

HILL, BRANDON, M.A. How the “Cop Killer” Disappeared: How Genre Deviation Influences Uptake in Censorship. (2018)
Directed by Dr. Risa Applegarth. 24pp.

By analyzing the song “Cop Killer” by Ice-T’s heavy metal band Body Count, I explain how genre deviation influences uptake and can lead to less desirable forms of uptake, specifically censorship.

HILL, BRANDON, M.A. Seeing through Panopticon: Lunn's Nature Alternative to Black Metal's Social Nihilism. (2018)
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By exposing panoptic terministic screens, Austin Lunn uses his black metal musical project, Panopticon, to suggest a nature alternative to the control and currency associated with American Christianity and capitalism.

HOW THE “COP KILLER” DISAPPEARED: HOW GENRE DEVIATION
INFLUENCES UPTAKE IN CENSORSHIP

AND

SEEING THROUGH PANOPTICON: LUNN’S NATURE ALTERNATIVE TO
BLACK METAL’S SOCIAL NIHILISM

by

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HOW THE “COP KILLER” DISAPPEARED: HOW GENRE DEVIATION INFLUENCES UPTAKE IN CENSORSHIP

How does one explain the phenomenon of censorship? How do language or images become so impactful that they are ultimately removed for the supposed good of society? Censorship still occurs in America in this day and age; in 2017 Kathy Griffith was fired for a photo depicting herself holding a phony severed head of the president (“Gwar and Municipal Waste,” *CNN*). Yet music groups like GWAR and Municipal Waste have done the exact same thing she did and were never once questioned by the media. How is this possible? How can different artists obtain different reactions from the same thing?

In this paper I hope to explain how censorship occurs through the concept of uptake and how genre deviation can affect an audience’s reaction, or, uptake. Considering that it has been 25 years since the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles, I will be using the song “Cop Killer” by the metal band Body Count, led by rapper Ice-T as my main example. I will compare Body Count to Ice-T’s solo career and to other artists who have expressed similar artistic sentiments, but did not face a media backlash like Body Count. Before diving into the context and controversy of “Cop Killer,” I want to go over Anne Freadman’s description of uptake in order to establish a vocabulary to use during my analysis.

In Anne Freadman's essay "Uptake," she describes uptake as the function of language that falls in between speech and action; it is the notion that the language is received, and that any response is conditioned by memory and "selects, defines, or represents its object" (Freadman 48). Her example of the court case where the process of "Judge – Sheriff - Execution" is a metaphor for "language – uptake – action" illustrates that uptake generally and appropriately fits the object, or language through memory. Essentially the judge issues a written death sentence which is taken up, or received, by the sheriff. The Sheriff relies on his memory (meaning his position as Sheriff, of the protocol of an execution, the legalities to the sheriff must adhere to, etc.) in order to carry out the physical execution of the prisoner. This is how the judge's words lead to an action carried out by others to achieve a result. Basically, uptake is what lies between language and the physical reaction to that language by another.

How does this function in the process of censorship, where people have different interpretations of the same thing? This raises the question, is there a possibility for multiple uptakes to any one object? As Freadman states, "forms do not constitute the genre because they do not constitute the mechanism of uptake" (Freadman 47). Therefore, I will argue that uptake, being so closely tied to memory (cultural and societal norms, language, knowledge of situation), is a concept that can be drastically affected by genre-deviation as illustrated by analyzing the censorship of rap artist Ice-T's heavy metal band, Body Count, and their infamous song "Cop Killer."

After the Rodney King incident, in which several officers of the Los Angeles Police Department were filmed brutally beating King, America was in a state of division.

Despite the video evidence, the officers involved in the beating were found not guilty and riots broke out in Los Angeles. As Judith Halberstam states in her article, “Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representation, Rage, and Resistance,” the Rodney King verdict “marked racial violence as a one-way street in America: white violence is not only permitted but legally condoned while the mere representation of black-on-white violence is the occasion for censorship and a paranoid retreat to a literal relation between representation and reality” (Halberstam 190).

The turmoil and rage over the verdict of King’s trial inspired many forms of protest, but none quite as successful in reaching a large audience as music. Rap had exploded, quickly rising as the dominant genre on the airwaves in the early 90’s. The Rodney King beating, trial, and subsequent riots influenced many musical artists to utilize the stage to speak out against police brutality. As Clarence Lusane mentions in the article “Rhapsodic Aspirations: Rap, Race and Power Politics,” “the eruption of rebellion in the streets of L.A. and its representations in hip hop culture indicate very clearly that violent law demands violent resistance” (Lusane 189). Rap incorporates imagined violence in its lyrical themes about social problems, especially in gangsta rap.

Rap has always had a reputation for providing rappers a platform to speak about social issues and to protest the police. N.W.A.’s extremely controversial “Fuck the Police” comes to mind, a song that was fought by the censors for encouraging violence against police officers. However, N.W.A.’s famous song was released several years before the Rodney King tape was recorded. It also adhered to the rap genre and did not deviate from. To this day, one can purchase N.W.A.’s album *Straight Outta Compton*,

and the track will be available on the record. “Fuck the Police” legitimized rap as a genre that an artist could openly criticize the police by using violent imagery; inadvertently this also added to the genre rules of rap, sometimes referred to by the subgenre, gangsta rap.

So why was “Cop Killer” censored?

Ice-T was one of the more popular rappers in the rap genre. Ice-T, like many other rappers, had songs about breaking the law and running from the police, as seen in his early hit “6 in the Morning”:

Looked in the mirror, what did we see?
Fucking blue lights: L.A.P.D
Pigs searched our car, their day was made
Found an Uzi, .44 and a hand grenade
Threw us in the county high power block
No freaks to see, no beats to rock. (Ice-T)

He had several songs that depicted fictionalized violence against police officers participating in police brutality. For instance, the lyrics to his song “Squeeze the Trigger” read:

Cops hate kids, kids hate cops.
Cops kill kids with warnin’ shots.
What is crime and what is not?
What is Justice? I think I forgot.
We buy weapons to keep us strong
Reagan sends guns where they don’t belong. (Ice-T)

Here Ice-T is directly talking about police brutality and self-defense in this song, released in 1987. Social commentary was a staple to Ice-T’s career as a rapper; he was successful in establishing both a gangsta rap persona and a social voice. Ice-T’s image allowed him

to solidify himself within the genre of rap while simultaneously participating in the redefinition of a subgenre of hip-hop. The uptake that comes from “Squeeze the Trigger” is what is expected. Ice-T’s already established audience, who’s memory of Ice-T is that of his gangsta rap persona, “take-up” these lyrics knowing Ice-T’s intention behind them. The audience understands that this is imagined violence because this isn’t the first time that they have encountered it in this genre and with this artist.

Having an already well-established solo career, Ice-T began to explore different genres and forms like the film *New Jack City*, in which he played a morally sound police officer. Before the Rodney King incident, Ice-T decided to explore alternative genres of music, specifically, hard rock and heavy metal. This is when he formed the all-African-American heavy metal act Body Count. The intention of Body Count was to shake things up a bit; here is an all African-American musical act subverting a genre that is usually dominated by whites. Through Body Count’s lyrics and aggressive sound, they attacked their would-be critics about participating in a white-dominated genre. Their song “There Goes the Neighborhood” epitomizes this:

Here come them fuckin' niggas
with their fancy cars.
Who gave them fuckin' niggas
those rock guitars?
Who let 'em in the club?
Did you make 'em pay?
Who let 'em on the stage?
Whose lettin' 'em play?
Don't they know rock's just for whites
don't they know the rules?
Those niggers are too hard core
this shit ain't cool.

Those blacks want everything
in the fuckin' world
That nigga plays so good
he took my muthafuckin' girl, there goes the neighborhood. (Body Count)

Obviously, Ice-T and Body Count found an issue with racism in music. Not because there weren't as many blacks in metal as in hip-hop, but just that the idea of an all-black metal band was taboo to most metal fans. Body Count was attempting to bring the hip-hop audience into metal and vice versa. Incorporating hip-hop culture into a heavy metal sound allowed Body Count to cover lyrical themes such as cocaine addiction ("The Winner Loses"), interracial dating and white supremacy ("KKK Bitch"), as well as racism that's passed down from previous generations ("Momma's Gotta Die Tonight"). There is even a track on the album called "A Statistic" that has one line of lyrics that says:

A Statistic:
At this moment
There are more black males in prison
Than in college. (Body Count).

From reading the lyrics on the album, it would be very hard to argue that Body Count is doing nothing more than attempting to combat unconscious racism in metal and rap fans. This attempt leads to the complete removal of their most popular song.

Body Count is most known for their infamous song "Cop Killer" from the album of the same name. This song received so much backlash that "Iran-Contra scoundrel" Oliver North had the temerity to announce that he would provide attorneys to any

wounded police officer to sue Time-Warner if the officer could show that their assailant had listened to and was inspired by ‘Cop Killer’” (Lusane 46). This song was censored for supposedly advocating violence against police:

I'm a cop killer, better you than me
Cop killer, fuck police brutality!
Cop killer, I know your family's grieving
(Fuck 'em!)
Cop killer, but tonight we get even, ha ha. (Body Count).

Though the name “Cop Killer” is repeated over and over, the main lyric that sticks out is “fuck police brutality” (Body Count).

In Ice-T’s book, *The Ice Opinion*, Ice-T lays out his perspective on the events that ultimately led to the decision to remove “Cop Killer” from the debut album of the band. Body Count’s “fans didn’t consider Body Count a controversial record” (169). Body Count experienced playing the touring music festival Lollapalooza where “430,000 predominately white kids waved their fists in the air and screamed ‘Cop Killer’ along with us” (*Ice Opinion* 169). Ice-T notes that after the Body Count album came out, the band played in “seventy cities, performed ‘Cop Killer’ to wild fans at eighty shows. Nothing happened” (*Ice Opinion* 169). Since there were no controversial incidents on tour when the album containing the song was initially being promoted, it seemed that the song raised no alarms with censors. However, the audience that Ice-T entertained had changed in demographics. Now, more than just rap fans were being introduced to Ice-T and his version of black rage. Therefore, Ice-T would have to defend his intended message, or uptake, of “Cop Killer” to an audience that didn’t quite understand.

The controversy surrounding the song occurred, according to Ice-T, “out of nowhere” (*Ice Opinion* 170). A group named The Fraternal Organization of Cops publicly denounced the song, claiming that it influenced the killing of cops. Therefore, the Fraternal Organization of Cops led an embargo against Warner Bros. The Foc lead the charge, but sympathetic politicians and influential celebrities provided the soapbox and media attention for the controversy. President George Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, and controversial Colonel Oliver North were also attacking Ice-T. Also, an organization named “CLEAT (Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas)” started calling for people to boycott Time Warner and get ‘Cop Killer’ removed from stores (*ICE* 141). President Bush was quoted in an article saying that he stood “against those who use films, or records, or television, or video games to glorify killing law-enforcement officers. It is sick.”(Time-Warner, *Washington Post*). Even “sixty members of Congress signed a letter expressing ‘our deep sense of outrage’ over Time Warner's decision to continue distribution of Ice-T's "Body Count" album” (Reaction, *Washington Post*).

Then, actor Charlton Heston, a major stockholder in the company, publicly criticized Warner Bros. for not immediately pulling the song because “it was a cash-cow hit cd for them” and the media for “tip-toing around the thing because the rapper was black” (Heston, YouTube Video). Heston goes on to say that he decided to attend a stockholder’s meeting in Beverly Hills. At this meeting he asked for the floor and “simply read the full lyrics of ‘Cop Killer’, every vicious and dirty word they were

selling” (Hesston YouTube video). It should also be noted that Hesston also publicly denounced the lyrics to the anti-Ku Klux Klan song ‘KKK Bitch.’”

Ice-T and his girlfriend at the time, Darlene Ortiz, reported receiving death threats due to the controversy. Warner Bros. were targets of attacks as well: “They sent death threats to Warner Bros. They actually sent two bombs to the label. Real bombs. These came from either police or police sympathizers” (*Ice opinion* 173). Ice-T felt it was largely a race related issue, he says that protestors of the song couldn’t understand “why would the big white corporation – who’s a member of the same country club as us, whose kids go to spring break with our kids, who supports the same politicians that we do – be associated with those niggers” (*Ice Opinion* 173).

Due to the tension between major stockholders and Warner Bros. over the song, Ice-T was forced to decide between freedom of speech and safety for his family and his label’s personnel. A major boycott of Warner Bros had also affected the company financially; this did not dissuade the label from continuing “to stand by {our} commitment to freedom of expression” (Reaction, *Washington Post*). According to Ice-T, “they were totally paranoid of paying off for the hostages, paying the extortionist” (*Ice Opinion* 175).

Despite the label’s support, Ice-T decided to pull the record. Ice-T explained that the reason behind this was to disarm his enemies at the time: “the cops are arguing that we’re doing it for the money. So let’s pull it and then tell them to shut the fuck up” (*Ice Opinion* 176). Naturally, this also lead to Ice-T leaving Warner Bros.; he was afraid that the label wouldn’t, or couldn’t support him again, should another controversy over his

lyrics occur in the future. This was an immediate concern because the label's lawyers were already asking Ice-T to change the lyrics on his next solo album, *Home Invasion*.

Since Warner Bros. couldn't "be in the business of black anger while being in the business of black control," Ice-T decided to part ways with Warner Bros (*Ice Opinion* 183). He then formed his own record label, Rhyme Syndicate Records. This way, he would be solely responsible for any lyrics that caused future controversy. Though some, like *Source* editor Reginald Dennis felt that "Ice-T allowed a devastating precedent to be set, opening the door for widespread censorship of rap", musicians and artists in the entertainment industry chose to support Ice-T's decision by criticizing the critics (*ICE* 149). Chuck D of Public Enemy famously said on MTV when asked about the incident, "those who aren't in the war should never comment on the battle" (*Ice Opinion* 177).

Ice-T points out something very interesting about the timing of the "Cop Killer" controversy:

During the exact same time my record was being condemned, the film *Unforgiven* was winning critical praise across the country. What's *Unforgiven* about? A cop killer. Eastwood takes justice into his own hands after his buddy, a black man, is unjustly murdered by a corrupt cop (*Ice Opinion* 172).

This is one of the many times cop killers have been glamorized in the media. One just has to look at the popularity of the *Rambo* films to see this. Like these films, Ice-T's accounts of violence against police are fictionalized, or imagined, violence. As Ice-T stated in a 1992 interview, "American people are really up in arms about this song, which doesn't kill; It's just a song. The Cops in America actually kill kids" (1992 interview, YouTube

video). Again, this brings up the question of why this case of imagined violence is such an issue? Especially when one looks at the many famous cop killers in the mainstream media, in both film and music.

Music that criticizes the police is nothing new. Eric Clapton covered Bob Marley's classic song "I Shot the Sheriff" and it "became a smash hit" (Lusane 46). Lusane argues that "Ice-T's blackness provided him no such protection" (Lusane 46). Many other acts in different genres have songs that use imagined violence when speaking about police. The reggae-influenced punk band Sublime incorporated some lyrical themes that were more popular in hip-hop. Sublime's self-titled album from 1996 contains the track "April 29th, 1992" which is actually about the Rodney King riots and explicitly encourages looting, and violence against police:

April 29th, 1992
There was a riot on the streets
Tell me where were you?
While you were home watching your TV
I was participating in some anarchy
First spot we hit up was my liquor store
I finally got all that alcohol I can't afford.
With red lights flashing, time to retire
And then we turned that liquor store into a structure fire (Sublime).

This song also includes the lyrics:

it's about coming up and staying on top
and screaming 1-8-7
on a motherfucking cop. (Sublime).

It should be noted that 1-8-7 is the police code for a homicide. Sublime faced no issues of censorship. These bands also operated according to the rules of their genre. Sublime incorporated elements from ska, rap, reggae, punk, etc., but they had been doing so since their conception. Sublime also regularly criticized police for enforcing marijuana laws; talking about police on their last album was to be expected from them.

Black Flag, the controversial Hermosa Beach anarchists (an influence to Body Count), has a song entitled “Police Story” in which the chorus recites:

This fucking city
Is run by pigs
They take the rights
Away from all the kids
Understand
We're fighting a war
We can't win
They hate us
We hate them
We can't win, no way! (Black Flag)

This was only one of the many songs in which Black Flag indulged in controversial subjects such as police brutality, race, drugs, etc. However, as they are considered pioneers of punk rock, the very underground D.I.Y. scene of the late seventies' and early eighties, one can understand how they avoided the level of backlash that Ice-T received. Black Flag were on a record label that was run by their guitar player and the band relied heavily on touring to promote their music, not their label. The label was solely a means of making physical copies of the music.

This wasn't the case for Ice-T, who was signed with a major label, Warner Bros. Ironically, for a provocative artist like Ice-T Warner Bros. was the ideal label. Warner Bros. was no stranger to controversy, they were "the home of the edgiest artists of the time: Prince, Madonna, Slayer, Sam Kinnison, Andrew Dice Clay, the Geto Boys, and" Ice-T (*ICE* 146). Combined with experience in the industry and the funds to support any legal issues, the resulting censorship is still a surprising end; all these other people are on the same label, all had controversial lyrics, videos, song titles, etc. but did not have anything removed from an album that had already been released.

Ice-T's issue with "Cop Killer" is that it is not a part of the genre that his audience has become accustomed to. His blackness offered no protection from sensors or even political figures (Lusane 46). Lusane points out the plethora of celebrities and organizations that "attacked Ice-T" and included such famous figures as "Bush, Charlton Heston, and the National Rifle Association" (Lusane 46). What is ironic about the NRA protesting the song is that they also protested against "legislation that sought to ban 'cop-killer' bullets thereby putting more police lives at risk than all the rappers combined" (Lusane 46).

Body Count was for a completely different audience, bringing punk and metal fans to see Ice-T perform. Therefore, his audience grew. He already had amassed fans of different races because, according to Lusane, "increasingly, rap is being bought by non-blacks" (Lusane 43). Body Count was a way for rock and metal to be appealing to black audiences. Ice-T understood that the problem was about genre, not the lyrics. In a 1992 Rolling Stone interview he stated:

This is not a rap album underline rap album. It's a rock album, it's an album that got into Texas and got inside suburbia a little deeper than a normal rap record would. It's a rock album with a rap mentality. And it has a brain this album's mentality is a progressive mentality against racism. It's hate against hate, you know. It's anger. It's not necessarily answers, it's anger with the same force of their hate. It scares them when they see it being kicked back at them. (Rolling Stone)

Here Ice-T understands that uptake is guided by genre, which is defined in memory.

Carolyn Miller says in “Genre As Social Action,” that “form shapes the response of the reader or listener to substance by providing instruction so to speak, about how to perceive and interpret; this guidance disposes the audience to anticipate, to be gratified, to respond in a certain way” (Miller 159). Audiences weren’t used to the attitude that came along with rap combined with the ferocity of metal. According to Halberstam, “genre, like racial categorizations, is supposed to essentialize and stabilize the form of Ice-T’s cultural production” (Halberstam 188). She goes on to say that Ice-T’s “protest, however, that the song is a hard rock song and that it should be heard as a fiction rather than as a direct provocation, emphasizes the ways in which censors refuse to grant the song any moral or narrative complexity,” essentially controlling the available uptake (Halberstam 188).

Ice-T acknowledges that *Body Count* attracted a different audience because the change in genre affects the tone of the album; *Body Count* was intentionally different from an Ice-T album. An Ice-T album has intelligence, and at times it has ignorance. Sometimes it has anger, sometimes it has questions. But *Body Count* was intended to

reflect straight anger. It was supposed to be the voice of the angry brother, without answers. (*Ice Opinion* 166).

Ice-T also explains another aspect of Body Counts music that is a reasonable connection to the anger found on the album, protest. Ice-T explains that Body Count was meant to be a “protest record” (*Ice Opinion* 167). For a heavy metal band, anger and protest are important thematic principles to adhere to. Some of Heavy metal’s most famous songs are protest songs: “War Pigs” by Black Sabbath, “Peace Sells...” by Megadeth, and “Mandatory Suicide” by Slayer all protest war and the political party in power at the time of the release. Considering these themes as staples of the genre, Ice-T easily appealed to the heavy metal audience. By relating the anger to black rage, he appealed to black heavy metal fans as well as marginalized groups who were not a part of the heavy metal community, which was predominately white in the early 1990’s in America.

Body Count directed their anger at three main groups they viewed as rhetorical enemies: The Ku Klux Klan, racist parents, and brutal police. Ice-T explains that he wrote lyrics that spoke out against the KKK because he feels that “the true fear of the white racist man is his woman leaving him for black man and systematically eliminating the white race – i.e., the white woman making love with the black man” (*Ice Opinion* 167). Closely related to that, Body Count spoke out against racist parents because they felt that their enemy was also “anyone who brings an innocent child into this world and decides to teach them hate” (*Ice Opinion* 167). Ice-T speaks for Body Count in The Ice

Opinion by saying that “we targeted police who feel it’s not their job to solve problems, but to perpetuate them” (*Ice Opinion* 168).

Ice-T says that because of playing heavy metal with Body Count, he “injected black rage into white kids” (*Ice Opinion* 170). Considering how Body Count expanded his audience, I would have to agree with him. Ice-T went from performing rap songs to a rap fan base to performing to a vastly larger audience that included a different demographic. Naturally, this altered the reaction, or uptake, available to his newfound audience, who probably weren’t quite familiar with him as a rap artist. Without changing lyrical themes, only changing the sonic elements of his craft, Ice-T illustrated how powerful an audience really is, simply based on how they react to an artist’s work. If the artistic expression is countered with enough resistance, whether logical or not, it can be completely removed from the conversation as “Cop Killer” was.

The Body Count album cover also reflected both musical worlds that Ice-T inhabited: a black man, the words “Cop Killer” tattooed on his chest, and a pistol in his hand. The style used in the design is more reminiscent of artwork on heavy metal covers, but the actual subject connects directly to both Ice-T’s rap lyrics and the lyrics of Body Count. Visually, this album inhabits both genres as the music itself does. This also introduced Ice-T’s newly expanded audience to the imagery of urban decay and the lifestyle of a criminal in that environment.

Therefore, Ice-T’s intended uptake was not well-read by the new audience whose memory was not expecting a group of black men to talk about police brutality in a metal song. Republicans were issuing a warning to parents about this song: “Cop Killer” will

make your children kill police officers. The artist cannot control the reaction, or uptake, to their art, they can only try to present it as best as possible. Freadman says that “uptake is first the taking of an object; it is not the causation of a response by an intention” (Freadman 48). This means that the uptake will represent the initial object as much as it represents the responder. Freadman says that is “the hidden dimension of the long, ramified, intertextual memory of uptake: the object is taken from a set of possibilities” (Freadman 4). There is no way to completely control how something will be understood by others. No one said that “Cop Killer” was a terrible song, just one that could possibly influence listeners negatively. This shifts the sole qualification for censorship to be based off what the powers that be consider “decent,” not good.

Censorship is directly related to uptake. When a member of the audience is so offended by something that they want it made unavailable for everyone else, they have engaged in uptake. The push for censorship is just a form of uptake. The issue with “Cop Killer” isn’t the subject material, it is the genre. As Freadman says, “when uptake crosses the boundary between ceremonies, and *a fortiori* between jurisdictions, it mediates between genres” (Freadman 44). The ceremonies concerning “Cop Killer” are for two different audiences with very different expectations. This new audience also included previous critics of heavy metal.

Heavy Metal had come under harsh criticism for years due to its supposed ties to the occult and the extremely sexualized imagery that some acts incorporated. Groups like the Parents Music Resource Center, made famous by member Tipper Gore, had tried and failed to censor heavy metal acts in the 1980’s. Their crusade was appeased by the

addition of the “Parental Advisory Explicit Content” labels to album covers, ironically causing the explicit albums to sell more copies. Some members of Ice-T’s new audience were already familiar with heavy metal as something dangerous that should be censored; since he participated in an already controversial genre by including elements of another controversial genre, it is understandable to see how censorship could be considered a form of uptake. This is how a part of his new audience understood him based on the song; therefore, their only way to fully uptake his message, was to remove it.

This recent scrutiny had already cast metal music, in the eyes of the public, into a sphere associated with social undesirables: drug addicts, Satanists, liberals, communists, etc. When Ice-T and Body Count decided to participate in the metal genre, they knew the role that controversy has played in the metal culture. Again, I must quote Freadman about the relationship that form has with genre and uptake: “forms do not constitute the genre because they do not constitute the mechanism of uptake” (Freadman 47). Therefore, participating in a different genre influences memory and audience. Drastically influencing memory and audience contributes to multiple uptakes from the same text or song, including those that view the piece as dangerous.

Regardless of genre, censorship goes against everything the first amendment supposedly stands for. As American’s we are given the right to say, feel, and read what we want. We are guaranteed the right to criticize our government and speak up when problems arise. “Cop Killer” was released before the Rodney King incident in 1992, warning us about the consequences of unchecked police brutality. Twenty-six years later in 2018, our country still has severe problems regarding race, specifically with those of

dark complexion and the police. Body Count's "Cop Killer" is as relevant today as it ever was, illustrating how powerful memory is in the function of uptake.

Should someone release a similar song to "Cop Killer" in 2018, it would be interesting to see how it is received and if it is completely removed as "Cop Killer" was. Since the song was removed, Body Count has performed the song live with little controversy. Other acts such as Soundgarden have even performed the song live at large music festivals, attempting to comment on the censorship of music (Cop Killer, Soundgarden). This censorship has silenced Body Count in some ways, but also solidified their place in the history of music as well as social reform. Due to the censorship copies of the album on CD with the controversial track have skyrocketed in value, selling for over sixty dollars sometimes; the copy I currently own is one of the uncensored versions. The song has a legacy that has lasted since its release inspiring politicized bands like Soundgarden to record a live-bootleg version of the song (a version that was not censored by the way). Body Count has since returned to the stage, capitalizing on the old controversy, and creating new ones with songs such as "Black Hoodie" and "No Lives Matter."

In the end, an artist must realize the pros and cons of staying within the realm of one's established genre. The audience is already familiar with you, their memory will serve their expectation and the uptake will adhere to that expectation. However, when one deviates from the form of a genre and reaches out to a new audience, an audience whose memory is not familiar with the artist, uptake can have a negative impact both professionally and socially. Not only was the first amendment ignored, but the censorship

of “Cop Killer” demonstrated that the African-American community’s voice was not worth hearing and their grievances could ultimately be silenced by the powers that be.

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SEEING THROUGH PANOPTICON: LUNN'S NATURE ALTERNATIVE TO BLACK METAL'S SOCIAL NIHILISM

Since its inception in Norway in the early 1990s, the black metal music genre has provided audiences with harsh social and cultural critique concerning the flaws in human society, but it offers no realistic alternatives or solutions. This heavy metal sub-genre has been and continues to be shrouded in controversy due to a multitude of church burnings and several gruesome murders/suicides involving a few members of the genre-founding bands such as Mayhem, Burzum, and Emperor. Because of a “tabloid-style exposé” article from the music magazine *Kerrang!* that focused on the controversy as opposed to the music, the world’s introduction to black metal could be summed up into four words, “ARSON...DEATH...SATANIC RITUAL” (Paterson 169). Diverging from the first wave of Norwegian black metal, the American black metal artist Panopticon does focus on social critique; however, with his emphasis on the natural world, he offers an alternative way of seeing and being in the world. Since the release of the self-titled *Panopticon* in 2008, the one-man band consisting of multi-instrumentalist Austin Lunn, has provided the metal community with what he has called “Anarcho-Pagan Black Metal” (*Panopticon*). This self-description speaks to the thematic scope of the American institutions Lunn criticizes with his music. As Panopticon’s music has matured and developed, Lunn has included acoustic folk elements and a deeper analysis of himself and American institutions. These lyrical and sonic themes are prevalent across the songs in

2010's ... *On The Subject of Mortality* and 2012's *Kentucky*. These albums provide Lunn the opportunity to criticize what he sees as two of the more harmful and powerful institutions in America—Christianity and capitalism.

Drawing on Kenneth Burke's concepts of "motive" and "terministic screens," I argue that Lunn uses Panopticon's music to criticize the motivations and terministic screens of the American institutions and ideologies of Christianity and capitalism in order to provide his audience with an alternative view. By highlighting these social panoptic terministic screens, he "directs the attention" of his audience to the underlying controlling motivations of these American institutions ("Terministic" 45). ... *On The Subject Of Mortality* critiques the practices and motivations of Christianity. With a similar approach, Lunn uses *Kentucky* to criticize unchecked capitalism by remembering and analyzing the sordid history of the coal-mining industry in his home state. On both albums, he suggests that the natural world is a better option to these Foucauldian social panopticons, as it undermines their attempts at power and control by offering a more tangible understanding of God and wealth.

In the next sections, I utilize Burke's theory of terministic screens to explain why Lunn disapproves of the Foucauldian institutions as well as how he himself criticizes them. In conjunction with Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*, Burke's theory explains Lunn's perspective and approach to his criticism. Michel Foucault's Panopticism theory clarifies why Lunn takes issue with the American institutions of Christianity and capitalism, as well as underscore the symbolic meaning behind Lunn's choice for the band name, Panopticon. The following section examines the two Panopticon albums,

...*On The Subject of Mortality* and *Kentucky* to demonstrate how they embody this criticism of American panopticons and how they support Lunn's alternative view of nature. Across his lyrics, Lunn not only takes a stance against powerful societal institutions, but also inverts the nihilism typically associated with black metal. Instead of pointing out a problem and accepting it, Lunn suggests possible means of correction.

Lunn's Panoptic Critique of Motivations with Terministic Screens

Burke argues that terministic screens "direct the attention" of the audience when communicating as well as deflect specific aspects of possible meaning, so it "directs the attention into some channels rather than others" ("Terministic" 45). Terministic screens operate discursively, through language. For instance, when asked one's opinion on a subject, we can only attribute our answer to the language we use to understand our experience, thoughts, prejudices, etc.; these linguistic meanings are our terministic screens. Burke uses an example of a person's dream being analyzed by psychologists from different schools of thought; ultimately, they develop different conclusions about the dream because of the schools' different terminologies and perspectives ("Terministic" 45). Terministic screens are an unavoidable result of language and communication; Burke explains that "we *must* use terministic screens, since we can't say anything without the use of terms; whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another" ("Terministic" 50). These screens are typically based on two types of comparisons: how things are alike and how they are different. Burke refers to these as "continuity" and "discontinuity" ("Terministic" 50). He illustrates this through the

perspectives of a biologist and a theologian. Darwin “views man as continuous with other animals”, but the theologian would “stress the principle of discontinuity” (“Terministic” 50). For Lunn as Panopticon, he is examining the discontinuity between the Foucauldian institutions of religion and capitalism with nature; he is “unmasking” the panoptic schema, or screen (*Rhetoric* 99).

Lunn chose an appropriate name for his black metal project; not only is the panopticon the perfectly designed prison, but it is also the social theory presented by Foucault in *Discipline & Punish* that uses the design of the prison as a metaphor for how discipline leads to social order and control. Foucault describes the Panopticon as “the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form” (205). Conceptually, the panopticon is the perfect structure for altering behavior and reinforcing control. This panoptic schema, as Foucault explains, is used in every version of the social control of behavior: “all that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy” (200).

Lunn understands the social metaphor of the panopticon and utilizes his music to critique American panopticons. The panoptic schemas that allow panopticons to function and reinforce their power are themselves terministic screens. By examining the individual cell of the panoptic prison, it is noted that the prisoner can only see that guards are watching him constantly; the prisoner’s “visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them” (Foucault 187). The prison’s walls are literal terministic screens that communicate to the prisoner that he is under surveillance and should behave accordingly. These particular screens are motivated by the desire for power over others in

order to obtain some type of product. For instance, Lunn would view the practice of Christian prayer as a panoptic mechanism, or panoptic terministic screen. Prayer is only a viable linguistic and bodily practice to those who follow the teachings and rules of the church. For a Christian, it is the means to directly communicate with God and symbolizes the acknowledgment that God is greater than the person. For Lunn, prayer is a way that the clergy deceive people by justifying their word with an invisible enforcer.

These terministic screens are the methods in which the institutions, or panopticons, that Lunn critiques establish their dominance over others; Lunn's lyrics reveal these panoptic terministic screens. Across his lyrics, Lunn argues through what I refer to as an Emersonian terministic screen that, at its core, values nature over all human enterprises. Both Emerson and Lunn look to nature for and claim to have found the presence of God. Lunn has even used a quotation from Henry David Thoreau, a student of Emerson, in his album design. Burke suggests that Emerson provides "us with the terms for the physical realm that are transferable to the moral realm," meaning that Emerson's writing identifies the divine by focusing more on nature in order to "direct the attention" ("Terministic" 46, 45). This is how Emerson guides his audience through his argument. He begins *Nature* by claiming that "few adult persons can truly see nature," that "they have a very superficial seeing" (9). Emerson then guides the reader through his terministic screen, one that views nature as the divine. By discussing how he views nature's beauty as a commodity and as an ideal, Emerson suggests an alternative to popular religious thought, so his readers may "come to look at the world with new eyes" (42).

Both ... *On the Subject of Mortality* and *Kentucky* use this Emersonian terministic screen to condemn American institutions as Foucauldian panopticons. While Lunn disparages the literal transgressions that the institutions have made against people and the environment, his larger concern is the motivation of these panoptic structures. He realizes that while the church preaches love and acceptance, its true motivations are power over others. The Christian institution that Panopticon addresses uses the promise of a rewarding afterlife as a method of control. If these people found God in nature instead of a church, the power structure of the panoptic mechanism of an ever-vigilant God, utilizing the effects of constant surveillance, would unravel. Like the church, Lunn also criticizes the coal-mining industry and capitalism in a similar fashion. The institutions are guided by profit, that is their terministic screen. Like nature for Lunn, profit controls how they view everything involved, like the environment. Hence, it is easier for the coal companies to justify the horrible treatment of miners and the massive environmental issues that stem from mining.

Disrupting Panoptic Motivations with Nature

Burke speaks specifically about these particular screens, the religious and capitalist, in his chapter “Scope and Reduction.” Burke says that in a pious culture you may get it done “religiously,” if those who are asked to do the work are moved by such motives as devotion, admiration, sense of duty. But in a capitalist labor market, all that is necessary is for you to say, “Who’ll do this for five dollars?” – and men press forward “independently,” of their “own free will,” under orders from no one, to “voluntarily” enlist for the work (“Scope” 93).

For example, in the song “A Message to the Missionary,” Lunn directly criticizes the motivations of the church, or in other words, their terministic screens. Lunn believes that the Christian denominations’ true desires are to control people, not save them: “you want us on our knees not only to pray, but to be enslaved. We cannot fight when we can’t stand” (*Mortality*). For Lunn, prayer is literally kneeling before those in power: the clergy, who teach prayer and other religious rites as well as the consequences of not adhering to them. The fear implemented upon the congregation to control their behavior is, for Lunn, a form of enslavement. By implementing the fear of God and hell into followers of Christ, Lunn maintains that, the church has taught them “to be afraid to be free” (*Mortality*). In the same fashion, Lunn criticizes the coal-mining industry and capitalism on *Kentucky*. Lunn’s lyrics, and the lyrics of the cover songs included on the albums, are attempts at convincing people to see through the screens that the coal companies put up in order to convince people that they are not hurting anyone or anything. Coal was a booming industry in the early twentieth century and required a lot of man-power to obtain it from the mountain. Coal-companies were notorious for enforcing unrealistic work hours and pay standards on miners as well as constructing a system of total economic reliance in which the miner totally depended on the coal company. Lunn’s inclusion of a protest song from the early twentieth century coal-mining protests is an attempt at illustrating how people saw through the company’s terministic screen.

With Panopticon’s album ...*On the Subject of Mortality*, Lunn criticizes what he sees wrong with the institution of Christianity. While he differs from Emerson in his

relationship with Christianity, the two are similar in their perspectives on and valuing of nature. Lunn, coming from a more modern pagan belief system, obviously appreciates Emerson's perception of God/s residing in nature. Also, according to Philip Gura, Emerson's "chief charisma derived from a challenge to conventional wisdom rather than for his particular wisdom itself" (96). This is one of the main functions of black metal, criticizing the current social structure without offering a possibly universal solution: the black metal genre typically entertains the idea of a world without organized Christianity, but does not necessarily advocate for organized Satanism or atheism. Lunn, however, diverges from this black metal trope because, along with the criticism, he does offer an alternative. For example, in the song "Living in the Valley of the Shadow of Death," Lunn claims that "golden gates and choirs of angels sing praises to a heavenly host who has overlooked in arrogance the true majesty of the world" (*Mortality*). With his critical focus on heaven being Christianity's ultimate reward, Lunn highlights Christianity's privileging of the afterlife over the material and immediate reality. Like Emerson, Lunn feels that the major beliefs within the institution of Christianity overlook and dismiss what is right in front of believers, the natural world. Lunn rejects the need to look towards a church for God with "there is no god in buildings" inferring that a humanly contrived structure cannot contain or compartmentalize God (*Mortality*). He goes on to refer to the religious institution as a "cunning method of control," a terministic screen that keeps believers from understanding God in other ways (*Mortality*).

For Lunn, being a part of nature is the ultimate reward, even in death. Like Emerson, but unlike the typical black metal artist, Lunn describes mortality as a natural

process as opposed to anything involving spirituality or religion: “Death is my final gift, the leaves that fall nourish the soil with their decomposition and the oak will feed from itself again. And the world thrives” (*Mortality*). This extended metaphor of the cyclical process of plants lacks human intervention and solely relies on the natural processes of biology. Decomposed organic material often leads to another organism’s sustenance. Applying the metaphor to human death removes the reward of heaven and punishment of hell, which alleviates the pressures and undermines the precepts of Christianity that Lunn views as seeking to control behavior. If an institution cannot control behavior, it cannot control the way one thinks. Lunn’s perception of death is one that greatly differs from the institutionalized norm, and it could be perceived as dangerous to those in power. In the song “...Seeing...,” Lunn repeatedly screams “there is no god in buildings” and “there are no forests in your heaven” (*Mortality*). With these lyrics, he not only attacks the institution of the church, often considered the house of God, but he criticizes how Christianity overlooks the wonders of nature in exchange for a building, or tithes, or other manufactured idols. With these two lines, he implies that God is not controlled by man, and man’s edifices to glorify God and heaven blind him from the heaven on earth that is nature. Obviously, for Lunn, heaven is an untouched wilderness, not anything associated with human creation or hierarchies.

In “A Message to the Missionary,” Lunn goes on the offensive towards the institution of organized Christianity and its practice of conversion. He begins by rejecting martyrdom as a viable Christian lifestyle: “the institution of your faith is not worth dying for. Not worth living for, worth crying for” (*Mortality*). This condemnation of

Christianity is then supported with Lunn's critique of prayer and proselytizing. The process of prayer is a symbolic act of surrender to Lunn: "You want us on our knees not only to pray, but to be enslaved. We cannot fight when we can't stand" (*Mortality*).

While his example of not being able to fight on one's knees makes sense, there is also a metaphorical component to it. When one is converted from a supposedly primitive culture to a Christian one, new ideas become valued. In Christianity, martyrdom, extreme pacifism, and forgiveness are some of the main components. Ironically, these three components also make it easy for a violent or hierarchical culture to control the new Christians in various ways. Lunn is alluding to the Christian missionaries teaching pacifism and martyrdom, while also being responsible for the slaughter of the people they sought to convert. He is criticizing Christianity's practice of correct training, a theory that Foucault developed in order to help explain the process of establishing power and control. For Foucault, correct training is executed through discipline backed up by punishment: "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (170). By punishing those who fail to adhere to the panoptic norms and rules, an institution's subjects will choose to behave accordingly, even if only to avoid punishment. Lunn also links missionary work to colonialism and relates it specifically to America's origin and the European belief in a white God: "One nation's ethnocentric perception of god cannot be the only end" (*Mortality*). In this promotion of a white God, missionaries misuse scripture, since many atrocities have been committed in the name of God. Lunn directly accuses the missionaries of this misuse with "your internecine is supported by scripture,

it's the only credibility you're willing to lend" (*Mortality*). Lunn's use of the word "internecine" carries both its meaning as "marked by slaughter" and "of, relating to, or involving conflict within a group" (Merriam-Webster). Missionaries work to control the converted through both violence and through enforcing new belief systems through changing culture and law; therefore Lunn views them as a colonial force, not a spiritual one.

Shifting from the institution to the believer, "...Seeing..." begins with a criticism of how humans search for answers through religion: "We search so hard in vain when the answers hold our hands" (*Mortality*). Religion offers supernatural answers to a natural world, but Lunn counters this by claiming that these supposed answers humans search for are unfulfilling and insufficient as "They fill our bellies, They drench the sand, They pour from the sky, Their thunders roar" (*Mortality*). The true answers lie, not in the heavens, but within nature, so, "We must search no more" (*Mortality*). Lunn continues with a straightforward solution to the turmoil of human condition: "Disregard dogma," the practices and teaching of Christianity (*Mortality*). He mocks the act of prayer by suggesting the more practical practice of communing with nature: "We've no need to kneel again unless to feel the earth, to drink from the streams again" (*Mortality*). Not only is there a spiritual component to this idea of feeling the earth, there is a literal aspect as well. Lunn suggests drinking the water as both a metaphorical and literal representation of life for humans. Drinking directly from a stream not only provides literal hydration, but the spiritual connection here is different than that of Christianity. For Lunn, the water is the connection to the Gods as opposed to a cleansing force that is

merely symbolic like with a Christian baptism. The water is what is important, not what humans do with it. His inclusion of “again” also suggests that humans at one time understood this connection to nature in its literal and spiritual meanings but lost it in their focus on Christianity.

While most black metal is the anti-thesis of Christianity, meaning more satanic or atheistic, Lunn prefers to take a more Emersonian perspective on the divine. For instance, while Lunn criticizes the institution of Christianity, he does not necessarily dispute the possible existence of God or Gods. Like Emerson, he merely suggests that there are alternatives to the institution and practice that has become the norm in America. Panopticon’s “...Seeing...” ends with a list of several instances where Lunn feels that he has encountered the divine: “i saw the gods in the eyes of my father on the last day he waved goodbye” (*Mortality*). In referring to his biological father as opposed to a spiritual or omnipresent father. Lunn subverts the Christian patriarchal approach to the divine and brings that infinite force down to a human person and situation, the loss of a beloved parent. Much like Emerson, he simplifies the process of reaching God; for Emerson nature “is not fallen, as Christians maintained, but is itself perfect and worthy of our worship. The sacramental corn and wine are not reserved for saints alone, but are available to all who seek them” (Gura 103). Lunn goes on to say that he “saw the gods staring at the night sky with a friend standing on lake ice” (*Mortality*). Once again, Lunn brings the concept of God/s to something as simple as being with a friend outside at night. Like Emerson, Lunn sees nature as God, not as a creation from God: “That which, intellectually considered, we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit.

Spirit is the Creator” (Emerson 19). Lunn goes on to explain that he has also seen the gods “in the eyes of my nephew just minutes after his birth” (*Mortality*). This is another example of nature; however, it represents the natural miracle of creation and birth, something that is both a standard aspect of nature and the miracle of creating a conscious life. The name of the song itself seems to refer to Emerson’s *Nature* where he discusses “superficial seeing” and how “few adult persons can see nature” (9).

Shifting from Christianity to capitalism in *Kentucky*, Lunn offers a tribute to his home state. On this album, he explores the fraught history of the coal-mining industry in Kentucky and the fight against the coal companies for workers’ rights. He juxtaposes this with the appreciation he has for the state’s natural beauty. The album cover even depicts the Kentucky mountains with the ghostlike image of two coalminers, a grown man and a young boy, superimposed onto the landscape.

In the album’s jacket, Lunn includes liner notes along with the lyrics to “Bodies Under the Falls” that provide context behind the writing process and the lyrics themselves. Lunn states that in “Daniel Boone national forest there is a water fall called ywahoo falls where it is said that 110 of the Cherokee tribe who lived there were massacred on Friday, August 10th, 1810” (*Kentucky*). He explains how the institution of colonialism has removed this from the memories of modern Americans: “Many claim that the events never happened due to the lack of ‘documentation,’ but none the less a plaque stands at the site commemorating the warriors who were slain, the children murdered and the women raped beneath the looming walls of Ywahoo Falls (*Kentucky*). Lunn’s lyrics to “Bodies Under the Falls” focus solely on this massacre: “The blood-

stained soil, their ancestral forest...Where only trees now know of the horrors seen here,” “Pale faces in the mist, demons who claim the mountains,” and “Sorrow fills the air where tribal souls sleep beneath the cliffs where Ywahoo Falls forever weeps...” (*Kentucky*). Before Lunn confesses his love for Kentucky he reminds the listener that, despite the natural beauty of the state, the landscape is marked by these hidden tragedies and that America was built on the bones of Native Americans. By beginning an album entitled *Kentucky* with a song about a massacre of Native Americans and including context for the song, Lunn is utilizing Burke’s theory by creating a terministic screen to allow the listener to experience the song the way Lunn intended; he “directs the attention” of his first song onto the violent history that most of America has tried to forget about (“Terministic” 45). This distrust of the American government and settlers felt by the Native Americans is reiterated by the coal miners. Lunn’s use of terministic screens has allowed the listener to not only get a glimpse at a different perspective, but possibly become more open to the extreme thematic goals that Lunn is tackling. In other words, he is dismantling the walls of the capitalist institution, or panopticon, constructs created to keep prisoners or workers, isolated, under surveillance, and compliant (Foucault 191)

On *Kentucky*, Lunn rerecorded two protest songs that were originally written during the coal-mining wars, “Come All Ye Coal Miners” being the first the listener encounters. The bare-bones acoustic “Come all Ye Coal Miners” comes immediately after the sheer black metal force that is “Bodies Under the Falls,” which drastically changes the tone of the album. This piece emphasizes the politics of the Coal Mining

industry from the perspective of the coal mining family. The song, originally written by Sarah Ogan Gunning, “opposed the treachery of the mining companies and the ‘capitalist system’ as she put it” (*Kentucky*). Lunn slightly alters the lyrics of the original song by shifting the perspective from a wife to a son in order to “reflect the gender of the person singing” (*Kentucky*). The song describes what it is to be a member of the coal mining family. After calling for coal miners to “listen to a story,” the singer relays to the listeners their experiences in order to establish a rapport with the listeners: “I am a coal miner’s son, I’m sure I wish you well, I was born in old Kentucky, in a coal camp born and bred, I know all about the pinto beans, bull dog gravy, and cornbread” (*Kentucky*). After establishing the origin of the singer, and any of the listeners, the song begins to list the struggles associated with a coal mining life: “I know how the coal miners slave and work in the coal mines every day For a dollar in the company store, for that is all they pay” (*Kentucky*). The song describes many negative aspects of being a coal-miner, labelling it “the most dangerous work” and “slaving” (*Kentucky*). With these phrases, *Kentucky* begins to criticize the institution of the coal-mining industry and capitalism, much like Lunn himself attacked Christianity in ... *On the Subject of Mortality*. The song begs the coal miner to “open your eyes” and “see what the dirty capitalist system is doing to you and me” (*Kentucky*).

Then, the effects of the capitalist system are described. By taking “fathers away from children, and husbands away from wives” the family unit is destroyed and solely exists as a method of creating new miners (*Kentucky*). The singer warns the miners that their reward for being compliant to the system, or remaining docile bodies, is a “run-

down shack to live in, snow and rain pours in the top” and that the rent for that shack never leads to ownership: “you have to pay the company rent, your payin’ never stops” (*Kentucky*). “Come All ye Coal Miners” overtly attacks the institution of coal-mining and capitalism harshly, ending with a blunt call for action: “Let’s sink this capitalist system in the darkest pits of hell” (*Kentucky*). Lunn’s decision to include this song on the record reflects not only his critique of the coal mining industry but also the name of the band, Panopticon. In Foucauldian terms, the miners are the docile bodies who operate as prisoners within the panopticon of the coal mining industry. The goal of this song is to disrupt the correct training and create active bodies, not docile ones, ones that act on their agency to break free. This takes the power away from the panopticon. A protest song’s goal is to spark a thought process in the audience; this is the case with any song with politically charged lyrics. Including this song, Lunn reminds his modern audience of how unchecked capitalism has effected people before.

As a counterpoint, “Black Soot and Red Blood” is Lunn’s attempt to write a black metal song with similar themes as “Come All Ye Coal Miners.” He begins the lyrics with a metaphor that juxtaposes nature against industry: “Tonight, the dis-harmonic symphony of the cicadas plagues my ears... Drifting off to the mind numbing hum of grinding gears” (*Kentucky*). This metaphor illustrates how when industry is valued, nature is thought of as bothersome, a force to be conquered. Lunn’s lyrics reflect a discomfort with natural sounds and the ability to find rest amidst the sounds of industry. He goes on to describe the mindset of a coalminer who is about to participate in a literal fight against the panoptic structures of the coal mining companies and guards. Lunn’s speaker begs

others and himself to stay strong, to “hold out for just one more day,” to “hold out for a fair wage and a living” (*Kentucky*). Here listeners are witnessing what happens when the panoptic schema is disrupted, prisoners of the panopticon, in this case coal-miners, become aware of the situation and stop policing themselves. Lunn refers to “Bloody” Harlan, a county in Kentucky that experienced bloodshed several times as a result of unfair treatment of workers by coal companies: “fight for what is right ‘till they meet your demands...in Bloody Harlan County...lives laid down for the union” (*Kentucky*).

Lunn explains in *Kentucky’s* liner notes that the coal companies “don’t care about people, they care about commodities and profits.” The capitalist coal-mining institution derives its power from both individuals and natural resources. Like Emerson, part of Lunn’s anger towards these companies stems from the “environmental hazards and disregard to the safety of the populations of the surrounding areas” (*Kentucky*). While Lunn is concerned with the literal aspect of damaging the environment, his spiritual Emersonian perspective on nature views this disregard for the environment to be blasphemy towards the divinity of nature. Like Emerson and his student Thoreau, Lunn goes out into the geographic area he mentions in the song. He notes that the lyrics were partially written on a camping trip, while “the remaining lyrics were penned in Harlan County” (*Kentucky*). Lunn ends the liner notes on this song by dedicating it to “the workers who struggled in ‘Bloody’ Harlan,” for those workers who challenged the panoptic structure that oppressed them (*Kentucky*).

“Killing the Giants as They Sleep” has an environmental preservation theme to the lyrics, providing an Emersonian appreciation for the mountains and a subtle call for

action. Lunn indicates this in the liner notes for the song where he discusses the negative impact on the land that comes from mountain top removal for coal mining. He refers to the mountains as “Giants” to humanize them for the sake of his metaphor and does not hide his admiration for the mountains: “I have found such deep respect for what you destroy” (*Kentucky*). The lyrics begin mourning the giants/mountains: “older than time and cut down by a lesser foe, like thieves in the night mined for coal” (*Kentucky*). Here Lunn refers to the coal-mining industry as thieves, the robbers and destroyers of nature for profit. Lunn speaks of the “timeless stone” buried beneath the mountains, but he also mentions the “secret poisons in its belly” (*Kentucky*). Lunn views the mountain as “pulsing with life” but others do not “see its shimmering green,” they only see “the deep hue of coal, grey smoke, and black waters in the stream...” (*Kentucky*). Metaphorically he explains the environmental dangers associated with coal-mining, something Emerson would probably do as well: “poison the earth, poison the stream, killing the weary giants as they sleep. blackened waters, sand and soot, grinding gears halt serenity” (*Kentucky*). Lunn brings back the sound of grinding gears, this time as a deterrent to sleep for the mountain. The poison, black waters, etc. are all environmental atrocities that originate with mountain top removal. For Lunn, to kill the mountains, or giants, is to literally kill ourselves.

Lunn’s Critique of Black Metal: The Banjo as Terministic Screen

Lunn’s lyrical approach is quite literally “Killing the Giants as they Sleep,” the giants being panopticons of Christianity and capitalism (*Kentucky*). However, the same could be said for his relationship to the black metal scene itself. Genre-creating bands

like Mayhem attacked Christianity as well, but with different terministic screens in mind: “we used Christianity as an enemy in the expression, but if you lived in Norway you would understand why” (Patterson 131). This Norwegian version of the anti-Christian terministic screen has led these artists to also criticize the Christian panopticon. However, their statements typically involve literal actions as opposed to suggesting theoretical alternatives through their music in the hopes of changing minds. Members of bands such as Mayhem, Burzum and Emperor participated in anti-Christian behavior such as murder, suicide, and church burnings. Mayhem’s infamous guitarist, Euronymous, “often presented black metal as merely a medium to manipulate, commenting that young musicians should become Satanic terrorists rather than form yet more new bands” (152). These bands chose to focus on the extreme black metal lifestyle instead of their music. For example, Mayhem singer Dead had “this fascination with decomposition, the smell...everything to do with death, that was his interest” (142). Instead of relating death to something more positive like Lunn does with Panopticon, Dead ended up committing suicide before recording any songs with Mayhem for their upcoming debut album (146).

Panopticon diverges from the black metal genre, not just in theme and approach, but in sound too. Panopticon’s sound utilizes black metal composition techniques, such as “high-paced percussion, high-pitched ‘screamed’ vocals, fast tremolo picking on guitars” while championing a professional production quality over the harsh sounding cassette recordings of the early black metal bands (Patterson 151). Early black metal releases such as Mayhem’s *Deathcrush* and Darkthrone’s *Under A Funeral Moon* “made use of a shockingly raw production,” often recording on the simplest recording equipment (200).

While Lunn is influenced by the “fast tremolo melodies, droning, hypnotic song structures, and higher-pitched, raspy vocals,” a Panopticon album sounds much more professional than a traditional black metal recording.

Though Lunn is the sole-member of the band he is a gifted multi-instrumentalist and he demonstrates this on his albums. While adopting the “emphasis on atmosphere and feeling” through the fast guitar riffs and screaming vocal styles of traditional black metal, Lunn adds outside musical influences in his writing style (Patterson 151). He writes acoustic songs that are directly influenced from traditional Appalachian folk and country music. Because of Panopticon’s American thematic scope, Lunn is able to utilize new musical elements that are absent on previous black metal albums, even among American bands; most noticeable is the inclusion of Appalachian folk instruments as seen from the start on the first instrumental track on *Kentucky*, “Bernheim Forest In Spring.” Lunn introduces the banjo, fiddle, acoustic guitar, and the Appalachian folk playing style into black metal. This part of Lunn’s music is somewhat foreign to the black metal sound; most traditional black metal bands frown upon the idea of acoustic or clean music. The artists who do use acoustic music have typically been directly influenced by Norwegian or European folk music; even most American bands have more in common with the European bands as far as their sonic attributes are concerned. Panopticon differs from these bands by providing acoustic passages that are clearly influenced by American mountain music. In some cases, Lunn even covers country/folk songs by American artists from the early 20th century. Panopticon is inherently original in blending Appalachian folk music with black metal.

Any power structure enforced by panoptic mechanisms is only able to do so because of terministic screens. By directing the attention of the subject, one can choose how to present information to gain one's desired product. Lunn's Panopticon attempts to reveal the motivations and terministic screens of the institutions of religion and capitalism in order to provide the audience an opportunity to make decisions without institutional influence. By implementing Appalachian folk instruments, Lunn contrasts the expectation of black metal by providing an alternative American sound. While Lunn's audience is subjected to Lunn's Emersonian screen, his motivations are not as nefarious as the panoptic institutions he criticizes. Lunn's focus is to help his audience to see an alternative in nature that avoids panoptic normalization. Lunn's goal is to break through these panoptic screens and allow docile bodies to become active in their response to Christianity, capitalism, and black metal.

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