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# Twenty Years After: Rock Music and National Rock in Hungary\*

László Kürti

*This article explores an underresearched topic in popular musical studies, the changes in the Hungarian popular music scene since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and situates that research in a comparative perspective. It highlights some of the more obvious and less recognized developments: in particular, special attention is given to the ways in which the new "national rock" developed and was ideologized in the past two decades. The relationship of this new music and the socioeconomic and political changes that have taken place since the establishment of democracy and multi-party politics is also considered.*

I'd love to change the world  
But I don't know what to do  
So I'll leave it up to you!

(Ten Years After, "I'd Love to Change the World," *A Space in Time*, 1971)

## Introduction

Those familiar with classic rock music of the early 1970s will recognize the song "I'd Love to Change the World" from the famed rock group Ten Years After. One reason for selecting the above motto for this essay is to emphasize the importance of examining rock music as a key locus of the concerns of generations experiencing political transitions with specific sentiments and ideologies of their own. Both popular and classical music (*komolyzene*, or "serious," as it is called in Hungarian) are laden with politics and can be re-

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cruited for specific ideological purposes.<sup>1</sup> These genres may either be part of the established or politically mainstream production and distribution system or exist beyond its purview. At the very least, since the 1960s rock music has been viewed both as a promoter and an instigator of social change, often with the support of the state—at times, indeed, quite contrary to its practices.<sup>2</sup> The case of rock music of Eastern and Central Europe has been analyzed by a number of scholars,<sup>3</sup> but relatively less attention has been paid to which direction it has taken since the implementation of capitalism.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is high time to ascertain the claims made by Peter Wicke that:

There are many lessons to learn from the events of 1989 which transformed Europe so fundamentally. One of them concerns the socio-po-

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- 1 For an excellent example, see Collin's study on a Belgrade radio station broadcasting music as a source of protest: Matthew Collin, *This is Serbia Calling* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2001). Similarly Brana Mijatović describes rock music as an oppositional force against Slobodan Milošević: "Throwing Stones at the System: Rock Music in Serbia during the 1990s," *Music and Politics* 2, no. 2 (2008) (<http://www.music.ucsb.edu/projects/musicandpolitics/archive/2008-2/mijatovic.html>; last accessed 23 September 2011).
  - 2 Susan Bleich, "Enjoyment and Consumption of Defiant Rock Music as a Function of Adolescent Rebelliousness," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 35, no. 3 (1991): 351–66; and Martin Cloonan, "Pop and the Nation-State: Towards a Theorisation," *Popular Music* 18, no. 2 (1999): 193–207.
  - 3 László Kürti, "Rocking the State: Youth Culture and Popular Music in Hungary in the 1980s," *East European Politics and Societies* 5, no. 3 (1994): 145–64; Tony Mitchell, "Mixing Pop and Politics: Rock Music in Czechoslovakia before and after the Velvet Revolution," *Popular Music* 11, no. 2 (1992): 187–204; Rajko Muršič, "Local Feedback: Slovene Popular Music between the Global Market and Local Consumption," *Beiträge zur Populärmusikforschung* 29/30 (2002): 125–48, and "Destinies of the Post-War Colonists in the Village of Trate: Unintended Phenomena in the Appropriation of Public Spaces," in *Social Networks in Movement: Time, Interaction, and Interethnic Spaces in Central Eastern Europe*, ed. D. Torsello and M. Pappová (Šamorín: Forum Minority Research Institute, 2003), 99–113; Sabrina P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation*, 2nd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), and Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Marc W. Steinberg, "When Politics Goes Pop: On the Intersections of Popular and Political Culture and the Case of Serbian Student Protests," *Social Movement Studies* 3, no. 1 (2004): 3–27; and Yngvar Bordewich Steinholt, *Rock in the Reservation: Songs from the Leningrad Rock Club* (Larchmont, NY: MMSMSP, 2005).
  - 4 See, for example, Cushman's study on the changing music scene in St. Petersburg after glasnost and perestroika: Thomas Cushman, *Notes from the Underground: Rock Music Counterculture in Russia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

litical dimensions of cultural forms such as popular music which are rarely displayed so graphically as had been the case in the events leading to the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.<sup>5</sup>

Just how musical culture has been transformed or alternately, how musical culture has influenced the nature and the content of transition are challenging questions to be answered.

Since 1989, Hungarian rock music, like its counterparts in the former Soviet bloc, has undergone a fashionable if questionable facelift. Apart from music of one kind or another, a generational art form functions to reflect as well as remedy societal ills, implying a conscious wish for improvement. This is the argument of its practitioners. As followers and prime movers of social change, artists and musicians negotiate and challenge prevailing attitudes toward culture and politics, believing that performance itself is tantamount to creating spaces of contestation.<sup>6</sup> This, I would argue, is even more the case for post-1989 Hungarian rock music. In my analysis I focused on the rock music scene specific to that country, analyzing some of the directions music has taken in the past twenty years. In order to begin to consider the way in which rock music developed and in particular deconstructing its new radical national aspects, I return to my original research on Hungarian youth and rock music, begun in the 1980s, and continuing well into the mid-1990s, and look at what took place recently in the Hungarian rock music culture.<sup>7</sup>

What is national rock and how is it understood in its native context? I want to argue here that in Hungary national rock music is closely connected with radicalized right-wing ideology, a phenomenon that has been observa-

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Wicke, "Popular Music and Processes of Social Transformation: The Case of Rock Music in Former East Germany," in *Music, Culture and Society in Europe*, ed. Paul Rutten (Brussels: European Music Office, 1996), 77.

<sup>6</sup> For generational attitudes during late socialism in Hungary, see Ildikó Szabó, *Pártállam gyermekei: Tanulmányok a magyar politikai szocializációról* (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 2000); for comparative European data, see Dorle Dracké, ed., *Jung und Wild: Zur kulturellen Konstruktion von Kindheit und Jugend* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1996); Ulla-Britt Engelbrektsson, *Tales of Identity: Turkish Youth in Gothenburg* (Stockholm: CEIFO Publications, 1996); and Marta Tienda and William Julius Wilson, eds., *Youth in Cities: A Cross-National Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> For historical discussions on Hungarian rock music, see Béla Szilárd Jávorszky and János Sebők, *A magyarrock története 1* (Budapest: Népszabadság Könyvek, 2005); Ádám Pozsonyi, *A Lenin-szobor helyén bombatölcsér tátong—A magyar punk története (1978–1990)*, 2nd ed. (Budapest: Mucska Könyvek, 2003); and János Sebők, *Rock a vasfüggöny mögött* (Budapest: GM és Társai, 2002). For English language analyses, see László Kürti, "How Can I Be a Human Being? Culture, Youth, and Musical Opposition in Hungary," in Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Rocking the State*, 55–72; and Anna Szemere, *Up from the Underground: The Culture of Rock Music in Post-socialist Hungary* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

ble since the mid-1990s. The sociologist Jens Rydgren argues that such ideology shares “an emphasis on ethno-nationalism rooted in myths about the distant past.”<sup>8</sup> All this then “is directed toward strengthening the nation, by making it more ethnically homogeneous and by returning to traditional values.”<sup>9</sup> To better represent Hungarian material, it will be necessary to see the connection of national rock to politics. It is also fundamental to first emphasize the differences between various strands of national rock (*nemzeti rock*) that all closely parallel Rydgren’s description for right-wing politics. There are those bands that specifically call their art national rock (for example, Fejbőr, Magna Hungaria, Szkítia, Turán), and those that follow a more mel-low line, referred to in Hungarian as “nemzeti érzelmű zenekarok” —such as Beatrice, Edda, P. Mobil, Kárpátia, and others—a notion we may simply translate as bands with sentimental national (or patriotic) rock. Both styles differ slightly from those extremist national rock known as national socialist, or ns-music bands, called variously in Hungarian as *ns-zenekar*, or alternately as *Hungarista zenekar*, such as Archivum, Division 88, Zsenti, and many more.<sup>10</sup> The relationship between these three kinds of musical styles is not easy to decipher for at times some of these groups may perform together at concerts and exhibit similar instrumentation and styles of behavior. To further complicate this relationship, many protagonists often use the expression “patriotic” or “radical” instead of “national” or “right-wing.”<sup>11</sup> Moreover, concerts by these bands are visited by the same followers, with the proviso that most bands—like their counterparts in the West—have their own hard-core fans. Even their connections, as well as their similarities to other musical styles (pop, folk, folk rock, world music, etc.), are difficult to delineate, but I will try to elicit some below when I discuss specific styles and bands. In general, I should mention that the way in which mainstream and its alternative versions (folk, ethnofolk, metal, techno, punk rock, reggae, etc.) differ from national rock may be witnessed in the way these bands are commercialized and presented by the media.

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<sup>8</sup> Jens Rydgren, “The Sociology of the Radical Right,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007): 241–62, at 242.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> This classification can also be found on the national rock homepage, <http://nemzetirock.startspot.nl/> and <http://nemzetirock.hu/> (last accessed 14 September 2011). The national rock magazine *Magyar Hang* (Hungarian Voice) also has a general category for national rock bands that includes all kinds of national, patriotic, and ns-rock bands. Since its first printed number in 2010, *Hungarian Voice* has already appeared a sixth time. Another ns-rock magazine *Véres Kard* (Bloody Sword) has already appeared six times, and also utilizes this elastic categorization.

<sup>11</sup> In Hungarian these terms are *nemzeti* and *patrióta*, but for those involved with national rock music there seems to be no difference between the two.

Since the 1990s two large music festivals have emerged in Hungary that concern us here: the Sziget Fesztival (Island Festival) on Margaret Island since 1993, and Magyar Sziget (Hungarian Island), organized in Verőce since 2001.<sup>12</sup> The former, catering to middle-class Hungarian youth as well as to foreigners, is for established, or alternative, up-and-coming bands from Hungary and abroad.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, the Hungarian Island rock festival is organized by the right-wing Sixty-Four Counties' Youth Movement (Hatvannégyszéki Ifjúsági Mozgalom, or HVIM for short),<sup>14</sup> with the explicit goal to provide an alternative to the "consumerist and neo-liberal" Sziget Festival.<sup>15</sup> By uniting working-class youth and those with patriotic (national) feelings, the Hungarian Island features only bands of the national rock and ns-rock music genre—both domestic and foreign. What is interesting, however, is that both festivals also feature revivalist folk music bands in their various programs, an aspect to which I will return later.

Besides the concert circuit, there are other aspects that separate national rock from its mainstream counterpart. In national rock, the lyrics, context, and message are more important than the music itself. Its ideological, often anarchic, underpinning is best summarized by four concepts: national freedom-fighting (or liberation) from communist and liberal (Jewish) domination, anti-establishmentarianism, ethno-nationalism, and mystic Christian-paganism. For the most extreme national rock style, ns-rock music, there are added elements: racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and anti-Roma sentiments. In terms of music and orchestration, with their rough and screeching sound, meager melody, screaming singing-style, and minimal instrumentalization (the most favored instruments are still the guitar, bass, and drum but

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<sup>12</sup> There is of course a third nationally/internationally recognized rock festival, called VOLT, organized in the western city of Sopron. Already in its 19th year, the festival is more mainstream—comparable to the Island Festival—and therefore I will not deal with it here.

<sup>13</sup> The Sziget Festival has been researched thoroughly by youth sociologists since the late 1990s; see Gábor Kálmán, *A középosztály szigete* (Szeged: Belvedere Meridionale Kiadó, 2000); Kálmán Gábor and Marianna Szemerszki, *Sziget fesztivál* (Budapest: EIKKA, 2007); and Béla Szilárd Jávorszky, *Nagy Sziget Könyv* (Budapest: Crossroad Records, 2002). For the Sziget Festival, see its homepage: <http://sziget.hu/fesztival> (last accessed 15 September 2011). A quick look at the 2011 program would make it obvious to anyone that the Sziget Festival is not for bands identified as national rock, either the more mellow or hard-core styles (see <http://sziget.hu/fesztival/programok/programok>, last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Information on the Hungarian Island can be accessed from its own homepage, <http://www.magyorsziget.hu/> (last accessed 15 September 2011). For the youth movement HVIM, its structure, program, and ideology, see its homepage, <http://www.hvim.hu/> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>15</sup> The week-long Sziget Festival in 2011 had almost 400,000 visitors; the Hungarian Sziget about 20,000.



never, for example, brass instruments), ns-bands are updated Hungarian representations of earlier skinhead and oi-music well known from the Euro-American tradition since the 1970s.

### Rock Music after the Fall of State Socialism

Apart from eccentric performers and the national rock introduced here, the majority of Hungarian pop artists today do not exhibit unique characteristics either in their music or performances and fit well within mainstream globally produced and consumed pop music.<sup>16</sup> Such conformity with international standards (equipment, instruments, sound and light effects, etc.) is not surprising given the fact that Anglo-American rock, in its manifest diversity, is seen as the leading force in the music industry by practitioners, producers, and audiences alike.

The history of Hungarian rock music since the 1960s has been inseparable from the state and the ideologically-determined culture industry. What Rajko Muršič writes about Slovene rock music is equally applicable to Hungarian music culture as well: “during the socialist era popular music was never ‘just music.’”<sup>17</sup> An “unofficial” music culture grew out of this stalemate in an attempt to subvert the “official.” Despite the upheaval of 1989–90 and all the economic reorganization and privatization of state companies, popular music today remains under the watchful eyes of the government and major media systems, as the viability of mainstream singers and bands depend largely on funding provided by the various governmental bodies as well as major corporations. Government support for new popular and rock music was rejuvenated in 2005 when the policy of PANKKK (Program for the National Contemporary Pop Music Culture) was introduced by the cultural ministry.<sup>18</sup> This major source of funding included production as well as distribution of first CDs, the organization of concerts, and invitations issued to performers from overseas. This last part, called Hungaro Connections, resulted in more than 300 concerts performed by Hungarian and overseas bands. This opportunity was of paramount importance, especially for those groups that could not manage on their own to travel outside Hungary. State funding was

<sup>16</sup> Jávorszky and Sebók, *A magyarrock története*, esp. chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> Rajko Muršič, “Punk Anthropology: From a Study of Local Slovene Alternative Rock Scene towards Partisan Scholarship,” in *Postsocialist Europe: Anthropological Perspectives from Home*, ed. László Kürti and Peter Skalnik (Oxford: Berghahn, 2009), 188–205, at 189.

<sup>18</sup> PANKKK was the brainchild of the agile minister of culture and political scientist, András Bozóki. Following new elections in 2006, he was no longer a member of (still left-liberal) government, although his program survived governmental reshuffling.

monitored through a national competition, a system well known for both its positive and negative aspects. If willing to enter into competition, bands had to submit two songs to be judged by the selection committee which administered funding. Underground or extreme bands and performers were not accepted. New bands, such as Korai Öröm (Premature Ejaculation), received a small sum to produce their album.<sup>19</sup> In 2007, altogether 227 bands applied for funding for a total of 72 concerts, with 25 bands and 17 programs actually receiving subsidies. The amount expended for each category, however, was limited to about 1,000 Euros, a sum that contributed to but did not fully cover expenses incurred either to produce a new CD or to manage concerts.

Even though this program catered to new and alternative bands, it was still “official,” having minimal impact either on commercialized pop music, or the thriving national rock. PANKKK ended abruptly in 2010. The newly privatized media of Hungary went hand-in-hand with this policy: only the new “official” music emanated from radios, television stations, and public spaces. Left largely on their own, it is not surprising then that alternative bands or sentimental national rockers have developed an anti-corporate and anti-state attitude. In contrast, one of the most popular music forms since the 1990s continues to be the genre called *lakodalmás rock*, a style played mostly at weddings, balls, and parties, with an up-to-date rendition of music by an electrified orchestra since the late 1970s.<sup>20</sup> While the pioneers (3x2, Csinnyságok) are now relegated to music history books, their new alteregos, referred to in Hungarian as *mulatós rock* (entertaining rock) or even *agrár rock* (agrarian rock), are thriving. The truth of the matter is that these bands and performers—many of whom are of Roma/Gypsy background (Bódi Guszti and the Fekete Szemek, Kadencia, Kaczor Feri, Csocsesz, Váradi Roma Café)—do not need any state funding at all; they are extremely successful on their own.<sup>21</sup> In the 1990s, there was a moment of hope that a new Gypsy generation of singers would arrive. One of the most promising formations was Black Train (Fekete vonat), formed in 1997. The other, Romantic, was extremely popular thanks to the sumptuous female voices and the eccentric

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<sup>19</sup> See the information on the PANKKK (still existing) homepage: <http://www.pankkk.hu/> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Rose Lange has documented this in her “Lakodalmás Rock and the Rejection of Popular Culture in Post-Socialist Hungary,” in *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Mark Slobin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 76–91.

<sup>21</sup> See some of the homepages of these entertainers, <http://www.csocsesz.hu/CSOCSESZ.HU/page01.html> and <http://www.bodiguszti.hu/main.php> (last accessed 10 September 2011). There are many others of lesser fame, but this music needs a separate treatment of its own.



male star (Győző Gáspár). However, neither group managed to stay together for more than a few years.<sup>22</sup>

### The Folk-Rock Connection

Nevertheless, what signaled the arrival of the new era was the popularization of peasant-revival style folk music and its elevation into rock music. To be sure, there was one pioneer, the Illés band in the 1960s, which brought a new voice into Beatles and Rolling Stones-style rock music by utilizing peasant melodies and instruments.<sup>23</sup> But the arrival of the new millennium was completely different, with such performers as Nox and Swetter emerging. Nox had represented Hungary at the Eurovision song contest in 2005, and had become famous by utilizing folk songs, using folk dance moves in their choreography, and folk instruments as rock music, something that Illés or his coeval rival, the Omega, never attempted. For Nox, it was the entire folk song that was needed, not just a line or verse; in addition, the staging had been enhanced by the presence of male dancers who performed stylish choreographies together with the lead female singer (Szilvia Szabó Péter) at the center for the entire show.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Nox became a household name not only in Hungary but in Europe as well, producing eight albums and garnering several music prizes in its seven-year life span. Some earlier folk music bands, such as Swetter from the northern city of Miskolc, have shown greater resilience. Established already in 1987, it began as a run-of-the-mill revivalist folk music ensemble only to disappear after a few years. However, in 2007 Swetter was reorganized to include many of the same musicians but with a differ-

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<sup>22</sup> LL Junior is László Csaba Lesi who has managed to start a solo career resulting in him being a mega-star on his own after the break-up of Fekete Vonat. I have analyzed the story of Gáspár Győző in my "Images of Roma in Post-1989 Hungarian Media," in *Comparative Hungarian Cultural Studies*, ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise O. Vasvari (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011), 296–307.

<sup>23</sup> The story of the Illés band is described in a book-length study by Mihály L. Kocsis, *Illés: Énekelt történelem* (Budapest: Zikkurat, 1999). The band's homepage is <http://www.zikkurat.hu/illes/> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

<sup>24</sup> The band's dismal performance in the Eurovision song contest resulted in its eventual downfall; the lead dancer had a nervous breakdown, and the female lead left the band and moved to Australia for a while. The band's homepage was [www.nox.hu](http://www.nox.hu), but after the band's break-up it was taken off the internet. The Eurovision song contest is not without its problems; see Ivan Raykoff and Robert D. A. Tobin, *Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 2006).

ence: now under the name Vastaghúros (Thick Stringed), it more closely resembles a heavy metal band with a unique folk music base.<sup>25</sup>

I must stress, however, that bands such as Nox and Swetter could not rise to stardom had it not been for the emergence of hard-core revivalist experimentation with neo-folk music since the late 1970s. After an initial wait-and-see period by the state, from the mid-1980s the elevation of traditional peasant music into the national limelight has continuously been at the forefront of national festivals, political rallies, and media events.<sup>26</sup> As I have shown in an earlier study,<sup>27</sup> authentic “dance-house” (táncház) style revivalist urban folk music caters to audiences different from those listening to heavy, mellow, punk-rock, and other underground/experimental styles, but slowly this music has been more and more identified with a revived sense of national identity.<sup>28</sup> Working-class youth in cities and throughout the countryside have found their own outlets in their own musical subculture outside the mainstream commercialized milieu. However, it needs to be stressed that whether folkloristic revival music for educated urban and rural youth, or more alternative metal or punk rock for working-class youth, both orientations have been popularized out of proportion in the past two decades, contributing to their elevation into both the mainstream as well as national rock outside the

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<sup>25</sup> See the group's homepage at <http://www.vastaghuros.hu/index.htm> (last accessed 2 September 2011).

<sup>26</sup> This has been a global phenomenon since the 1980s; see Donna Buchanan, *Performing Democracy: Bulgarian Music and Musicians in Transition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Timothy Cooley, *Making Music in the Polish Tatras: Tourists, Ethnographers, and Mountain Musicians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Hilary Pilkington, “Reconfiguring the ‘West’: Style and Music in Russian Youth Cultural Practice,” in *Looking West? Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Cultures*, ed. Hilary Pilkington, Elena Omel’chenko, Moya Flynn, and Uliana Bliudina (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 165–200; and Marc Shade-Poulsen, “The Power of Love: Rai Music and Youth in Algeria,” in *Youth Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Vered Amit-Talai and Helena Wulff (London: Routledge, 1995), 81–113.

<sup>27</sup> I have described the dance-house music and culture in greater detail elsewhere and I need not repeat it here; see *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), especially Chapter 6.

<sup>28</sup> The interconnectedness of nationality, identity, and folk music has been well illustrated by, among others, Christopher Dunn and Charles A. Perrone, eds., *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); Alejandro L. Madrid, *Sounds of the Nation: Music, Culture, and Ideas in Post-revolutionary Mexico* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Laura J. Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004); and Jane C. Sugarman, *Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

subcultural sphere. To be sure, youth of the 1970s and 1980s, who grew up with such sounds, are by now part of the middle-age bracket.<sup>29</sup>

A characteristic feature of the folk revival musical scene is a backward turn from classic 18th- and 19th-century popular music, or urban style Gypsy music.<sup>30</sup> *Táncház zene* (dance-house music) has earned international recognition for Hungary and has experienced a remarkable renaissance after the 1990s as many revivalist ensembles underwent reorganization. For instance, the Téka, Méta, Dűvő, and Ökrös bands continue to take pride in being more faithful to village tradition than others in the folk music industry.<sup>31</sup> Csaba Ökrös, associated lately with the Téka Band, is a famed violinist with many albums to his credit; in 2002, Rounder Records compiled an impressive selection of Transylvanian village music played by him.<sup>32</sup>

As it was, during the early 1980s, few neo-folkloric bands (the exceptions being Muzsikás or Téka) experimented with world music style; ten years later, their number had grown considerably, and today has multiplied manifold.<sup>33</sup> Originally, a champion of authentic peasant music, by 2008 Muzsikás won the Womex prize, one of the most important international awards in world music. This was the first occasion during the nine years of the award's existence that a European band had been honored in this way.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, Muzsikás was also a featured attraction at the Sziget Festival in Budapest in 2011, an honor that also went to the Csík Ensemble, Kerekes Band, and Felix Lajkó, the virtuoso violinist.<sup>35</sup>

This development includes the emergence of new bands as well as the rejuvenation of established ones, with the proviso that better instrumenta-

<sup>29</sup> This seems to parallel data described for youth culture in Ireland; see Michele Dillon, "Youth Culture in Ireland," *The Economic and Social Review* 15, no. 3 (1984): 153–72, at 163.

<sup>30</sup> For an introduction about the distinction between urban style 19th-century popular music and true peasant or folk music in English, see Zoltán Kodály, *Folk Music of Hungary* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 14–15; and Bálint Sárosi, *Folk Music: Hungarian Musical Idiom* (Budapest: Corvina, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> *Téka*, *Méta*, and *Dűvő* are archaic terms: carved wooden chest (*téka*), ballgame played by children in two teams (*méta*), and a special rhythmic form of accompaniment in stringed village bands (*dűvő*).

<sup>32</sup> See the band and the profile of Csaba Ökrös, [www.tekaband.hu](http://www.tekaband.hu) (last accessed 17 September 2011).

<sup>33</sup> For a similar neo-folkloric or ethno-jazz musical development in Bulgaria, see Claire Levy, "Folk in Opposition? Wedding Bands and the New Developments in Bulgarian Popular Music," *Music and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2009) (<http://www.music.ucsb.edu/projects/musicandpolitics/archive/2009-1/levy.html>, last accessed 10 September 2011).

<sup>34</sup> The *Muzsikás* can be found at <http://www.muzsikas.hu/index2h.htm> (last accessed 1 September 2011).

<sup>35</sup> See Lajkó's homepage, <http://www.lajkofelix.hu/hu/bio> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

tion, amplification, and staging are now expected from all. An impressive array of vocalists and instrumentalists has been discovered: for example, the Kerekes band, founded in 1996 playing in a style they refer to as “ethno funk.” Another excellent band, Zuboly, produced its unique CD in 2007, and Neofolk, founded in the southern city of Pécs in 2007, is special for its lead singer is Judit Bonyár, a cellist, who provides a unique sound for the band’s repertoire. Besh O DroM, well-known since 1999, with three well known CDs, already has an international reputation for being the number one representative of the genre known as “urban folk,” a mixture of Balkan, Middle Eastern, and Gypsy sounds but rarely in combination with Hungarian folk music.<sup>36</sup> The rich musical heritage of the Balkans and the Middle East has other acclaimed practitioners as well: Balkan Fanatik, for instance, has been performing since 2002, and was awarded the best world music album a year later.<sup>37</sup> The Vujicsics Ensemble is recognized beyond Hungarian borders as an excellent revivalist band of Balkan music, together with that of Makám which also plays in that style.<sup>38</sup>

Another remarkable rise of stardom concerns the Csík band, founded in 1988 in the city of Kecskemét. The rise in their popularity reveals the way in which established folk music bands progress to the more fashionable world-music style. The Csík band, with its talented leader János Csík, started out as a revivalist dance-house music band, switching to a stronger pop sound when it became involved with the rock band Kispál és a Borz (Kispál and the Badger) for a few gigs in 2000. Afterwards, the band gradually altered its repertoire by singing numbers more appropriate for a rock band. This combination led to a unique style, establishing the Csík band as one of Hungary’s leading popular folk-rock bands from the countryside. A similar history has characterized the Ghymes band, a formation that took its name from a historical region in Slovakia. The band has been playing folk music with modern orchestration and world music beats for more than two decades. This orientation has other pioneers: Kormorán has been playing since 1976 and pro-

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<sup>36</sup> See the bands: <http://kerekesband.hu/>, <http://www.beshodrom.hu/>, <http://www.zuboly.com/index.html>, <http://www.neofolk.hu/swf/starteng.htm> (last accessed 10–12 September 2011). The British music critic Andrew Cranshow wrote in 2001 of Besh O DroM’s album in *fRoots* that it “is yet further proof of the power of middle and eastern European and Gypsy music to spread and metamorphose, gathering up whatever sticks to it to make modern wide-audience music of dazzling drive and color.” Reprinted on-line at <http://www.cloudvalley.com/reviews/REVBeshOkros.htm> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>37</sup> For the band, its story, and sound, see <http://www.balkanfanatik.com/> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>38</sup> On Makám see the homepage, <http://www.makam.hu/2/> (last accessed 22 September 2011).

duced more than two dozen albums.<sup>39</sup> Others have followed in the line of national sentimental rock: Csillagösvény (Star Path) is an up-to-date version of revivalist folk music with many albums and plenty of songs on YouTube.<sup>40</sup> One of the best-known bands working outside of Hungary is Transylmania (an obvious wordplay on Transylvania).<sup>41</sup>

As it is, the folk revival movement reveals remarkable diversity as some performers are intent on combining old-fashioned village music, while others are more intent on experimenting by including authentic instruments and local singing dialects. Such is the case with the Szászcsávás orchestra from Transylvania, Romania, a group that has by now achieved international fame for their local traditional stringed instrumental music.<sup>42</sup> There are plenty of other bands experimenting with fusion, jazz, and techno styles, such as the Dresch Quartett, an avant-garde jazz orchestra with folk music base.<sup>43</sup> The Budapest Klezmer Band is notable for its rearrangements of Central Eastern European Klezmer music, with a possible crossover to classical music, since 1990.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, musicians have also discovered the refreshing possibilities of the new Irish folk-pop music and dance popularized by Michael Flatley and Riverdance, with many followers in Hungary.<sup>45</sup> Now there are about two dozen bands in Hungary specializing in Irish/Celtic/Scottish rock music, the most famous among them is MÉZ, established well before Riverdance in 1988, and still popular nowadays.<sup>46</sup>

In the revivalist folk music genre, the growth of revivalist Gypsy bands stands out as one of the major novelties since the early 1990s. In contrast to its 19th-century romantic urban musical antecedent,<sup>47</sup> revivalist Gypsy folk mu-

<sup>39</sup> See the group's homepage: <http://kormoranfolk.hu/audvid.html> (last accessed 24 August 2011).

<sup>40</sup> See <http://csillagosveny-zene.gportal.hu/> (last accessed 12 September 2011).

<sup>41</sup> See <http://www.transylmania.hu/menu.htm> (last accessed 12 September 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Szászcsávás (Ceuas in Romanian) is a village of 900 inhabitants whose Gypsy musicians have travelled the world over performing authentic village music. For the past few summers, a dance and folk music camp was organized for folk music lovers in that settlement. See <http://www.szaszcsavas.hu/> (last accessed 12 September 2011).

<sup>43</sup> For reviews on the band's albums, see <http://www.sohajkeseru.hu/?page=kezdolap> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

<sup>44</sup> See <http://www.budapestklezmer.hu/> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

<sup>45</sup> See Helena Wulff, *Dancing at the Crossroads: Memory and Mobility in Ireland* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 110–13.

<sup>46</sup> See the band's homepage: <http://www.mez.hu/flash.html> (last accessed 10 September 2011).

<sup>47</sup> In Hungarian this style is called "coffee-house gypsy music" (*kávéházi cigányzene*) or "Hungarian song" (*magyar nóta*). Popularized by Franz Liszt in the middle of the 19th century, it is not comparable to tribal Gypsy/Romany music; see on this Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music* (Budapest: Corvina, 1978).



sic uses electronic instruments, guitars, and every conceivable technological aid, occasionally incorporating the water-jug (*kanna*), spoons (*kanál*), and widely known mouth-music (*szájbőgőzés*).<sup>48</sup> This style can be directly connected to a 1993 talent show that recognized, apart from a few earlier groups (Kaly Jag, Ando Drom, Romani Rota), a number of new bands, catapulting them into national and international fame (Etnorom, Amaro Suno, Kanizsa Csillagai). Kanizsa Csillagai (Stars of Kanizsa), a large family ensemble from the city of Kanizsa, has been in existence since that historic date and has been able to produce five albums so far.<sup>49</sup> Not unlike the Stars of Kanizsa, the Szilvász Gypsy Folk Band is another revivalist folk orchestra utilizing authentic Gypsy/Romany music with an up-to-date sound.<sup>50</sup> Romano Drom (Gypsy Way) released its successful album *Ando Foro* in 2002, while Parno Graszt (White Horse) was chosen to close the finale at the European Festival of Intercultural Dialogue in Belgium in 2008.<sup>51</sup> The latter band is notable in that the group hails not from Budapest, where most of the revivalist artists reside, but from Szabolcs-Szatmár County, one of the poorest eastern regions of Hungary. These achievements indicate the ability of talented performers to successfully integrate authentic folk music with more popular world music arrangements. What is significant is that while there is a relative lack of male Gypsy singers, there are plenty of noted instrumentalists (the virtuoso cymbalom player Kálmán Balogh being one of them).

One area where the new winds of change cannot be felt in post-socialist, or as some prefer to call it post-authoritarian, Hungary is the stubborn gender asymmetry prevailing in rock music. Even though female performers are numerous compared to their male colleagues, with a few exceptions such as Magdi Ruzsa and Ibolya Oláh, most have been relegated to secondary status.<sup>52</sup> Just like before 1990, female bands did not create a lasting stage presence, in contrast to their female colleagues in the pop music industry; none of the female rock bands from the 1980s survived the tumultuous decade following 1989. With the introduction of punk, rap, hip-hop, and fusion into

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<sup>48</sup> Despite the inclusion of modern instruments and electrification, the use of spoons, water-buckets, and mouth-music is seen by musicians as the most authentic way of expressing Gypsiness in music. Akin to scat singing, Gypsy mouth-music is rhythmic nonsense syllables that originally accompanied dancing.

<sup>49</sup> The group was also featured at the 2011 Island Festival, <http://kanizsacsillagai.mindenkilapja.hu/> (last accessed 14 September 2011).

<sup>50</sup> See the band's homepage, <http://www.szilvasigipsy.hu/> (last accessed 12 September 2011).

<sup>51</sup> See the group's homepage: <http://www.parnograszt.com/cimlap> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Magdi Ruzsa and Ibolya Oláh are two of the most famous discoveries of 2004 and 2005; Kati Wolf appeared on a talent show in 2010 and was elected to represent Hungary in the 2011 Eurovision song contest.



Hungary, several women's bands emerged. However, in 2004 the four-member Asylum and, two years later, Buttercup and Sugarpress appeared, but the lifespan of each was short. A few women who managed some sort of cult status did so by maintaining a steady presence as underground stars. One is Tereskova, a performance artist and exhibitionist whose rise to fame had to do with songs such as "My Cunt is Parfumy."<sup>53</sup> Bori Péterfy is another notable singer usually billed with her own group, the Love Band. They are not, however, part of the national rock scene, a terrain reserved for either some folk singers or a few select women such as Barbara Sárdy, who manage to stay in the limelight because of other appearances in the theatre or the arts scene of Hungary.<sup>54</sup>

This gender imbalance is missing from the revivalist folk music industry altogether. Surely, the names of Márta Sebestyén and Irén Lovász must ring familiar to Western ears. Beginning their careers in the 1970s, and having been active ever since, both acquired international reputation. Márta Sebestyén achieved world fame by lending her voice for a folk song in the 1996 Oscar-winning film *The English Patient*. She also participated in the Deep Forest album *Boheme* in 1995 with several songs on that album winning a Grammy Award for best world music a year later. Travelling world-wide and singing with the revivalist Muzsikás Ensemble, it is rather surprising that she produced her only solo album as late as 2008. Nevertheless, she has been recognized as Hungary's number one female vocalist, receiving the much-coveted state Kossuth Prize in 1999.<sup>55</sup>

Her colleague, Irén Lovász, born outside the nation's capital, holds a PhD in cultural anthropology and, in contrast to Márta Sebestyén, has managed to produce 13 solo albums altogether.<sup>56</sup> Following in their footsteps are their younger cohorts: Mónika Miczura, Ágnes Szalóky, and Bea Palya, vocalists whose voices represent interesting experiments with revivalist and world music combinations.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Tereskova's ironic, often obscene lyrics can be found on YouTube and read: <http://www.zeneszoveg.hu/egyuttes/374/tereskova-dalszovegei.html> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

<sup>54</sup> See her homepage, <http://www.sardybarbara.hu/> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Márta Sebestyén's homepage is <http://sebestyenmarta.hu/> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Lovász' homepage is <http://www.lovasziren.hu/hun/index.html> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>57</sup> The three singers can be found at: <http://www.mitsoura.net/#/p=theband&m=0>, <http://www.szalokiagi.hu/index-main.html>, and [www.palyabea.hu](http://www.palyabea.hu) (last accessed 18 September 2011).

### Death-Metal, Alternative-Sound, and Cultic Music: Rock with a New Face?

Even a cursory glance at the current scene will reveal that certain bands, despite their foreign (English) names, consist of Hungarian musicians. Although there is not sufficient space here to present them in detail, I will highlight areas that may be of interest for comparative purposes and to reveal the connection between mainstream, alternative, and national rock music. The band Yellow Spots from Budapest, established in 2003, has classified itself as playing punk swing. Its humorous lyrics and reliance on brass instruments undoubtedly qualifies it as a unique experimental rock band.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Trousers, appearing on the national charts with the English-language hit song "Blood for You," has established itself as a leading force in the independent and garage-band category.<sup>59</sup> Although they may represent only a fraction of the music industry's output, alternative bands enjoy popularity thanks to clever and even shocking parodies of mainstream rock music and humorous lyrics (Heaven Street Seven [HS7], Kaukázus, Magashegyi Underground, 30Y, Vad Fruttik). Yava, a band appearing in 2008, combines heavy metal, garage, folk music and world music instrumentation together with esoteric Hungarianism; it is in fact one of the groups who have self-titled themselves as "Hungarground bands."

New rock bands are also known for amalgamating folk music as well as Gypsy/Roma and Latin musical elements (Kistehén, Quimby).<sup>60</sup> What is characteristic for most is not only a sense of new irony but a successful assimilation of fashionable international styles (funk, fusion, punk, reggae, ska, techno, etc.) as well. Hip-hop, rap, and folk music, for instance, have made Goulash Exotica, a fashionable band with many hit songs such as "Green Marty" ("Zöld Martzi") and "Outlaw Visit" ("Betyárvizit").<sup>61</sup> Another popular band well known for its sense of biting sarcasm is Belga. In one song, "Hungarian National Hip-Hop" ("Magyar nemzeti hip-hop"), it turns a 19th-century national poem into a critique of nationalism and copy-cat contemporary rap music. They sing: "What does the Hungarian nation want?" but the answer is "Hungarian-style rap music." In another verse, "Foreign music is pouring

<sup>58</sup> Some of the songs of the group can be downloaded from the home page: <http://www.yellowspots.hu/index.php?lang=hun&menu=mozgo&kat=0> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Trousers is definitely a low-profile band; it only has two albums published so far and does not care to have its own homepage.

<sup>60</sup> Kistehén (Little Cow) actually started out as a musical prank. "I am a little cow sitting on the top of the tree," reads the lyric that became an overnight national hit. The group has been successful ever since producing its first major CD in 2006.

<sup>61</sup> The songs are on YouTube: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=uhGamCASCJw> and <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=krAlrfOlc-Y&feature=related> (last accessed 17 September 2011).

from the media, is this why we came from Levedia?"<sup>62</sup> Levédia was the pre-historic homeland of the 8th- and 9th-century Hungarian tribes before they entered the Carpathian Basin. This hit song by Belga was also featured in Miklós Jancsó's 2002 film *Get Up Buddy, Don't Sleep (Kelj fel komám)*. Some of their lyrics could never appear on CDs due to their extreme pornographic content. For example, in the song "One-Two-Three": "Smoky, dirty liquid is pouring on your clitoris, come with me to curse around the city of Miskolc." In another song, "That's the Problem" ("Az a baj"), the lyrics are more acceptable although undeniably sexist, which is a constant preoccupation of male-centered rock: "If I grab you, if I rape you, that's your problem / If I only play with you, that's your problem." Belga, described by some critics as a "national joke," considers its music, not without some humor, to be a genuine example of the genre "national hip-hop" sui generis.<sup>63</sup>

Heavy metal and its more extreme version, death metal, also have large followings no doubt because of their connection with the national rock sub-culture. This is certainly the case with groups such as Malediction from the city of Komló, which produced its CD *Reductio ad Absurdum* in early 2009.<sup>64</sup> Another noted heavy metal band, Superbutt, quickly established itself after it was formed in 2000, thanks in part to the many clips it posted on YouTube.<sup>65</sup> One of the notable pioneers of the genre, Pokolgép (Hell Machine), in existence since 1980, pales in comparison to such extreme metal groups. Some groups even managed to negotiate foreign contracts; Pushing Onwards, Hungary's well-known death ns-metal band, published its *Tradition of War* album entirely in English with Opos Records in Germany.<sup>66</sup>

The mixture of heavy metal and skinhead music has easily been incorporated within both national sentiment rock and national rock. For the national

<sup>62</sup> Belga's music can be found on YouTube with several versions of "National Hip-Hop." For example, <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=Z-gz7aqRkLY&NR=1> (last accessed 13 September 2011). The lyrics can be read at <http://www.zeneszoveg.hu/dalszoveg/30793/belga/magyar-nemzeti-hip-hop-zeneszoveg.html> (last accessed 12 September 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Belga has an eccentric homepage as well; see [www.belga.hu](http://www.belga.hu) (last accessed 4 September 2011). In Poland, the category of patriotic hip-hop is described by Renata Pasternak-Mazur, "The Black Muse: Polish Hip-Hop as the Voice of 'New Others' in the Post-Socialist Transition," *Music and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2009) (<http://www.music.ucsb.edu/projects/musicandpolitics/archive/2009-1/pasternak.html>, last accessed 10 September 2011).

<sup>64</sup> The Hungarian band should not be confused with the popular progressive British death metal group from the early 1990s also named Malediction, although I imagine the two would make a fine pair on the stage.

<sup>65</sup> See the group's homepage: [http://superbutt.net/index\\_m4\\_promopics.html](http://superbutt.net/index_m4_promopics.html) (last accessed 20 September 2011).

<sup>66</sup> Samples of this mixture of death metal and ns-rock can be heard at Lel's homepage, <http://www.lel-records.com/viewtermekek.php?lang=hu&id=479> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

sentimental heavy metal, the best illustrations are P. Mobil, Beatrice, and Edda, all dating from the 1970s. In Edda's 2005 album, *God on the Way (Isten az úton)*, the band protests against the socialist-liberal government and identifies with the youth of the street:

It's enough, it's enough, no more truce,  
 It's enough, the street is calling,  
 Help the future generation (we'll be there, don't worry),  
 Come with us, for the future generation.<sup>67</sup>

Nothing shows the transformation of metal rock into national sentimental rock better than that of the musician-singer, Feró Nagy. Once a unique persona in Hungary's cultic underground music scene, he is a performer who turned into a right-wing media celebration after 1990.<sup>68</sup> Nagy, the former leader of the hard-rock Beatrice, continues to play national rock, although his youthful rebelliousness has vanished and his original liberal world-view metamorphized into nationalistic/patriotic ideology.<sup>69</sup>

Another band, Zsenti, has had a similar transformation. Zsenti (a name that plays on the sounding of a Chinese communist newspaper) and its leader, the fifty-year old Géza Kovács, have a fascinating story to tell about the transformation of punk into right-wing extremist music. Founded in 1987, the band from Esztergom immediately posed a problem for the leadership. After only a year of indulging in anti-state lyrics, its leader was offered a choice: either go to prison or dismantle his group. He opted for the latter. After 1990, he confessed about being forced to become a police informer in order to survive; later he relocated to Budapest, a move facilitated by the changing political climate in Hungary. In 2007, however, he decided to re-group his band under the same name, openly declaring "strong patriotic sentiments" for all band members.<sup>70</sup> His new rise to fame is all the more ironic since the man on whom he was required to spy (Tamás Meggyes)

<sup>67</sup> For Edda see, [www.edda.hu](http://www.edda.hu); for the lyrics, <http://www.zeneszoveg.hu/album/364/edda-muvek/isten-az-uton-album.html> (last accessed 22 September 2011).

<sup>68</sup> Although he is not like Feró Nagy, and not part of national rock, I must mention a genuine maverick of Hungarian rock, someone who has not changed ideological mantles but remained true to his artistic—and *épater les bourgeois*—world-view, László Hobo Földes. His style is best summarized with a line of his song "Farewell Letter," "I am a safety valve on the ass of the country." For his homepage, see <http://www.hobo.hu/index.php> (last accessed 22 September 2010).

<sup>69</sup> For his story, see his website, <http://www.nagyfero.hu/index2.html> (last accessed 14 September 2011). Nagy can be best compared to the Croatian Marko Perković-Thompson whose background and far-right-wing-inspired music recalls Hungarian national rock, especially that of Kárpátia and Beatrice.

<sup>70</sup> On Zsenti, see <http://www.friweb.hu/zsenti/zenekar.html> (last accessed 20 September 2011).

during the late 1980s was elected mayor of Esztergom in 1999.<sup>71</sup> Kovács now is also a leader of the extreme right-wing Hungarian Defense Movement (Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom, or MÖM); however, due to his personal history, other right-wing extremist groups such as Hungarian Resistance (Magyar Ellenállás) and Kurucinfo.hu have vilified him as a traitor.<sup>72</sup>

Other former underground bands have followed a somewhat similar trajectory. C.A.F.B. (its name refers to the four musical notes) has been well known in the alternative scene since 1994, the date it was established. Infused with earlier punk styles, its characteristic songs have been combined to create a crashing metallic sound even though the musicians claim that their music is “rock with a human face” and nothing more (in what is clearly a satirical reference to the previous political system’s claim to represent “socialism with a human face”). While some tunes may be ironic, all are rough and never boring: “Everything is beautiful, everything is good, when you’re covered by the black snow,” is a line from their hit song “Black Snow.” In “My Blood Pulls Me Down,” they express the customary bleak take on life typical of punk lyrics: “My blood pulls me down, deep underground / My blood pulls me down / Maybe this is my end.” In the song “Budapest,” the group sings of the capital’s mix of people and their hopelessness: “Yesterday’s poverty is seen everywhere / Tomorrow’s people are playing with their life.” They also frequently rearrange earlier “classic” Hungarian underground punk numbers from the 1980s such as those of Mos-oi (Smile), ETA, Európa Kiadó (European Publishing), Kretens (The Cretens), and Sikátor (Allyway).<sup>73</sup>

Extremism is clearly not only the prerogative of national rock of the extremist kind as a number of heavy metal bands have also swung to the right. Some bands have been regularly included in national rock concerts, such as Edda, P. Mobil, Karthago, or Kárpátia. The latter, formed in 2003 and named after the Carpathian Mountains, performs typical heavy-metal rock with lyrics that some may consider patriotic; other lyrics, however, are unabashedly nationalistic and xenophobic.<sup>74</sup> The group is credited with writing the marching song (“Szebb Jövőt” in Hungarian, or “Brighter Future”) for the paramil-

<sup>71</sup> On the political career of Tamás Meggyes, see his personal information on [http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meggyes\\_Tam%C3%A1s](http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meggyes_Tam%C3%A1s) (last viewed 17 September 2011). After the local elections in 2010, Meggyes retained a seat in the city council of Esztergom. His political role can be seen on his own homepage, <http://meggyestamas.hu/> (last accessed 17 September 2011).

<sup>72</sup> See the discussion at <http://maghar.gportal.hu/gindex.php?pg=21156448&nid=4644066> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>73</sup> For information on the band and its music, see <http://www.cafb.hu/tortenet.html> (last accessed 14 September 2011).

<sup>74</sup> The elevation of heavy metal into pop music in Great Britain is discussed by Benjamin Earl, “Metal Goes ‘Pop’: The Explosion of Heavy Metal into the Mainstream,” in *Heavy Metal Music in Britain*, ed. Gerd Bayer (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 33–53.

itary Hungarian Guard in 2007. Despite its melodic line and better-than-average orchestration, there can be no doubt about Kárpátia's extreme-right message:

Those with the throbbing Hungarian heart  
 Those with the heroes' blood in their veins,  
 Those should be among us,  
 Only those you can trust.

That Kárpátia's music is flowing with national sentiment is no secret. In one of its songs, Transylvania, a contested terrain between Hungary and Romania, is mentioned with an obvious irredentist message:

A small village in the Gyergyó Mountains tells a tale,  
 Black and Red flag is blowing in the wind,  
 A silk flag says it all: Freedom,  
 Oh, the freedom.<sup>75</sup>

In combination with heavy metal and punk, some performers aim at representing a longer, mythical view of Hungarian history using folk revival music in a special brand called "Scythian pop" or "Scythian rock." This term refers to a historical authentication musical style that does not shy away from experimentation with Hungarian folk songs and folk instruments with an updated rock or heavy metal sound.<sup>76</sup> For them, their music does not imitate peasant culture described in 19th- or 20th-century folkloristic collections but mortgaged to the prehistoric and mystical past where shamanistic religious performances were in vogue.<sup>77</sup> While many of its earlier performers are now to be found only in history books, some have survived. Among them László Waszlavik Gazember and Attila Grandpierre should be mentioned, though for different reasons. Gazember (this stage name means "impostor") has become perhaps one of the best-known figures of the alternative musical culture playing folk rock and national sentiment rock. In fact, he was one of the first performers who organized the so-called "national rock festival" at the

<sup>75</sup> All lyrics of Kárpátia can be read on the band's homepage: <http://www.karpatiazenekar.hu/kottak/igyvoltigylesz.php> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, the homepage of the Szkítia rock band, <http://szkitiarock.hu/partnerek.php> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>77</sup> I have written on the emergence of the cultic milieu in Hungary after 1989, "Neo-Shamanism, Psychic Phenomena, and Media Trickery: Cultic Differences in Hungary," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, Jeffrey Kaplan and Helen Löw, eds. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 110–38. The connection between neo-paganism and national rock can also be witnessed on the concert list of bands on the homepage: <http://magyartaltos.info/index.php/hirek/zenakarok-fellepesei> (last accessed 19 September 2011).



beginning of the 1990s. Unfortunately, he has not been particularly successful in promoting himself and the many groups he has created since 1980 when he started his career in the rock business.<sup>78</sup> Self-titled as “a European shamanistic rocker,” Gazember was a member of the famed hard rock band Beatrice and the Galloping Coroners in 1980–82. Since that time, he has performed primarily with his own band; his witty songs and anti-government stance, as well as his various female vocalists, have elevated his music into the respected arena of the alternative musical genre. Yet thanks in part to his beliefs and actions, Gazember’s reputation has not been tarnished today, being still active outside the mainstream pop industry. Some of his songs, such as the early 1980s hit “Hello, Here’s Budakalász” and the 2005 “March of Kosuth Square,” are hailed as enduring symbols of his uniqueness.<sup>79</sup>

Another veteran of the early underground scene has been Attila Grandpierre of Galloping Coroners fame.<sup>80</sup> He got rid of his punk persona and nowadays enjoys a more mystic style with his new band, Galloping Golden Stag (*Vágtázó Csodaszarvas*).<sup>81</sup> Today, as in the era of the Galloping Coroners, his stage performances are punctuated by semi-hallucinatory texts and bold outbursts of trance-like states all to the sound of electrified folk rock music. Building on his past experiences though, Grandpierre’s songs, with texts that praise Hungarian prehistoric culture, may well fit within the framework of revivalist mystic folk music as well as rock with national sentiments.<sup>82</sup>

There are other versions of rock mixing punk, metal, national sentiments, and hip-hop that are fashionable among music lovers. *Fürgerókalábak* (Speedy Fox Feet) has made a name for itself by playing punk rock, similarly to *Hatóságilag Tilos* (Legally Forbidden), a band existing between 1996–2007 and rejuvenated from time to time. *Rózsaszínű Pitbull* (Pink Pitbull) is an al-

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<sup>78</sup> Waszlavik has a middle name, Gazember, meaning “impostor”; he has taken pride in his self-administered nickname and attempts whatever may be necessary on stage to live up to this characterization.

<sup>79</sup> See <http://waszlavik.uw.hu/index.html> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

<sup>80</sup> See <http://vhk.mediastorm.hu/indexhu.html> (last accessed 11 September 2011).

<sup>81</sup> For Attila Grandpierre and his new group, visit [http://www.vagtazocsodaszarvas.hu/index\\_en.html](http://www.vagtazocsodaszarvas.hu/index_en.html) (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>82</sup> That there is a Christian religious and mystical connection to a pseudo-historical paganism can be best witnessed by the growing number of internet sites, for example, <http://www.taltos7.hu/>, <http://l88.freedom.hu/kezdolap>, and <http://www.aranytarsoly.hu> (last accessed 11 September 2011). For those following such musical culture, clothing and jewelry known from archeological discoveries of the period of the conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Hungarian tribes around the eighth to tenth centuries AD have been refashioned to wear. Numerous shops and internet sites are available for customers, for example, <http://www.turania.hu/catalog/index.php> or <http://magyarokforrasa.hu/>, among others (last accessed 12 September 2011).

ternative punk rock band popular for its witty, often sexist, or angry lyrics (for example, “Don’t smoke grass because you will be like I am,” “Death to all politicians”).<sup>83</sup> *Hungarica* (formed in 2006) plays national metal rock;<sup>84</sup> FankaDeli uses rap, hip-hop, and remix styles with customary national rock lyrics.<sup>85</sup>

Korai Öröm (Premature Ejaculation), formed in 1990, is an extremely popular band on the Hungarian concert circuit (having produced ten CDs thus far), and was voted the best group for 1998–99. In the course of one German tour, the group was described as a notable Hungarian punk band (*punk aus Ungarn*). Its instrumentalization and more modest lyrics, however, are in line with those mellowed post-punk and techno-folk rock genres, especially since it labels itself as a “progressive techno-trance-ethno” music group.<sup>86</sup> Punk music has, after all, changed since the mid-1990s, following international trends; however, there are groups that continue to play within the established (“old school”) skinhead/punk music genre.<sup>87</sup>

### Hard-Core National Rock: Enter the Ns-Rock

What separates the bands noted above from the hard-core national ns-bands is that the latter openly embrace inter-ethnic hostility and racist hatred from inter-war Nazism as well as Hungarism.<sup>88</sup> Hungarism is a version of National Socialism developed by Ferenc Szálasi, the Arrow Cross party chief, who is today identified by ns-music protagonists as their hero.<sup>89</sup> Racial purity and

<sup>83</sup> See the band’s homepage, <http://www.rozsaszinpittbull.hu/> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

<sup>84</sup> The lyrics and story of the band can be read in Szántai Zsolt, *Hungarica: Magyar a dal* (Budapest: Tuan Kiadó, 2010).

<sup>85</sup> See [www.fankadeli.hu](http://www.fankadeli.hu) (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>86</sup> See the group’s homepage: <http://www.korai.hu/4/> (last accessed 15 September 2011).

<sup>87</sup> This certainly seems to be the case with bands such as The Moog, Barackca, or the Junkies from Budapest, enjoying well-established popularity among their followers. See the homepage of Barackca, <http://szkitiarock.hu/partnerek.php> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

<sup>88</sup> To be fair, there are some band members who are more vocal than others about their extremist ideas and differences are not rare. The female singer (Judit Markó) of Romantikus Erőszak, for instance, admits that she does not like the band singing anti-Semitic or anti-Roma lyrics, in the documentary *Dübörög a nemzeti rock* (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=dCyexoafm20>, last accessed 22 September 2011).

<sup>89</sup> Although there were several fascist and Nazi organizations in Hungary during the 1920s and 1930s, it was the party of Arrow Cross (Nyilaskeresztes Párt) with its ideology of Hungarism (*Hungarizmus*), as well as its maker, Ferenc Szálasi, that were resuscitated by neo-Nazis since the 1990s. On the Arrow Cross and

the rejection of all those who are stamped as the enemy of the Hungarian nation, are hallmarks of ns-music.<sup>90</sup> An excerpt from the Credo of the Hungarian National Front (MNA), Hungary's number one neo-Nazi organization, describes the connection between ns-ideology and art including music:

We have to reject all forms of degenerate art, the Jewish-black music (rock, pop etc.), brutality, pornography, consumer idiocy, films and theater that propose artificial things, the monstrous plastic arts (paintings, sculpture, graphics), and all sick expressions (cubism, surrealism, avant-garde, etc.), because this provocation called "art" is directed toward to liberate man's hidden, lowliest and animalistic instinct and hatred.<sup>91</sup>

Ns-bands are unabashedly nationalistic in their outlook and ideology; "Hungary for Hungarians" is the slogan, and while they reject the 1920 Paris Peace Settlement which divided the Hungarian nation, they are equally forceful in espousing anti-Roma as well as anti-Semitic feelings.<sup>92</sup> They find the essence of Hungarianness in folk music and utilize freely folk music instruments and melodies in their songs and concerts, new features that can be found in some national rock bands as well lately.<sup>93</sup> A large percentage of na-

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Szálasi, see my entries in "World Fascism," *A Historical Encyclopedia*, 2 vols., ed. Cyprian Blamires (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2006), 58, 324–27, 651; C. A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929–1945* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1957); and Mária Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921–1938," in *A History of Hungary*, ed. P. Sugar, P. Hanák, and T. Frank (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 319–38.

<sup>90</sup> See, for instance, the songs of Divízió 88, Hétköznapi Csalódások, Tarsoi, Utolsó Vérvonal, Vérvád, Zsenti, and many others of lesser fame. The homepages of Utolsó Vérvád and Végső Megoldás can be found at <http://www.vedvonalezenekar.com/> and <http://www.vegsomegoldas.atw.hu/>, respectively (last accessed 5 September 2011).

<sup>91</sup> The original text reads: "El kell utasítani a degenerált 'művészet' minden megnyilatkozását, a zsidó-néger zenét (rock, pop, stb.), a brutalitást, a pornográfiát, a konzum-idiotizmust, a természetellenességet propagáló filmeket, színdarabokat, a torzszülött képzőművészeti alkotásokat (festményeket, grafikákat, szobrokat, stb.), és minden beteges kifejezési módot (kubizmus, szürrealizmus, avantgárd, stb.), mert ez az egész, 'művészetnek' nevezett provokáció arra irányul, hogy felszabadítsa az emberben rejlő legaljasabb állati ösztönöket és a gyűlöletet." (Translation is mine; see <http://jovonk.info/2009/03/03/magyar-nemzeti-arcvonal-kodex>, last accessed 13 September 2011).

<sup>92</sup> Holocaust denial is a constant trope in Hungarist media similarly to ns-music; see, for example, <http://hollokoszt.wordpress.com/category/aktualitas/> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

<sup>93</sup> Nothing proves this connection better than the joint album by Romantikus Erőszak and Sándor Csoóri junior, a founding member of the world-famous Muzsikás Ensemble. They also played one concert together in Transylvania, Ro-

tionalist rock is also overtly anti-American, a grass-roots Hungarian idea that, in my view, differs substantially from what Beverly James has found earlier among students in the city of Pécs.<sup>94</sup>

It is worth noting that many ns-bands, such as Valhalla, HétköznaPI CSAlódások (Everyday Disappointments), and some other bands,<sup>95</sup> do not consist of youngsters who grew up after 1990. Both bands date from the 1990s and have managed to survive the collapse and restructuring of the music industry. Without claiming to be complete, I will list some of the most well known bands that appeared in the past to give a sense of their popularity: Archívum (Archive), Csendháborítás (Disturbance of Peace), Déli Terror (Southern Terror), Divízió 88 (Division 88), Egészséges Fejbőr (Healthy Skinhead), Fehér Vihar (White Storm), Fehér Törvény (White Law), Hunnia, Hungarica, Hunor, Ismerős Arcok (Familiar Faces), Kitörés (Explosion), Magna Hungaria, Magozott Cseresznye (Cherry without Pits), Nemzeti Front (National Front), Oi-kor (Once), Onugor, Parázsló Hamvak (Ember Ashes), Radical Hungary, Romantikus Erőszak (Romantic Rape), RPG, Szabad Akarat (Free Will), Tar Had (Bold Army), Tarsoi (Puch-Ouch), Tiltott Ellenállás (Illegal Opposition), Turul, Turul Nemzetség (Eagle Nation), Új Hajnal (New Dawn), Utolsó Védvonal (The Last Defense Line), Vádló Bitófák (Accuser Gallows), Vendetta, Vér Kötelez (Blood Binds), Vérszerződés (Blood Contract), Vérvád (Blood Libel), W.A.R, and Zsenti.<sup>96</sup>

While I cannot include all in my discussion here, I selected a few bands and their songs to illustrate the nature and ideology of Hungarian ns-music. Egészséges Fejbőr, established in 1986, labels itself as specializing in hardcore “national rock,” a term used similarly by many ns-groups, such as Romantikus Erőszak.<sup>97</sup> In one song, HétköznaPI CSAlódások hails the Nazi Ru-

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mania, in 2004. Their joint production can be viewed on YouTube ([http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=pGqAkZm8Bll&feature=player\\_embedded#!](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=pGqAkZm8Bll&feature=player_embedded#!), last accessed 10 September 2011).

<sup>94</sup> Beverly James, “Two Cheers for the Red, White, and Blue: Hungarian Assessments of American Popular Culture,” in *Kazaam! Splat! Poof! The American Impact on European Popular Culture since 1945*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet and Gordana P. Crnkovič (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 148–57, at pp. 156–57.

<sup>95</sup> Adding an extra meaning to their name HétköznaPI CSAlódások is written with a few capital letters meaning “ass” in Hungarian.

<sup>96</sup> Names such as Hunnia, Magna Hungaria, and Hunor refer to the period of Conquest of the 8th–9th century AD when the Hungarian tribes entered the Carpathian Basin. Oi-kor has a double meaning: “once,” and “oi-times”—the times of oi-music. Much of their music can be listened to at: <http://skinheadinfo.atw.hu/mp3.html>; a good list of bands can be viewed at [http://hunory.shp.hu/hpc/web.php?a=hunory&o=koncertek\\_GX1T](http://hunory.shp.hu/hpc/web.php?a=hunory&o=koncertek_GX1T) (last accessed 19 September 2011).

<sup>97</sup> Romantikus Erőszak and its leader, Balázs Sziva, are featured in an hour-long documentary directed by Bori Kriza, *Dübörög a nemzeti rock* (Metaforum Film, 2007). It can be viewed in its entirety on YouTube: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=dCyexoafm> (last accessed 22 September 2011).

dolf Hess; in “Viktor” the former prime minister and elected head of government after the 2010 election, Viktor Orbán, is the butt of the jokes as he is transformed into Mr. Bean on the group video clip.<sup>98</sup> In another song, the band changes the name of Hungary to Agony; in “Rock Culture,” it criticizes classic rock music as filthy, idiotic, and meaningless, whereas in “US Army,” it sings about the militaristic and expansionist politics of the US, and, in a perplexing twist, hails the memory of “Commandante,” the revolutionary hero Ché Guevara.

One of the most extreme neo-Nazi skinhead groups must be Divízió 88, a three-man band whose identity continues to remain obscure.<sup>99</sup> Founded in 2003, the band adheres to Hungarianism and its more obvious antecedent, German National Socialism, by following the well-known ns-music scene established in Germany in the 1980s (known collectively by the term *Rechtsrock*).<sup>100</sup> The band has already produced several CDs and has numerous songs available on YouTube and various Hungarian websites. The number “88” is a reference to the eighth letter of the German alphabet (H) suggesting the Heil Hitler salute of Nazi Germany.<sup>101</sup> The target of their songs is Gypsies and Jews in such examples as “Rotten Gypsies” (“Rohadt banda”), and “You Will Die, Gypsies” (“Megdöglötök Romák”).<sup>102</sup> The group’s rampant racism conceals little: “You dirty, stinky Gypsies / You live off our land / You steal, cheat, and don’t work / You only stand in line for welfare checks.” In “Death Factory” (“Halálgyár”), the lyrics go well beyond hate speech recalling the extermination of the Jewish people in the Nazi death-camps:

<sup>98</sup> See the song “Viktor” on YouTube, [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=vZVcs\\_8wO\\_w&feature=related](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=vZVcs_8wO_w&feature=related) (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>99</sup> Divízió 88 should not be confused with Group 88 (88-as Csoport), an oi-band from the late 1980s and early 1990s; see <http://www.88csoport.atw.hu/> (last accessed 10 September 2011). The band published perhaps the first (and only) skinhead magazine called Pannon Bulldog, of which 5 issues were published between 1991–92.

<sup>100</sup> For some earlier references on the German ns-music scene, see Johannes Bähr and Dorothee Göbler, *Rockmusik und Rechtsradikalismus: Materialien zu verschiedenen Aspekten des Rechts-Rock* (Frankfurt am Main: Staatliche Landesbildstelle Hessen, 1993). For more recent studies, see Christian Dornbusch and Jan Raabe, eds., *RechtsRock – Bestandsaufnahme und Gegenstrategien* (Hamburg: Unrast Verlag, 2002); and Constanze Krüger, *Rechte Bands: Geschichte, Gegenstrategien, Wirkung* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2007).

<sup>101</sup> This greeting is also common at soccer matches, a salute generally recognized as a common gesture among far-right youth: see Cinzia Padovania, “The Extreme Right and Its Media in Italy,” *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008): 753–70, at p. 758.

<sup>102</sup> The lyrics can be found at <http://rockerek.hu/zenekarok/Div%EDz%F3%2088> (last accessed 5 September 2011).

The crematoria are fired up, smoke's rising through the chimneys,  
 Jewish children and women are marching in,  
 You can't escape from here there are plenty of mines and barbed  
     wires,  
 Only through the chimneys can you gain your freedom.

Corpses reach the sky, Jews alive no more,  
 Corpses reach the sky, the factory is full,  
 Corpses reach the sky, the Jewish state is no more,  
 Death to all, the Cyclone-B is very useful.

Vérvád (Blood Libel), and Végső Megoldás (Final Solution) are also producers of similar anti-Semitic hateful lyrics. The latter sings about "today caftaned robbers are sucking our blood" with an obvious reference to an emerging Jewish international conspiracy against the Hungarian nation.<sup>103</sup> In "Wonderland" ("Meseország"), Vérvád's lyrics read:

The legend of Auschwitz is in the air,  
 Restitution payments are given to nonexistent survivors,  
 Nonexistent chimneys, nonexistent smoke,  
 Six million who perished this is the latest news,  
 Crime against humanity is the charge,  
 Wiesenthal fuck you.<sup>104</sup>

Ns-rock has also inherited a sexist legacy from earlier skinhead punk music: indeed, it is openly anti-gay as well as sexist. In "You are Different" ("Más vagy"), Titkolt Ellenállás's subjects are the "much-despised gays" and "lesbians" as the song closes with: "Long live heterosexuals." That this is not just an isolated case is well-illustrated by an action in 2010 of a neo-Nazi group, called Budapest Hungarists, which covered the grave of the Austro-Hungarian novelist and translator and a champion of gay-rights, Karl-Maria (Károly) Kertbeny, with a black flag together with an excerpt from the Bible.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> See the lyrics of their song "Defend Me" ("Védj meg") on their homepage, <http://www.vegsomegoldas.atw.hu/> (last accessed 6 September 2011).

<sup>104</sup> Songs and lyrics of Vérvád can be found at <http://vervad.mindenkilapja.hu/> (last accessed 5 September 2011).

<sup>105</sup> The grave of Kertbeny (1824–82) in the Kerepesi Cemetery in Budapest has long been a pilgrimage site of homosexual and gay-rights groups and activists. On the rejection of homosexuality as an "aberration" by ns-groups, see the various anti-gay articles on the website <http://kitartas.mozgalom.org/search/node/homoszekualit%C3%A1s> (last accessed on 12 September 2011). The specific biblical line referred to by ns-musicians is: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination" (Lev. 20:13).



Aside from racism and homophobia, what truly unites national rock and ns-musicians and their followers, however, is their commitment to the RAC (Rock Against Communism) heritage. Widely-known from the late 1970s in England and Western Europe, this ideology has been firmly implanted in Hungarian national rock, emerging with vehemence since 1994 when the first socialist government of Gyula Horn took office. Tarsoi (Pouch), one of the well-known “oi-music” bands of the ns persuasion, calls for skinheads to unite against all remaining communists.<sup>106</sup> This ideology has subsequently been fused with Aryanism and xenophobic nationalist themes: many songs extol the “virtues” of Nazi Germany, notably the establishment of concentration camps, the glories of the SS and the Wehrmacht, and the actions of the Hungarian Arrow Cross and the Gendarmerie in WWII. Perversely, together with Holocaust denial, xenophobia, gay and lesbian-bashing, there is a total rejection of rave or techno-pop music by hard core national rockers as it is associated with drugs and globalism.<sup>107</sup>

With the emergence of extremist right-wing politics from the 1990s, earlier songs of ETA, Oi-kor, CPG, or Mos-oi of the 1980s are in vogue as current national rock, especially ns-bands, rework their “classic” numbers. Basing their music on the style developed by these earlier bands, today’s followers altered little in terms of style and orchestration: the main instruments are still the guitar and drums; keyboards or wind instruments are never utilized. Lyrics are shouted more often than sung while amplification is pushed to the limit in order to accentuate the band’s rough metallic sound. In addition to typical skinhead attire, slam dancing has emerged as an important feature. This dance form, originally developed in the 1970s as hard-core punk pogo dancing, now takes the form of group slamming for men who perform on their own on the floor in front of the band. Wild arm swinging, shouting, jumping, and banging against one another are standard movement characteristics of slam dancing.<sup>108</sup> In Hungarian, slam dancing has a special word

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<sup>106</sup> The pouch (*tarsoly*), the famous 8th- to 9th-century Conquest period metal pouches found by archeologists, has been refashioned by silversmiths for contemporary use. It is not only a purse but has a significant symbolic value attached to it by young men who wear them as a sign of love and commitment to Hungarian prehistory as well as Hungarian pride and identity.

<sup>107</sup> For the way in which raving has been nationalized in the eastern part of Germany, see Birgit Richard and Heinz Hermann Kruger, “Ravers’ Paradise? German Youth Culture in the 1990s,” in *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, T. Skelton and G. Valentine, eds. (London: Routledge, 1998), 161–74; for the comparable British scene, see David Hesmondhalgh, “The British Dance Music Industry: A Case Study of Independent Cultural Production,” *British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2 (1998): 234–51.

<sup>108</sup> William Tsitsos, “Rules of Rebellion: Slam dancing, Moshing, and the American Alternative Scene,” in *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee (London: Routledge, 2006), 121–27.

attached to it: *csápolni*, meaning to swing the arms wildly. Otherwise, dancing generally is referred to as *taposni*, or *taposni a sarat* (to stomp the mud), or *pogozni* (to pogo). If they are present at all, or if they are willing to tolerate the rough bodily movement and abuse that is associated with slamming, women also imitate the accepted code of behavior on the dance-floor perhaps with movements that are less boisterous and wild than those of the men.

What also signals the popularity of national rock is that bands are much better organized and many have found ways to internationalize their art. Some ns-groups in Hungary take pride in belonging to the International Hammerskin Nation; *Vérszerződés* (Blood Contract), for example, was deemed eligible for membership in 2006 only after it initiated its national variant, the Hungarian Hammerskins.<sup>109</sup> That Hungarian post-punk revival skinhead music is very much part of the international scene is well illustrated by ACAB. This acronym—All Cops are Bastards—was a popular song of the British punk band The 4-Skins from the late 1970s. This anthem was taken up by a Hungarian skinhead group, *Nimród*, in 1994.<sup>110</sup> Such connections can be ascertained elsewhere as well. One of the founders and the singer-songwriter of *Egészséges Fejbőr* (Healthy Skinhead) is a Serb-Hungarian (Zorán Petrovity), credited with writing the nationalistic marching song of the ns-group “*Nemzeti Gárda*” (“National Guard”) as well as another fiery theme-song, “Hungarians, Defend Your Country.” With such “patriotism” running through his texts, Petrovity has even been called a Serb with authentic Hungarian blood. Although the group disbanded in 2009, the leader Zorán Petrovity has embarked on a solo career under the name of “*Fejbőr*” (simply translates as “skinhead”).

The total acceptance of Euro-German ns-music style and a complete rejection of what took place before 1989 is a fundamental preoccupation of ns-music in the new millennium. ACAB clearly has no affection or respect for the new democracy that followed in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall:

Democracy is beautiful, thoughts are free,  
The problem is that they brainwashed you as a child.  
From smart book they poured into you  
Into your brains, the big-big nothing.

In contrast, ACAB praises openly about the “bravery” of the soldiers of the *Waffen SS*:

<sup>109</sup> See the information on <http://www.hammerskins.net/hhs/index.html>. The ns-skinhead movement is also hampered by infighting and personal conflicts; see <http://www.jovonk.info/2010/12/17/felozzlott-az-ns-front> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

<sup>110</sup> During 1994–2003, a Malaysian punk band was also performing under the name The ACAB.

Your example is for us, Waffen SS,  
We respect your name, Waffen SS.

In 2005, after the socialist government's victory in the national election, Division 88 performed an openly anti-Semitic song in which a racist statement about Hungary's prime-minister Ferenc Gyurcsány is evident:

Why is the prime minister's nose so big,  
Why is his biggest problem racism?  
The prime minister's eyes look really evil,  
I believe that this rat is a stinking Jew.<sup>111</sup>

One of the more racist songs in the defense of White Europe, is performed by Vádló Bitófák:

The Masai now beat up the Bantus,  
The Tutsi kill all of the Kaffer buffaloes,  
They are hungry, they have no home,  
All tribes want space, but there's no solution,  
They're constantly at war, and will overpopulate White Europe.<sup>112</sup>

With so much hatred, anger, and violent sentiments in ns-music, were there any objections on the part of the state or its citizens? Opponents of such hate music, filled as it is with racism and flagrant abusive language, have not, obviously, remained silent. In 1998, several groups, notably Nemezeti Front, Valhalla, and Archívum, were charged with inciting hatred and offensive behavior in public. The court gave group members suspended sentences, which subsequently enabled members to regroup under different names.<sup>113</sup> Some, such as the punk band Oi-kor, have successfully united punk and oi-music, and in so doing have been "elevated" into skinhead consciousness. This group has also been influential in creating an avenue for youth to express such ideologies. Clearly, the emergence of these new groups has also benefited from the availability of small, often semi-clandestine record companies and studios willing to produce their albums. At the Fehérlófia, Loyalty Records, and the Lél Records bookstore in Budapest and the Red Hell Club, national literature may be purchased and RAC music is widely available. Other performances are held in semi-secret rural surroundings; at Musical Farm,

<sup>111</sup> The song is on YouTube: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=6ayw6Pa88ro&feature=related> (last accessed 20 September 2011).

<sup>112</sup> Some of the songs by the group may be accessed at <http://www.zenezoveg.hu/egyuttas/1829/vadlo-bitofak-dalszovegei.html> (last visited 10 September 2011).

<sup>113</sup> This was, for instance, the case with Archívum; see <http://archivum.fokk.hu/> (last accessed 19 September 2011).

near the town of Lajosmizse in 2008, locals were troubled for nearly a week by the presence of “strange looking youngsters” strolling around the otherwise sleepy and conservative countryside. Local authorities have not been able to curb the ns-rock music scene. In March 2011, the city council of Szekszárd objected to a concert to commemorate Hungary’s fascist leader, Ferenc Szálasi. The organizers were asked to “solve the situation,” a directive encouraging the club to stop the event that would feature the bands Vádló Bitófák and Hunnia.<sup>114</sup> Despite the official outcry, the concert was reorganized a few days later at a private farm.<sup>115</sup>

### The Political and Socio-Cultural Developments

I have written earlier about how the collapse of the state socialist system failed to bring about long-awaited positive change for many in Hungary and, for the most part, youth have been left on their own to find their place in society.<sup>116</sup> Working-class men and women have been flocking in large numbers to fill the ranks of right-wing organizations and political parties. This has been noticeable especially after 2002, when the first government of Viktor Orbán lost the election, and another left-liberal government took office for another eight years. For example, since 2007 the name “Hungaria Skins” has been associated with a neo-Nazi youth camp for boys. The three-day-long camp takes place, organized in northern Hungary, under the aegis of its motto: “no alcohol, no cigarettes, no coffee, no electricity, no cooked food.” This slogan refers to the sXe, or “straight edge” lifestyle of the punk subculture well known in the West, in particular in the United Kingdom and the US, since the 1980s.<sup>117</sup> Such camps have multiplied since; a similar movement, known as PHM (Pax Hungarica Mozgalom), is also an organizer of

<sup>114</sup> HVG, 8 March 2010, [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20110308\\_lemondtak\\_szalasi\\_emlekkoncert](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20110308_lemondtak_szalasi_emlekkoncert) (last accessed 14 September 2011).

<sup>115</sup> The concert is described in detail at <http://www.magyargardamozgalom.com/> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

<sup>116</sup> I have described these developments in earlier articles: László Kürti, “The Uncivility of a Civil Society: Skinhead Youth in Hungary,” in *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde (London: Routledge, 2003), 37–54; and “The Emergence of Postcommunist Youth Identities in Eastern Europe: From Communist Youth, to Skinheads, to National Socialist,” in *Nation and Race: The Developing Euro-American Racist Subcultures*, ed. J. Kaplan and T. Bjorgo (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 175–201.

<sup>117</sup> For these, see Ross Haenfler, *Straight Edge: Hardcore Punk, Clean Living Youth, and Social Change* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Shayna Maskell, “Performing Punk: Bad Brains and the Construction of Identity,” *Journal of Popular Music* 21, no. 4 (2009): 411–26; and Raymond J. McRea, *Out of Step: Faces of Straight Edge* (Philadelphia: Empire Press, 2007).

semi-clandestine self-defense camps.<sup>118</sup> There is no doubt about the aim and structure of such Hungarianist camps, as the camps' slogan "kitartás" (endurance) is taken from the greeting of Ferenc Szálasi's Arrow Cross movement and apes the familiar greeting gestures, the Heil Hitler salute.<sup>119</sup>

By the mid-1990s, with the emergence of the hard-core national socialist and nationalist music scene, this theme had become a favorite means of venting anger among East European skinhead youth.<sup>120</sup> The extent to which this neo-Nazi and racist skinhead music is well received by extremist youth may be ascertained by the many active political wings upholding Aryan ideology.<sup>121</sup> Such extremist organizations abound, supporting right-wing political and cultural developments, their ideology galvanized around nationalist, racist, and fundamental Christian attitudes. The two major churches in Hungary (Roman Catholic and Protestant) do not object to this, as national rock bands spread the message of conservatism emanating from the religious leadership.<sup>122</sup> Elites of the church as well as the major players of national rock are all connected in a professed adherence to national unity, extreme rejection of values linked to globalization (or the European Union), and belief in the Holy Crown theory, a historically legitimating force that can be traced to Stephen, the first saint king.<sup>123</sup> In that they have found plenty of support from the new conservative right-wing political organization, the Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary). Started in 2003 originally as a radical college and university student movement, it gained momentum after the 2006 national elections, when the socialist-liberal coalition won and was able to form a

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<sup>118</sup> For the connection between music and violence, see Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing LTD, 2009).

<sup>119</sup> For these camps with numerous photos, see <http://kitartas.mozgalom.org/aktualis/phm-also-nyari-tabor> (last accessed 15 September 2011).

<sup>120</sup> This is well documented in the chapters in Hilary Pilkington, Al'bina Garifzianova, and Elena Oeml'chenko, eds., *Russia's Skinheads: Exploring and Rethinking Subcultural Lives* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>121</sup> The website <http://wanted2007.blogspot.com/> includes some 50 extreme right-wing individuals with a description of their activities since 2006 (last accessed 11 September 2011).

<sup>122</sup> Lawrence Grossberg has noted a comparable tendency in the early 1990s in the conservative appropriation of rock in America, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 8.

<sup>123</sup> Historical and ideological theses about the Holy Crown's past and meaning are plentiful. I selected here one thorough account of this historical myth of the Holy Crown theory, or as some call it, the doctrine; see László Péter, "The Holy Crown of Hungary, Visible and Invisible," *Southeast European Review* 81, no. 3 (July 2003): 421–510 (also available on-line, <http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/13015/1/13015.pdf>, last accessed 22 September 2011).

government.<sup>124</sup> The Jobbik's political ideology is anti-globalist, anti-socialist, and openly nationalist principles that enabled the party to win not only parliamentary seats during the 2010 national elections but seats in the European Parliament as well. That this ideology is not far removed from the core values of national rock is well illustrated by its nationalistic slogan: "Hungary for Hungarians." Yet, the party does not acknowledge this attitude as extremism, instead classifying itself as adhering to "radical Christian patriotism." In 2007, the party's popularity grew considerably among youth due to the creation of its fundamentalist Christian paramilitary organization, the Hungarian Guard (Cultural Association of the Hungarian Guard, Magyar Gárda).<sup>125</sup> In 2008, the Hungarian Guard split into two organizations, one more independent, the other still closely connected to its founding party and renamed New Hungarian Guard Movement.<sup>126</sup> This group occupied the headlines primarily because of its organized demonstrations in Gypsy settlements, a move that also made the new right-wing Christian government of Viktor Orbán uneasy.<sup>127</sup> Another connected youth movement, HVIM, has already been mentioned above.<sup>128</sup> This nationalist connection is a clear indication of the linkages among political parties and organizations and national rock music

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<sup>124</sup> This is a play on words: *jobb* means both the right hand and "better" or "improved." The party's homepage is [www.jobbik.hu](http://www.jobbik.hu) (last accessed 19 September 2011).

<sup>125</sup> The anti-globalization stance of Jobbik and Magyar Gárda is surprising given the fact that the latter's bank is the Hungarian Volksbank, an affiliate of the Volksbank International AG (VBI), a multinational firm owned by Austrian (Österreichische Volksbanken), French (Banque Fédérale des Banques Populaires), and German (DZ-Bank and WGZ-Bank) investors.

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.magyargardamozgalom.com/bemutakozas> (last accessed 18 September 2011).

<sup>127</sup> Information on the movement can be found at <http://magyargarda.hu/> (last accessed 20 September 2011).

<sup>128</sup> More information on the movement and its activities is available at <http://www.hvim.hu/>. The movement's name refers to the number of historical counties in pre-WWI Hungary indicating that the group is also revisionist and irredentist. Because of its ideology, the group's president, László Toroczkai, has been declared *persona non grata* in Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. Irredentist ideas, especially a reference to the Paris Peace Treaty at Versailles (in the Trianon castle), where the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was dissected, are rampant in national rock. For Toroczkai's bio, see <http://www.toroczkailaszlo.hu/?q=eletrajz> (last accessed 20 September 2011). For lyrics on YouTube of Trianon, Sweet Transylvania, and Justice for Hungary, songs performed by the well-known national group Magozott Cseresznye, see <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=4INR94XjsAw> (last accessed 14 September 2011). The texts can also be accessed on the Hungarian lyrics homepage: <http://www.zenesoveg.hu/egyuttes/219/magozott-cseresznye-dalszovegei.html> (last accessed 12 September 2011) as well as from the band's homepage: <http://www.magozottcseresznye.hu/letoltesek> (last accessed 12 September 2011).



groups as well as their growing popularity among a certain section of the population.

As a result of a new right-wing and conservative turn in politics during the socialist-liberal governments' time (2002–10), neo-Nazi and Hungarian internet sites and media have multiplied manifold. One of the main avenues of extremist right-wing agitation is via internet.<sup>129</sup> One of the most obvious leaders is *kuruc.info* for it claims: "Kuruc.info is a patriotic Hungarian conservative, right-wing, nationalist, fact-finding news site that is independent of political parties." With its anti-Semitic and anti-Roma slogans, the domain was found so offensive by the court in 2008 that it was banned; the server, however, then moved to California in the US.<sup>130</sup> That organizations with national socialist ideology have met successfully with a number of ns-bands can be seen on *kuruc.info*'s homepage as it recently introduced *Titkolt Ellenállás*, a band just celebrating its 18th birthday with a new record.<sup>131</sup>

Apart from the internet, other media also support national rock. One of them is Holy Crown Radio (Szentkorona Rádió), a voice calling itself Hungarian national radicalism "featuring only Hungarian music."<sup>132</sup> Similarly, right-wing radio and television stations have mushroomed: the most well known are Lánchíd Radio (Chainbridge Radio, founded in 2005), Hír TV (News TV, founded in 2002 but took an expressly right-wing turn in 2004), and Echo TV (Echo TV, aired first in 2005). Among the printed newspapers *Heti Válasz* (*Weekly Answer*) and *Magyar Demokrata* (*Hungarian Democrat*) are the best known right-wing media; the extremists are also numerous, the *Karpatia* (*Carpathian*) being one of the best known.<sup>133</sup> For die-hard national rock music fans *Magyar Hang* (*Hungarian Voice*) is the foremost printed magazine, a fanzine already with its sixth issue in 2011.

In this climate, it is not by accident that many neo-Nazi leaders have again found a niche in Hungarian society. This is the case for István Györkös, the self-proclaimed leader of Hungarian National Socialism, and György Ekrem Kemál, founder of the Association of People Persecuted by Communism (A Kommunizmus Üldözötteinek Szövetsége), who returned to the political stage as an instigator of the attack on the Hungarian television building

<sup>129</sup> Some of these are: <http://arcvonal.org/>; <http://jovonk.info/>; <http://becsuletnapja.com/>; <http://betiltva.com/new/>; <http://magyargarda.hu/>; <http://www.barikad.hu/node>; <http://hunhir.info/>; <http://magyarharcos.hu/site/index.php>; <http://www.paxhungarica.org/> (last accessed 10–15 September 2011).

<sup>130</sup> See the homepage <http://kuruc.info/> (last accessed 17 September 2011). A similar site is <http://www.szittya.com/> (last accessed 22 September 2011).

<sup>131</sup> See <http://kuruc.info/r/34/85069/> (last accessed 14 September 2011).

<sup>132</sup> On the Holy Crown Radio, see <http://szentkoronaradio.com/szentkoronaradio> (last accessed 15 September 2011). The production company is registered as Joytrade LLC in Johnston, Iowa, USA. The radio lists as its personnel all the well-known names of WWII leaders and 19th-century outlaws.

<sup>133</sup> See its homepage, <http://www.karpatiamuhely.hu/> (last accessed 16 September 2011).

in Budapest in 2006.<sup>134</sup> An Australian ex-pat, Györkös was influential during the early 1990s among skinhead youth. After a brief period of silence, he reappeared in the early 2000s as head of the new Hungarian National Front (Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal), an organization that pays particular attention to the “education” of youth.<sup>135</sup> Its two factions (Vándorsólyom, Akciócsoportok) train young men in paramilitary camps, preparing them for eventual combat duty to take control of the country.<sup>136</sup> These are not isolated incidents: the HNF, the Pax Hungarica Movement, and the Independent Hungarian Guard, the paramilitary wing of Jobbik, routinely organize rallies, marches, anti-Roma, and anti-Semitic activities.<sup>137</sup>

It is worth noting that the disbanding of the Hungarian groups in the late 1990s failed to solve the problem of resurgent neo-Nazi ideology among youth. Many followers were recruited later in smaller, semi-illegal organizations, a notable one being Blood and Honor (Vér és Becsület). Legally registered at the Budapest Court in January 2001, it followed in the footsteps of the Hungarian National Front by openly celebrating February 11, a Day of Honor (in German, Tag der Ehre), observing the successful outbreak of fascist armies of the completely surrounded city of Budapest in 1945. Similar demonstrations organized against homosexuals, Gypsies, socialist and left politicians, and drug liberalization organizations prompted the authorities’ reprisals, and at the end of 2005, it was declared unconstitutional, its license revoked. This move had sealed the fate of Blood and Honor, which finally

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<sup>134</sup> An extreme anti-Semitic webpage is called JudeoNazi ([http://judeonaci-vadasz.blogspot.com/2008/07/magyar-zsidfigyel-akciban\\_20.html](http://judeonaci-vadasz.blogspot.com/2008/07/magyar-zsidfigyel-akciban_20.html), last accessed 20 September 2011). The Szentkorona Rádió is also a well-known extremist site (<http://szentkoronaradio.com/>), together with Kurucinfo.hu. MOVE (Hungarian National Defense League) which also reconstituted itself at the end of 2007 (its homepage, <http://www.move.try.hu/>, was closed in 2009). This paramilitary organization was created in 1918 as a precursor to the white terror of Admiral Miklós Horthy, Hungary’s governor between 1920–44. The group’s spiritual leader is Gyula Gömbös (1886–1936), the leading race-theorist of the time. White power ns-music homepages are numerous (see, for example, <http://www.fehertorveny.com/main.php>, last accessed 20 September 2011). There is a homepage critical of such views, for example, [kurucwanted.blogspot.com/](http://kurucwanted.blogspot.com/) (homepages last accessed 18–20 September 2011).

<sup>135</sup> Kürti, “The Emergence of Postcommunist Youth Identities in Eastern Europe,” 187–88.

<sup>136</sup> The youth movement’s full name is Vándorsólyom Hagymányórzó Bajtársi Közösség, or The Community of the Peregrine Falcon Traditional Brotherhood. Until 2005, the community was registered as an ecological and trekking organization (see [http://hu.metapedia.org/wiki/Magyar\\_Nemzeti\\_Arcvonal](http://hu.metapedia.org/wiki/Magyar_Nemzeti_Arcvonal) (last accessed 14 September 2011). Ideologically, this group is closely associated with the Turul Szövetség, a pre-WWII youth association that was renewed in 2000.

<sup>137</sup> Some of these can be found at <http://kitartas.mozgalom.org/kategoria.php?f=4> (last accessed 12 September 2011).

disbanded in 2006.<sup>138</sup> In its wake, however, new structures have appeared to take its place in what is considered within the movement to be a “resurrection,” a common trope of skinhead nationalist music that extols the virtues of Hungarian national rebirth. Bands of the national rock persuasion had another gathering in May 2011 at the Hungarian city of Eger with Oi-kor, Romantikus Erőszak, Vérszerződés, and Werwolf as the featured attraction. The connection between extremist politics and national rock can be witnessed in the case of Romantikus Erőszak and the clandestine group Magyarok Nyilai, a paramilitary organization that committed several killings in Gypsy settlements. The latter group included György Budaházy, who is still in police custody and who was a promoter of Romantikus Erőszak.<sup>139</sup>

## Conclusions

In my earlier analyses related to the topic of this article, I subscribed to Roland Barthes’ proposal that there are two kinds of music—official and unofficial.<sup>140</sup> The latter, characterized by a lack of organization and existing on the fringes of society, often without state support, was popular during the late 1970s and the 1980s, a period when state socialism was showing its cracks. How, we must ask, did this situation alter after the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist system? With the withering away of the socialist state and the re-emergence of capitalism, did unofficial music in fact disappear? If so what followed in its wake? Further, how has the business of popular music in Hungary been restructured and re-politicized and what are its main features? In retrospect, my conclusions from the early 1990s might appear naïve today in proposing that all non-state music was oppositional, anti-state. Tylor has remarked with regard to the globalized music industry that “the circulation of commodified musics provides more ways of resistance, and dominance, than ever before.”<sup>141</sup> This contention is borne out with regard to the revivalist

<sup>138</sup> The group’s history was printed on a now defunct homepage: <http://www.paxhungarica.org/vbke/index.html> (downloaded 11 May 2010).

<sup>139</sup> The case is in court and members, including Budaházy, are charged with genocide and anti-state conspiracy. The Jobbik party has decided to defend them in court. See “Hallgatnak a Magyarok Nyilai,” *Népszava* on-line, 10 March 2011 (<http://www.nepszava.hu/articles/article.php?id=402681>, last accessed 22 September 2011). Whether Budaházy denies his involvement with the Hungarian Arrows or not, his love for the ns-music, and Romantikus Erőszak in particular, has been captured on the one-hour documentary *Dübörög a nemzeti rock*.

<sup>140</sup> Kürti, “Rocking the State: Youth Culture and Popular Music in Hungary in the 1980s,” 145–64; and “How Can I Be a Human Being? Culture, Youth, and Musical Opposition in Hungary,” 55–72.

<sup>141</sup> Timothy D. Tylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (London: Routledge, 1997), 94.

dance-house music, a style that developed in contrast to the regimented folklore of state-supported groups during the mid-1970s. As the state lost control over youth and the music industry, however, this alternative music has gradually come to the forefront of the national, and, in certain instances, the international stage. In my earlier study I assumed that the often revolutionary-sounding political message of punk subculture was a sign of the times and the voice of a disenchanting generation committed to social improvement for the benefit of all. The overt resistance and opposition of punk and post-punk movements, I concluded, was part of a rejection of high politics as well as mainstream popular music culture. As Mary Bucholtz argues cogently, this is observable in most studies on youthful resistance and opposition as expressed in musically based counterculture.<sup>142</sup> From today's vantage point, however, it would seem that I may have too quickly determined that a somewhat colorless and copy-cat popular rock music, supported wholeheartedly by the media and music establishments, would disappear with the advent of multi-party, Western-style democracy and a more Europeanized culture. I was wrong: it thrives regardless of political system and economy; in fact it serves both. At the same time, I also did not envision such an efflorescence of national rock in the new millennium.

There can be no doubt that the regime change after 1989 brought about the transformation of Hungarian society, politics, economy, and culture despite the fact that many economic and social policies failed to meet the expectations of its citizens. The rock music industry had also experienced transformation on a massive scale as Western pop music, with its fusion, indie, reggae punk, and rap/hip-hop styles, firmly implanted itself on Hungarian soil, with a multitude of followers. Many formerly celebrated star musicians and singers of the pop industry have remained in the limelight, testifying to the resilience of pop music and the tastes of the population at large. Supported by the mainstream music industry, new faces and bands have appeared through various talent shows and the promotional work of agencies, meeting the standards of pop music, as is evident during every Eurovision and similar homemade song contests. In the interest of a balanced assessment, it must be acknowledged that undeniably maverick performers have also been created by the media; there are, to be sure, also grass-roots bands that succeed on their own in attracting a large following.

It is somewhat surprising to note that a number of underground artists and bands have in some sense been domesticated and elevated into stardom. Yet it is precisely the media empire itself that is responsible for having catapulted these formerly oppositional performers to national notoriety by contributing to their transformation into saleable commodities. Many former fringe groups are now established "in-groups," a phenomenon that can also

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<sup>142</sup> Mary Bucholtz, "Youth and Cultural Practice," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 540–41.

be seen in the alternative or the revivalist folk music or world beat styles. At the same time, the political transformation, four-year switch between the political left and right, has also created its own new “unofficial” music. While members of the adolescent generation felt justified in expressing their opposition to the establishment through rough music, even in its most extreme ns-form, given their socialization after 1990, their music in turn persuaded them of the new national perspective. It may have appeared logical to assume that underground punk or skinhead music would fade away once the deeply despised socialist government was no longer an easy target of their wrath. Paradoxically, however, the turn of events from the mid-1990s suggests that this musical orientation possessed an inner momentum and energy that helped it thrive. I could not have imagined during the 1980s that skinhead and ns-music, twenty years later, would prove to have such enduring power. To the extent that this may be the case, then, it is not entirely accurate to speak of the “decay of the rock underground,” as Anna Szemere would have it.<sup>143</sup> Rather, while such an élan could not be seen in the 1990s, we are today witnessing another cultural epiphenomenon in which an extremist form of national rock music is flourishing with a greater number of performers and bands, as well as followers, than ever before. In comparison to its 1980s predecessor, this music is also anti-state in the sense that the majority of its practitioners could not dream of negotiating a major record label contract nor for that matter of appearing on a nationally televised program. For them, however, this represents no dilemma whatsoever, signaling that a new wind is blowing in a transformed political-economic climate. The new landscape includes 9/11, the war in Iraq, an enlarged European Union, global ecological concerns, and international drug trafficking, as well as questions about the Nabucco pipeline which are measured against their rediscovered Hungarian national self.<sup>144</sup>

National rock in Hungary today is Janus-faced, turning inward as well as outward, in a double gesture not unique to Hungary and Hungarian youth. Similar developments have been occurring not only in post-socialist/post-Soviet space but elsewhere in Europe, the Americas, and Asia as well.<sup>145</sup> One aspect of this new national culture in Hungary would be its thoroughly globalized and mediatized structure in which ns-music concerts and neo-Nazi marches are, in spite of their nationalist impetus, becoming indisputably international. For example, in 2004 the Hungarian ns-band Fehér törvény (White Law) published a CD together with the Dutch Brigade M; the Hungarian Vértád and Fehér Vihar produced an album in 2010 titled *Hung-Aryan*

<sup>143</sup> Szemere, *Up from the Underground*, 221.

<sup>144</sup> Éva Borsi and Péter Portörő, eds., *Jelentés a magyarországi kábítószerhelyzetről* (Budapest: Ifjúsági, Családügyi, Szociális és Esélyegyenlőségi Minisztérium, 2005).

<sup>145</sup> Fran Markowitz, *Coming of Age in Post-Soviet Russia* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000).



*NS Rock for White Europe* with lyrics in English. In my study undertaken over almost two decades ago, I concluded that in Hungary the new music of the 1980s had “emerged as the explicit agenda of a generation coming of age.”<sup>146</sup> Culturally and politically, national rock seems to reflect a certain segment of contemporary Hungarian youth: divided, confused, and seeking to recover a lost sense of identity while confronting, like their counterparts around the world, a myriad of difficulties of the period often referred to by many as the end of Soviet-style state socialism to wild or post-authoritarian capitalism.<sup>147</sup> At the same time, a number of musicians and nationally-minded citizens have found an avenue through their music to express their concerns with regard to local identity and patriotism as well as to larger (global) issues of nationality, Europeanization, and Americanization. In this regard, many of national rock’s manifestations exhibit surprisingly similar characteristics across the globe.<sup>148</sup> At the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, Hungarian national rock music may be said to have remained true to its ideology of change within constancy. As articulated by skinhead youth who want to see their music as omnipotent, in one man’s words: “Our music does not change, we only change our country around it.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Kürti, “Rocking the State,” 95.

<sup>147</sup> East-Central Europe has no shortage of labels devised by—mostly Western—social scientists for the end of state socialism and the creation of capitalism. There are several studies discussing this with regard to Hungary, and I cite only two. See Krista Harper, *Wild Capitalism: Environmental Activism and Postsocialist Political Ecology in Hungary* (New York: East European Monographs/Columbia University Press, 2006); and also Zsolt Bedo, Mehmet Demirbag, and Geoffrey Wood, “Introducing Governance and Employment Relations in Eastern and Central Europe,” *Employee Relations* 33, no. 4 (2011): 309–15.

<sup>148</sup> See, for instance, Christian Lahusen, “The Aesthetics of Radicalism: The Relationship between Punk and the Patriotic Nationalist Movement in the Basque Country,” *Popular Music* 12, no. 3 (1993): 263–80; Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); M. von Schoenebeck, “New German ‘Folk-Like’ Song and Its Hidden Political Messages,” *Popular Music* 17, no. 3 (1998): 279–92; H. Wai-Chung, “The Political Meaning of Hong Kong Popular Music: A Review of Socio-Political Relations between Hong Kong and the People’s Republic of China since the 1980s,” *Popular Music* 19, no. 3 (2000): 341–54.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with band members on Szentkorona Rádió, on 19 April 2007; see “A fejbőr nem változik, csak a világ körülötte,” <http://szentkoronaradio.com/node/2332> (last accessed 10 September 2011).





**Figure 1.** A cover for *In Unity There Is Power*, a well-known ns-band's CD, released in 2008



Figure 2. A poster of an Archivum and Várszerződés concert in 2007.





**Figure 3.** Publicity photograph of Romantikus Eroszak  
(the female singer is missing from the photo)



**Figure 4.** Kárpátia concert in Siófok, 2007  
(from Wikipedia)



**Figure 5.** Publicity photograph of Superbutt  
(from the band's website)