

‘Templars, Fight or Fall!’ Remembering the Knights Templar in Power Metal

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On 2 August 2019, Swedish power metal band HammerFall uploaded a photo of themselves on stage at the Wacken Open Air festival, accompanied by the words “85,000 Templars can’t be wrong (...)” Referring to their fans as “Templars” evokes memories of power, masculinity, brotherhood, and determination; but why the Templars? Is using the memory of the historical Knights Templar innocent fun, appreciation, or something more sinister? Ever since Norwegian white supremacist Anders Behring Breivik laid out his plans for a new military order in his manifesto just before his attacks in July 2011, allusions to the Knights Templar have increasingly been used online and in rallies by the far right, including in the recent storming of the US Capitol. Is this something that is also to be found in metal culture? Through the application of the terms “Enchanted Zones” and “Play Chronotopes”, originally coined by Swedish anthropologist Lotten Gustafsson, it is the conclusion of this paper that Templar-focused bands such as HammerFall and their history-loving countrymen Sabaton manage to avoid outright extremism and Islamophobia despite their sometimes violence-celebrating lyrical content. Nevertheless, online communities do not always see the nuances or the implicit role-playing; the relationship between metal, historical narratives, and a resurging far right is problematic when moving beyond the “Enchanted Zone” and invites further discussion regarding bands and fans alike: How do metal bands play a part in shaping historical memory, are they aware of their being appropriated by extremists, and are metal fans (like reenactors) disinclined to surrender their imagery to the far right?