

Forbidden Heritage

The Defiance of Persian Black Metal and the Struggle to Not Forget

Pasqualina Eckerström, University of Helsinki

Iranian black metal pioneers Sina Winter and Magus Faustoos Crowley had to leave Iran because of their music. Sina, leader of the band From the Vastland, had to relocate after performing in 2013 at Inferno Music Festival in Oslo and participating in the documentary *Blackhearts* (2017). The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps targeted Sina because he gained attention from the media. Magus is a musician and a Doctor of Theology; he was imprisoned and tortured in Iran because of his art. He now lives in Germany as a political refugee. In the West heavy metal commonly draws on ancient legends and traditions, while in religious authoritarian countries musicians doing so face harsh punishments. In Iran, black metal is commonly considered a blasphemous form of art. Additionally, the lyrical content may be controversial, as both Sina and Magus celebrate their Persian heritage, which the Islamic Republic wants people to forget. Their catalogues build upon pre-Islamic themes, such as Zoroastrian tales. Additionally, Magus's lyrics also include strong anti-Islamic messages. Using qualitative data, this paper explores how the two black metal artists use their art as a tool of defiance and to preserve their ancient history. At times, in analysing music, scholars evaluate lyrics by speaking for the creator. This paper, instead, concentrates on the intent of the artists, valuing the lyrics through their narratives.