Reclaiming the Fight. Framing and Resignification of Radical Struggles in Italian White Power Music

Damiano KERMA (Pisa)[1]

Summary

White Power music is a well-known cultural phenomenon encompassing a variety of politically engaged far-right musical practices worldwide. In Italy, the longstanding tradition of 'musica alternativa' has for decades been playing a major role in providing cultural grounds and collective identities for radical right and neofascist movements. However, starting from the late 1980s, multiple waves of far-right artists have been effectively repurposing skin culture into a nativist discourse. Such practices later found fertile ground within the cultural milieus of Italian far-right movement parties, whose 'hybrid' approach to collective action and repertoires shaped an entire genre (NSHC) around the reconfiguration of hardcore tropes into a neofascist platform, hence becoming a new musical cornerstone for far-right events. In this paper, I adopt a frame analysis methodological approach on a corpus of recent (2005-2024) Italian White Power song lyrics and three case studies of notable covers of Italian Oi! and hardcore staples in order to investigate how artists related to CasaPound Italia's cultural circuit have been appropriating traditional radical-left themes and building them into their own discourse. Anti-globalism, anti-capitalism, and struggle against the status quo are thus reconfigured under an identitarian frame, combined with a 'populist' ideological approach and a novel aestheticization of fascist symbolism.

This is hardcore, is a violent thing
You are an asshole, you aren't like me
A song of hate, I sing for my crew
Antifa scum, that's not for you!
(Blind Justice, "Total N.S.H.C.")

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Introduction

"Music suggests interpretation, ideology commands it." (Eyerman/Jamison 1998, 46) The role of music in constructing and deploying political meanings has been thoroughly explored in political sociology for decades. As a valuable ritual and narrative toolkit for constructing political identities, expressing grievances, or offering frames for the interpretation of social reality (DeNora 2000), music has been coopted by institutional and non-institutional actors of any orientation, with far-right movements making efforts to reframe literature, music, folklore, and youth styles within a nativist – or even explicitly neofascist – political platform (Copsey/Richardson 2015). White Power music and musical events have been shown to play a major role in fringe political movements as a recruitment tool for winning young activists over (Futrell 2006; Langebach/Raabe 2013) and have proved a successful practice for strengthening collective identities by proposing and reinforcing shared worldviews and imaginaries (Eyerman 2002; Corte/Edwards 2008).

Needless to say, this has also been the case in the lively history of Italian far-right movements. The last two decades have witnessed a surge of new generations of militant artists from increasingly diverse artistic backgrounds. In this paper, I assess how current White Power music approaches and reclaims a variety of themes, styles, and political grievances, while being a major framing device for far-right activism both in representing political issues and in constructing a shared collective identity. The analysis develops as follows: The first section briefly reconstructs the analytical category of White Power and its application within the context of the Italian far right; in the second part I adopt an inductive approach to frame analysis to identify the main themes in contemporary Italian White Power music; the third part draws on three case studies of cover songs by far-right artists to show how traditional radical-left issues have been appropriated in support of an opposing political project, as a telling example of the broader cultural hybridization within part of the Italian far right (Castelli Gattinara/Froio 2014).

Musical Practices of the Far Right

"White Power! For England / White Power! Today / White Power! For Britain / Before it gets too late." Thus sang Skrewdriver's frontman and National Front member Ian Stuart Donaldson in the 1983 EP *White Power*. What came forth as a musical reaction to the perceived leftist trend in British punk would quickly become an institution for far-right youth cultures worldwide (Langebach/Raabe 2013). Among the many existing operationalizations, Dyck Kirsten defines White Power music as "an umbrella category that encompasses […] any music produced and distributed by individuals who are actively trying to advance what they view as a white-power or pro-white racist agenda" (2016, 3). Although it might sound tautological, ideological content and active promotion of a specific set of values are stated as the only discerning criteria by far-right sources as well:

> The main peculiarity of 'musica d'area' does not lie so much in its music genre as in the themes it addresses. In an age of cultural flattening and extreme conformism, where music is a reflection of the mainstream, with popular hits celebrating pleasure, unrestrained excesses, and libertinism, it becomes a paideutic experience for a young individual entering militant life to engage with music that embodies a different worldview, one that upholds values such as the homeland, sacrifice, honor.[2]
>
> (Blocco Studentesco, 2024, 12; author's translation)

As of today, White Power concerts and labels feature a wide spectrum of rock, punk, metal, and electronica artists, including the notable subgenres of National Socialist Hardcore (NSHC) and National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM), as well as a hard core of militant songwriters and folk singers, and an emerging scene of far-right rap and trap artists (Maspero/Ribaric 2020). Kirsten's broad categorization also accounts for the very diverse cultural and ideological milieus each country has to offer. As briefly mentioned, for instance, racial connotations are much more prominent in Swedish (Eyerman 2002), American (Futrell 2006), British and German White Power music (Brown 2004) than in their Mediterranean counterparts (Kirsten 2016). Italy serves as an excellent case study, as the ever-changing, yet highly prolific relationship of its far-right youth with music can be reconstructed in its historical parabola over the past fifty years.

Starting from the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the desire among right-wing youth circles to come out of their cultural self-ghettoization found an outlet in the chance of capitalizing on the protest movement so that it would not remain an exclusive domain of the left (Mammone 2015, 152; Bulli 2020). Their will for renewal gained traction thanks to the cultural impact of the Italian Nuova Destra of the following years. As this rethinking of dominant political issues was taking place, the musical landscape of the far right would see the emergence of names such as Janus, ZPM, Amici del Vento, Compagnia dell'Anello, Massimo Morsello, and Michele di Fiò. Their repertoires, which brought together progressive rock, folk, and songwriting traditions, were widely promoted within self-produced press and events of young far-right activists, as remarkably shown by the 1977-1981 Campi Hobbit experience (Di Giorgi/Ferrario 2010; Tonietto 2021, 117). From the mid-1980s onward, Italian outfits started incorporating the influx of British and American skin subcultures (Frezza 2017; Maspero/Ribaric 2020). A new wave of Oi! outfits (such as Peggior Amico, Gesta Bellica, ADL 122 and Ultima Frontiera) rapidly came forth, together with a wider popularization trend that favored more easy-listening nuances of political rock and punk music. ZetaZeroAlfa, Sottofasciasemplice, and Hobbit, among others, made their appearance in the late 1990s, as the White Power scene also started branching out with experimental folk artists and songwriters, such as Antica Tradizione and one-man project Sköll (Trobia/Mazzara 2021).

Starting from the early 2000s and up to the present day, self-defined 'third-millennium fascist' organization CasaPound Italia (CPI) has been acting as a successful catalyst for Italian White Power culture thanks to its unconventional, hybrid repertoires of action, often drawing on traditionally left-wing subcultural practices like squatting (Froio et al. 2020,

89). CPI's 'Occupazioni Non Conformi', as well as its effort to present itself as a cultural network, helped in legitimizing these otherwise deprecated 'leftist' forms of action (Di Nunzio/Toscano 2011, 33). CPI's foundation itself is tightly linked to the musical phenomenon of the identitarian rock band ZetaZeroAlfa (ZZA), founded in Rome in 1997 by later CPI leader Gianluca Iannone.

ZZA's experience was a steppingstone in this renewed approach to far-right mobilization (Di Nunzio/Toscano 2011, 62). Specifically, ZZA massively helped in bringing together new recruits and making far-right scenes more accessible for young people. Their musical style also contributed to shaping the Italian subgenre of 'rock identitario' within the White Power landscape, as a more easy-listening approach to street punk with a stronger focus on lyrical content (Bulli 2020, 224). Newborn outfits of this period also include Bronson, Fantasmi del Passato, SPQR and Topi Neri, among others. Political stances and imageries in lyrics have set a gradual yet strong cut with parliamentary right-wing actors, while embracing a communitarian, anti-globalist conception of society. Usual tropes are thus intertwined with themes of camaraderie, violence, and street life, often combined with an enduring martial rhetoric and worship of a heroic past (Castelli Gattinara/Froio 2014).

Contemporary spaces for 'musica alternativa' still recognize the prominent role of CPI's cultural animation. Its widespread linkages make music promotion all the more relevant, as far-right bands follow in ZZA's footsteps by acting as catalysts for gathering activists and reframing contentious issues (Kerma 2025). However, current developments are still largely understudied, with the notable exception of Davide Maspero and Max Ribaric's (2020) seminal work on National Socialist Hardcore (or 'hatecore') as an up-to-date overview of a subgenre that – once again – has been repurposing working-class grievances into an aggressive, nativist framework.

As mentioned, White Power music does not correspond to a defined genre, nor can it be reduced to a single cultural influence. Nevertheless, the current Italian scene remains closely tied to the British skinhead experience of the 1980s and its subsequent cooptation by the far right. While rooted in a vague understanding of class identity and patriotic sentiment, the origins of this subculture were fundamentally transversal and non-partisan (Frezza 2017, 23-26). However, a major rupture in the Italian context happened during the third national skinhead gathering held in Certaldo in 1983, with clashes breaking out among the audience in response to some bands' neofascist proclamations. This event triggered the association between skinheads and neofascism in the Italian press, while also prompting the spontaneous alignment of some bands with far-right political positions (Frezza 2017, 37). Such is the case with Veneto Fronte Skinhead, which gradually repositioned itself as an ideological stronghold of the far right. These national gatherings were also the first setting in which Italian Oi! and hardcore skinheads were able to integrate across stylistic and ideological lines.

This brings us to the final step, with its apparent contradiction. NSHC does not have a clear origin, although it arguably took inspiration from the U.S. scene of the late 1980s and experienced a quick development throughout Europe, with a prominent role of Italian and German artists (Maspero/Ribaric 2020). This endemic evolution of hardcore music

shows a stylistic continuity with its 'mainstream' counterpart, combined with unadulterated lyrics on radical right themes and production networks overlapping those of traditional skin communities. What constitutes said themes, however, is not obvious. Much like hardcore itself collected a number of grievances and political influences in a variety of subnational contexts – including, but not limited to, anarchism, pacifism, anti-racism, and anti-Americanism (Del Corno 2023), anti-globalism, liberal civil rights (Maspero/Ribaric 2020, 50), anti-neoliberalism, and even explicitly socialist likings (Frezza 2017, 36) –, fringe far-right communities further developed this sentiment into a new strand with a greater focus on violence, anger, and ideological belonging (Maspero/Ribaric 2020, 17).

Data Collection and Methodology

A key epistemological point underlying this work is the assumption that music, as a cultural product, may play a role in framing social grievances. This is a recurring concept in scholarly work on music and politics (cf. DeNora 2000; Street 2012), remarkably tackled by Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1998, 42), whose notion of 'musical tradition' is described as a pre-political source of identification and a repertoire of cultural materials for framing reality. Specifically, Corte and Edwards's notable contribution (2008) describes White Power as: (1) *oppositional*, in adopting an adversarial, anti-nihilist stance against the cultural mainstream; (2) *authentic*, as it prides itself of representing 'true white music', untouched by commercialization and multiculturalism; (3) *persecuted*, as a widely recurring theme is the self-portrayal of far-right activists as unjustly oppressed by the hegemonic left (Corte/Edwards 2008, 7-9). Even if a coherent ideological framework might not be found, this study highlights the role of White Power music as cultural praxis and framing device. However, much is left to uncover by looking into the lyrical content itself, with a focus on the struggles and political meanings on which far-right artists are able to capitalize. As the evolution of 'musica alternativa' may suggest, Italian White Power appears to be a flourishing ground for this enquiry.

In order to assess the main themes in contemporary Italian far-right music, a qualitative frame analysis was conducted on a corpus of White Power song lyrics drawn from two major online repositories: Associazione Culturale Lorien, which acts as a well-regarded digital archive for historical material and 'musica alternativa' among far-right activists, and Archivio Non Conforme, arguably the most prominent webzine and gathering hub for Italian White Power music. Their entire content of song lyrics was retrieved using a webscraper. What resulted was a dataset of approximately 4200 songs. This dataset was filtered by timeframe to only consider songs released in the last 20 years (2005-2024), a small, randomized sample of which was then extracted. This resulted in a manageable final working corpus of 250 songs.[3]

In order to make sense of this lyrical content, I resorted to an inductive, cluster-based approach to frame analysis. Following Matthes and Kohring's quali-quantitative method (2008), song lyrics were first codified into their bare frame elements. According to Snow and

Benford's seminal conceptualization (1988), frames are split into the 'core framing tasks' they pursue, meaning how they attribute blame or causality around a given issue (*diagnostic framing*), propose solutions (*prognostic framing*), and provide a shared rationale for action (*motivational framing*). Broadly speaking, frames result from the combination of these functions, although not all three are always easily identifiable. Additionally, the *motivational* frame element was broadened to also include the *mythos* of reference, meaning any idealized past, be it real or fictitious, proposed as a shared imagery to reinforce collective identity (Eyerman/Jamison 1998).

Frame elements were then coded, and co-occurring frame elements were grouped together by cluster analysis, hence allowing high-affinity groupings of elements to emerge for themselves into frames. This method has been proven to ensure higher validity in frame analysis, especially in any exploratory research where expected frames are unknown or blurry (Matthes/Kohring 2008, 264). The coding process resulted in a total of 82 empirically defined sub-variables, which were recoded into 32 variables, i.e. independent, mutually exclusive possible codes for each frame element. Every (nominal) variable was then computed into binary dummy variables. See Table A in the Appendix for a brief description of all coded variables.

Main Frames in Current Italian White Power

A two-step cluster analysis (AIC method) was conducted on the 32 converted dummy variables. The number of optimal clusters was detected in the pre-clustering step as 6. In Table 1, all variables are listed with their frequency percentage in each related cluster.

Table 1. Coded frame elements for the White Power lyrics dataset. Percentages show how consistently a given coded frame element appears within its detected cluster

Diagnostic framing	**Cluster (%)**	**Prognostic framing**	**Cluster (%)**	**Motivational framing**	**Cluster (%)**
Past times	5 (82.1%)	Cultural restoration	5 (45.5%)	Medieval symbolism	2 (63.6%)
Human dissatisfaction	2 (44.0%)	Memory	3 (60.0%)	Street life	1-3 (37.5%)
Societal dissatisfaction	4 (74.1%)	Fight	4 (53.3%)	Fascist symbolism	3 (41.2%)
Self-loathing	2 (24.6%)	Camaraderie	6 (100.0%)	Identity	4 (64.0%)
Motherland	2 (47.8%)	Heroism	2 (66.7%)	Faith	3 (37.5%)
Personal limits	3 (60.0%)	Overachieving	2 (63.6%)	Military symbolism	5 (38.5%)
Antifascism	1-2 (41.7%)	Collective resilience	1 (57.1%)	Willpower	2 (66.7%)
Oppression	1 (43.5%)	Introspection	3 (75.0%)	Pagan symbolism	2 (46.2%)
		Cultural hegemony	2 (100.0%)	Honor	1-2 (33.3%)
				Eternity	5 (77.8%)
				Futurism	2 (44.4%)
				Fun times	6 (100.0%)
				Fantasy symbolism	1-2 (33.3%)
				Anti-system	1 (45.5%)
				Natural predominance	1 (57.1%)

In Table 2, I provide frequencies for each detected cluster (i.e. the reconstructed main frames) within the dataset. In the next few pages, every cluster will be reviewed in further detail.

Table 2. Frequency of each frame cluster in the sample of Italian White Power lyrics

Cluster	N (Instances)	% (Total)
1 Oppression	46	20.5%
2 Nationalistic heroism	55	24.6%
3 Fallen comrades	31	13.8%
4 Rejection of society	37	16.5%
5 Glory days	37	16.5%
6 Light camaraderie	18	8.0%
Total	224	100.0%

Cluster Profile 1 – Oppression

Lyrics found in the first cluster reflect the adversarial framing identified by Conte/Edwards (2008), as they combine diagnostic frame elements that focus on marginalization with a prognostic solution rooted in collective resilience, as in mutual support among militants. Frame elements dealing with oppression and antifascism offer a narrative in which the 'infamous reds' have been distorting history since the 1940s and have thus established a societal order oppressing the right. Within this framing, both the metaphorical rejection from civil society and the literal imprisonment of detained far-right activists are key motives for conveying two main prognostic frames: persecution by the mainstream as a unifying factor, and marginalization as a source of pride, thus pitting the deceit and dehumanization of the powerful antifascist caste against the honor, freedom, and natural dominance of 'true fascist people'. Motivational framing elements take on an abstract rhetoric centered around honor, while also reinterpreting opposition to censorship as an epic battle against Evil, not uncommonly with Tolkienesque references and recurring metaphors of apex predators chained against nature. This frame accounts for 20.5% of the sample.

Cluster Profile 2 – Nationalistic Heroism

At the diagnostic level, a core theme of this heterogeneous cluster is the defense of the homeland and its people, framed as response to an imminent and unavoidable call to action. The nature of such threats is rarely clear-cut, as references to migration, foreign geopolitical interferences, or ethnic replacement theories appear only occasionally. Motivational frames are based on medieval symbolism, as well as on elements drawn from Celtic or Roman paganism. Notably, prognostic responses are mostly metaphorical, framed as moments of

personal trial, and tests of one's steadfastness. This prognosis is projected to the future, either as a quest to fight for ideals or as visions of a future 'Europe of Nations' united by common ancient traditions. Issues such as globalization or religious integration, though criticized, are not politicized per se, but rather serve as rhetorical devices to articulate a pan-European identity. Another thematic strand within this frame is the glorification of passion, courage, and personal fervor, often through references to Futurism and a sort of d'Annunzian, overtly masculine rhetoric. This is the most frequent frame, accounting for 24.6% of the sample.

Cluster Profile 3 – Fallen Comrades

The third cluster includes lyrics referring to old comrades and heroic figures of the past. While largely self-explanatory and not directly politicizing any specific issue, this frame is useful for grasping two aspects that are commonly expressed in Italian White Power identity-building. First, it profusely celebrates the notion of personal sacrifice for a cause, a recurring theme in line with Clusters 2 and 5. Second, and similarly to Cluster 5, it offers a glimpse into the pantheon of figures revered by far-right communities: whether referring to Sergio Ramelli[4] or the Istrian Foibe massacres,[5] the motivational framing of memory leverages a rationale of human closeness to reinforce well-known historical symbols of the far right. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is also the cluster in which most of the explicit fascist iconography appears, from mentions of 'raised arms' to quotes by Benito Mussolini. It is a relatively minor portion of the sample, as it comprises 13.8% of the total.

Cluster Profile 4 – Rejection of Society

This frame engages with contemporaneity in terms of rejection of a fallen society that has lost its traditional values. Multiple diagnostic frame elements target the general hypocrisy of society, its unnatural degeneration, and provide a moral criticism of capitalism, the bourgeoisie, and of the whole democratic system. However, such criticisms are expressed by highlighting an ethical and cultural decay rather than any socio-economic problems. This distinction is crucial for two reasons. First, the (arguably improperly labeled) variable of social justice, which represents motivational framing based on the people's supposed real social needs, is far more frequent in Cluster 1 (45.5%) than in this cluster (27.3%). This suggests that although anti-capitalist themes are present, their function is mainly to draw an oppositional front to, once again, state an adversarial identity stance. Secondly, attacks on the institutional system span the entire political spectrum, with no exemptions for the parliamentary right. This may further corroborate the ideological affinity with extra-parliamentary radical-right movements, or at least a profound detachment from representative institutions. Cluster 4 also includes sub-variables associated with struggle and even violent action as prognostic responses, albeit most likely a reflection of stylistic conventions from

the more openly anti-establishment genres of White Power music. This frame accounts for 16.5% of the sample.

Cluster Profile 5 – Glory Days

This backward-looking cluster is largely devoid of any diagnostic framing. It encompasses most instances of celebration of the past, either historical events or heroic figures, while sometimes drawing parallels with current challenges for far-right activists. Notably, a large variety of historical episodes, ranging from the Mexican Independence to support for the Irish Republican Army and the Burmese monks' protests, is used for comparison. Explicit references to historical fascism are less common. This identity affirmation through memory is intertwined with a prognostic frame focused on reclaiming traditions, understood both as conservative values and ancient virtues. This frame appears in 16.5% of the sample.

Cluster Profile 6 – Light Camaraderie

Finally, a smaller portion of the sample (8.0%) contains frame elements related to social bonding and camaraderie among militants and friends. These lyrics are fundamentally apolitical, often recalling subgenres of pub songs that celebrate genuine friendship, humor, and everyday life of in working-class suburbs. Far from ideologically charged tributes, these lyrics draw on punk culture tropes to represent groups of activists as chaotic, rowdy gangs, often disregarding their actual political premises.

Reclaiming the People's Will?

Although all the identified frames carry a certain degree of ideological content, it would be misleading to imply that they collectively represent a single, well-defined political orientation. This is in line with findings of comparative studies across different White Power contexts (Kirsten 2016; Bulli 2020). Still, some patterns are worth highlighting. A significant number of song lyrics, while referring to the current sociopolitical context, do not engage with it diagnostically; instead, it is used as a backdrop for affirming identity and values by contrast. As such, far-right songs appear less and less as tools for advancing a political platform, rather than public declarations of group-belonging and statements of a personal belief system.

A relevant element that might not clearly emerge from the frame analysis is the relatively low frequency of explicitly racial themes. While rejection of foreigners is certainly present, even frames concerned with defending the homeland (Cluster 2) or responding to contemporary society (Clusters 1 and 4) focus more on moral decline, mediocrity of the average Italian, or injustices perpetrated by antifascist traitors. Similarly, references to historical fas-

cism are twofold. On the one hand, there is an intense aestheticization of Italian fascism, understood as means for identity construction and group cohesion through shared symbols and lifestyle. On the other hand, these references are largely depoliticized: they neither frame current issues nor offer coherent solutions within a neofascist project but simply reinforce an existing symbolic repertoire. This aesthetic role is also evident in the widespread appropriation of imageries from medieval and contemporary history, fantasy literature, and pagan cults (see Clusters 1, 3 and 5).

In addition to this syncretic renegotiation of art and memory, a notable finding lies in the diagnostic framing of clusters openly dealing with contemporary politics (Clusters 1 and 4). Lyrics that offer social criticism tend to express a worldview that is markedly detached from the parliamentary right. There is a clear rejection of Atlanticism, of economic support for banks and corporations, and of the political class as a whole. While it may not be entirely accurate to speak of some populist turn in White Power music, one can certainly observe the emergence of thematizations of 'the people' as a unified entity opposed to a degenerate élite. This shift could simply be linked to the increasing influence of aggressive, generically anti-establishment musical genres among later generations of artists (Bulli 2020; Maspero/Ribaric 2020), but it nonetheless marks an ongoing discursive shift. It is also consistent with literature on contemporary movement parties on the far right, and especially with the prominent cultural role CasaPound Italia is still drawing for itself and its radical discourse (Frazzetta 2021). Specifically, CPI's ideological content has been shown to combine a nativist notion of 'true peoplehood' with a symbolic reliance on historical fascism (underlining its 'movement spirit'), together with a strong politicization of economic and social concerns such as housing rights and welfare (Froio et al. 2020) and a vast organizational network relying on music as a primary tool for self-representation (Bulli 2020; Kerma 2025).

The broader shift toward a less dogmatic neofascist musical platform (Maspero/Ribaric 2020, 437) is thus paired with the appropriation of grievances that were previously associated with contentious practices of the left (Di Nunzio/Toscano 2011). The most explicit example of this process of reconfiguration comes from the claim of Oi! and hardcore tropes through reappropriation in cover songs by White Power outfits. Although hardly quantifiable within the broader range of far-right repertoires, covers offer especially meaningful insights into the kind of imageries activists set as their cultural references and how they engage with them, either in continuity or discontinuity with established musical and political traditions.

New Meanings to Old Grievances

Covering a song is a complex and deliberate act of resignification. Within the selection of a specific song, its original and re-experienced context, and the stylistic variations it undergoes, there is a complex meaning-making operation that can shape a cultural artifact into something vastly different. In a cover "the choice of song intends to tease meaning out of perceptions of the past, to take what residual signification exists in memory, and either 'idealize' or 'naturalize' it through its re-presentation and re-performance" (Schiffer 2010, 91). Whether as tributes to influential militant bands or as reinterpretations of street punk classics, covers by White Power artists are no exception. A fitting example is the split EP *All'armi!* by Frangar and SPQR, which features three cover tracks among its four songs: a rework of "Consapevole" by Civico88, and two relatively mainstream metal tracks – "War" by Burzum (not a White Power song per se, though the author's ideological sympathies are well known) and "Gomorrah" by Sodom, whose political stance is markedly different.

Reworks of leftist street punk songs are not uncommon either. One notable case is "Frana la curva", from the 1996 album *Al Volga non si arriva* by the openly communist band Erode. A well-known live cover by the band Hobbit was popularized through Claudio Lazzaro's 2008 documentary *Nazirock*, but the song's meaning within Italian hooligan culture has arguably transcended any right-left polarization, with cover versions by Azione Diretta, Scalpo, and Attaccabrighe on the left, and by Ultima Frontiera and Hate For Breakfast, among others, on the right (Maspero/Ribaric 2020, 393). Even more striking is the tribute to CCCP's *Ortodossia* by Hate For Breakfast, Bad Fate, and Still Burnin' Youth in their release *Ortodossia III – Fedeli alla linea*, tellingly subtitled "A fascist tribute to the pro-Soviet punk of CCCP". True to its name, the three NSHC bands cover "Punk Islam", "Live in Pankow", and "Spara Jurij" respectively, leaving the original lyrics untouched while suggesting a symbolic equivalence between the Soviet October Revolution and the Fascist March on Rome, as stated in the album booklet (Maspero/Ribaric 2020, 398). While not as extreme, similar meaningful covers are frequent across recent far-right repertoires. In the following section, I go over a few White Power reinterpretations of some arguably well-known pieces from the Italian skin and hardcore scenes. According to the previous frame analysis, these cover songs allow us to look into the permeation of radical, anti-capitalist tropes posited by Clusters 1 and 4, suggesting that musical resignification may transcend (some) political categories and translate social struggles into a completely different platform.

Quen Reborn – "Rivolta" (originally by Plastic Surgery)

Verona-based outfit Plastic Surgery represents a particularly interesting case in the political transformations that shaped the Italian hardcore scene. The Veneto region was the first to develop a structured right-wing skinhead environment, as opposed to the provocative neofascist 'mannerism' that had spread elsewhere. Plastic Surgery would eventually go further

by progressively integrating elements of Evolian thought and metapolitical ideas associated with the Italian Nuova Destra into their lyrics.[6] "Rivolta", however, is a memorable hardcore piece that quickly became a staple of Italian skin culture and the influence of which is undisputed regardless of political affiliations. Its lyrics are an anthem to direct action and an urge to take back the streets to reestablish social justice. Given both its anti-establishment charge and the band's later ideological shift, it is perhaps unsurprising that "Rivolta" has been the subject of numerous tributes by White Power bands. Most recently, the track was revived as a studio single by Quen Reborn (2025), whose rendition strays away from the original Oi! style and leans into an alternative metal sound.

Through the streets and down the alleys	Per le vie e per le strade
Across the squares and out in the fields	Per le piazze e per i campi
A noise is growing	Un rumore sta crescendo
A roar is rising	Un clamore sta aumentando
Shutters pulled down	Le serrande abbassate
Silent glances passing by	Sguardi muti tra i passanti
Charter flights for the rich	Voli charter per i ricchi
Heavy thuds in the suburbs	Tonfi sordi nei sobborghi
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta! Rivolta! Rivolta!
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta! Rivolta! Rivolta!
It feels more like a party	Sembra più una festa
Than a slaughter of innocents	Che un massacro di innocenti
And instead of boredom	E che al posto della noia
There is only joy	Ci sia solo l'allegria
No more checkpoints	Niente più controlli
Who even knows the police?	Chi conosce polizia?
Bands of warriors	Bande di guerrieri
Turn the streets red	Fanno rossa la via
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta! Rivolta! Rivolta!
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta! Rivolta! Rivolta!
We don't want a bloody future for you	Noi non vogliamo un futuro di sangue per te
But we don't want to die with you	Ma noi non vogliamo morire con te
If this is the only chance for the youth	Se l'unica chance per la gioventù è questa
We're ready to scream, to scream	Siamo pronti a gridare, a gridare
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta, rivolta, rivolta!
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta, rivolta, rivolta!

However, Quen Reborn's cover also includes a few additional verses where they further aestheticize their notion of 'revolt' and introduce a final semblance of resolution:

Smoke flares in the sky, feel the heartbeat rising	Fumogeni in cielo, sento il battito che cresce
Streets are packed and silence doesn't exist	Le strade sono piene e il silenzio non esiste
Arms raised high, the time is now	Braccia alzate, il tempo è adesso
Here and now, we are the promised army!	Ora e qui, siamo l'esercito promesso!
Anger flows like flooding rivers	La rabbia scorre come fiumi in piena
The struggle is ours and it pulses in our veins	La lotta è la nostra e pulsa nella vena
Voices shout memories of truth	Voci urlano ricordi di verità
Against a system that still won't understand	Contro il sistema che ancora non capirà
We are the future you can't ignore any longer	Siamo il futuro che ora non puoi ignorare
Bleeding dreams, but ready to fight	Sanguiniamo sogni, ma pronti per lottare
Brothers and sisters united in a flame	Fratelli e sorelle uniti in una fiamma
Bringing all your nightmares to life!	Realizzeranno ogni tuo dramma!
No sign of oppression, every soul brings light	Non c'è ombra di oppressione, ogni persona porta lume
As we sail along the waters of this river	Mentre navighiamo sulle acque di questo fiume
Fragments of chains down the alleys	Per le strade frammenti di catene
The street is ours and no siren can be heard!	La strada è nostra e non si sentono sirene!
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta, rivolta, rivolta!
Revolt! Revolt! Revolt!	Rivolta, rivolta, rivolta!

While these additions do not substantially alter the song's thematic content, they are significant in terms of symbolic imagination. A series of longstanding symbols associated with the extreme right and commonly featured in previous lyrics of 'musica alternativa' is introduced: references to flames, blood, discerning light, and 'memories of truth' (not to mention the double entendre of 'raised arms') belong to a well-established semantic repertoire that finds resonance in older strands of far-right music. Fascist symbolism is thus intertwined with familiar tropes of street reclamation and violent resistance against an oppressive system, and a subtextual belief in a natural and rightful social order that needs restoring.

Legittima Offesa – "Droga" (originally by Rip Off)

The political trajectory of Bologna-based band Rip Off throughout the 1980s deserves a study of its own. While it is true that by 1983, at the Certaldo gathering, the band made public its right-wing sympathies following a lineup change (Frezza 2017, 37), this was not yet the case when they joined forces with fellow Bolognese Oi! pioneers Nabat, which would later distance themselves as openly antifascist (Frezza 2017, 38). In fact, the split album that includes "Droga", *Nabat/Rip Off*, also features songs such as "Anti Army" ("È già l'ora di marciare / Per la patria vuoi morire / È già l'ora di marciare / Devi solo obbedire") and "Io Non Voglio Polizia" ("Io non voglio star nel gregge / Io non voglio polizia / Questa è la mia anarchia"). *Nabat/Rip Off* would become a foundational piece of Italian skinhead subculture (Nozza 2011), but the tribute by self-described 'patriotic rock' band Legittima Offesa, also

from Bologna, clearly draws on a theme that is traditionally embedded in the Italian right's lyrical tradition:

No paradise in your future	No paradisi nel tuo futuro
You ran too hard tonight	Hai corso troppo questa notte
Stop crying in the street	Smetti di piangere nella strada
You're too scared to look back!	Hai paura di voltarti!
Drugs: weapon of power!	Droga: arma del potere!
Drugs: weapon of power! Oi! Oi! Oi!	Droga: arma del potere! Oi! Oi! Oi!
Fooling you to keep control	Ti convincono per comandare
With a joint and heroin	Con una canna e l'eroina
Touch the sky with a finger	Tocchi il cielo con un dito
You're too scared to look back!	Hai paura di voltarti!
Drugs: weapon of power!	Droga: arma del potere!
Drugs: weapon of power! Oi! Oi! Oi!	Droga: arma del potere! Oi! Oi! Oi!

"Droga" is only one of several covers featured in the album *Skinheads a passeggio* (Ferlandia, 2003), alongside Skrewdriver's "I Don't Like You", an Oi! reinterpretation of the Italian national anthem, and the hooligan culture tribute "You'll Never Walk Alone", originally a Broadway showtune that later became a stadium anthem for several European football clubs.[7] What stands out in this cover is the shift in tone compared to the more familiar framing of drug addiction as a human tragedy (brought on by an abject, leftist political agenda) that is commonly found in 'musica alternativa'. See for instance "Droga" by Amici del Vento (1993), or "Droga Assassina" by Topi Neri (1994), which depicts the slow decay of an old heroin-addicted friend. Whereas earlier songs emphasized individual suffering, the skinhead reinterpretation reframes and politicizes the issue as a mechanism of systemic oppression. Rip Off's anti-establishment attitude is still present, although instrumentally redeployed for a common right-wing cause. Two themes converge within the main frame elements identified in the previous section: through drug addiction, the lyrics attempt at articulating both the feeling of a systemic oppression and the negation of the individual's natural strength, thus resonating with the leitmotivs of Clusters 1 and 2. Once reappropriated by an explicitly right-wing project, "Droga" becomes less about drugs per se, and more of a device to contest the (leftist) concentration of power and the perceived persecution of far-right activists.

Hate For Breakfast – "La maledizione del benessere" (originally by Sottopressione)

In the 2008 split album *Hate For Breakfast/Macchina targata paura*, released by Rupe Tarpea, Viterbo-based NSHC band Hate For Breakfast pays tribute to a cornerstone group of 1990s Italian hardcore. "La maledizione del benessere" was originally included in the 1998 *Così distante* album by Sottopressione as a screamed rejection of consumerism and meaningless life in suburban Milan:

Nothing to do	Niente da fare
Nothing to say	Niente da dire
Nothing to show	Niente da mostrare
Nothing to fear	Niente da temere
Nothing ever happens	Non è successo niente
Not today, not yesterday	Né oggi né ieri
If I didn't have this, what would I be?	Se non avessi questo, cosa sarei?
Since this is all I have, what am I?	Poiché non ho che questo, cosa sono?
Machine driven by the forces	Macchina guidata dalle forze
Of environment and nature	Dell'ambiente e della natura
Reason is powerless	La ragione impotente
The curse of well-being	La maledizione del benessere
If I didn't have this, what would I be?	Se non avessi questo cosa sarei?
Since this is all I have, what am I?	Poiché non ho che questo, cosa sono?
Curse of well-being,	Maledizione del benessere,
the curse of well-being	la maledizione del benessere
Degrading waste numbing our lives	Spreco degradante che ci inebri le vite
The answer is somewhere else, not here	Altrove la risposta, non qui
Where nothing is real	Dove nulla è vero
Will! Will!	Volontà! Volontà!

Whereas bands like Plastic Surgery and Rip Off experienced shifting political affiliations, there is little ambiguity regarding the ideological orientation of Sottopressione, nor about their involvement in the left-wing social center circuit of Northern Italy. Despite their stark anti-capitalism, Sottopressione's lyrics stand out as something of an anomaly within a genre known for its raw realism. As noted by guitarist Federico Oddone, their work was imbued in a certain 'symbolist vagueness' that leaves room for interpretation.[8] In this cover, no textual modification is necessary. In fact, what is most striking is precisely how easily the original song lends itself to reinterpretation: whereas "Rivolta" is reshaped through symbolic additions, and "Droga" is reframed within different contextual implications, here the discursive overlap is effective from the outset.

The theme of social decay, framed as a rejection of consumerism and of a flattened post-capitalist reality, is equally resonant with the antagonistic left of the 1990s as with segments of today's radical right. Surely, their prognostic frames differ dramatically, but within

the construction of a musical tradition, meaning the reinterpretation of reality through musical repertoires, it is the identity-building component that clearly emerges (Eyerman 2002). And within this identity-building frame, no tricolor flames or fascist symbols are mentioned (even though Hate For Breakfast's discography definitely does not lack them). Instead, covering "La maledizione del benessere" allows Hate For Breakfast to express a form of belonging that is primarily rooted in the streets, a politicized anti-capitalist stance, and a desire for self-determination that opposes neoliberal consumerist values. Some degree of convergence can be seen (that obviously did not gain Sottopressione's sympathy),[9] but this is precisely the power of the cover as a tool of resignification: the original track becomes a medium for "forcing and reshaping ideology" (Schiffer 2010, 77), as new meanings are added and transformed.

Musical Permeation on the Far Right

In *Skinhead*, ex-Nabat guitarist Riccardo Pedrini defines Oi! culture as carrier of an intrinsic "working-class populism" (2004, 109) that had not much to share with sophisticated countercultures and simply relied on a vague class connotation and an authentic yet non-politicized anger as expressive outlets. There are, however, some degrees of continuity between skin principles and the main frames found in the general White Power music dataset. This permeation can be interpreted in multiple ways, as it may simply be linked to the great number of far-right bands that are still drawing on skinhead culture, or it could be representative of the ideological standpoints of supporting movement organizations – such as CPI – in a self-reinforcing cycle.

Nevertheless, by pointing toward a transversal, radical appeal, such hybridized musical practices mark a stark rejection of old neofascist environments (Maspero/Ribaric 2020, 437) and offer composite repertoires for recruiting new generations of activists. As the frame clusters suggest, White Power relies on a wide, sometimes contradictory range of identitarian references that freely draw from an aestheticized value system. This multi-faceted array of co-existing frames and tropes has no pretense to articulate a comprehensive ideology, contributing instead to the construction of a discursive front against a common enemy – that is, the perceived hegemonic antifascist system. Right-wing covers represent the most telling example of this reconfiguration process, but are also symptoms of a wider hybridization of references and practices.

Overall, White Power music has been shown to provide far-right movements with an impressive cultural toolkit for displacing ideological symbolism, framing issues, recruiting young activists, and building political connections across national borders. As this study suggests, music may also act as a catalyst for claiming and reframing political stances beyond their established traditions. Still, as musical subcultures are fluid and ever-changing, the manifold strategies and practices they enable within any political project are hardly ever self-evident. As reactionary movements do not appear to be losing any traction all over

Europe, being able to grasp the many shades of their cultural dimensions becomes all the more significant to understand their current ideological repositioning and aesthetic appeal even among unsuspected social groups.

Notes

1 Damiano Kerma is a PhD candidate at the University of Pisa, Department of Political Science.

2 "La peculiarità della musica d'area non è tanto il genere musicale quanto le tematiche affrontate. In un'epoca di appiattimento culturale, di estremo conformismo in cui la musica è riflesso di tutto ciò, con tanto di hit che inneggiano alla vita mondana, agli eccessi sfrenati e al libertinismo, per un giovane che si approccia alla vita militante diventa più che mai paideutico ascoltare una musica che incarna una diversa visione del mondo che porta in alto valori come la Patria, il sacrificio, l'onore." The quote comes from an editorial by CasaPound Italia's youth organization Blocco Studentesco in *Raffica* (2024), the far-right music zine of webradio Radio Bandiera Nera.

3 26 songs were later excluded during the coding process as having too little text for a meaningful analysis.

4 Sergio Ramelli was a nineteen-year-old militant of Movimento Sociale Italiano's youth organization Fronte della Gioventù, killed in an ambush beating by militants of extra-parliamentary far-left organization Avanguardia Operaia in 1975.

5 A long contentious topic in Italy's memory of World War II, notably leveraged by contemporary right-wing parties, the *Foibe massacres* were acts of mass killing and disposal in natural sinkholes of Italian and Slav anti-communists and presumed fascist collaborators, perpetrated by Yugoslav Partisans between 1943 and 1945 in then-Italian Istrian and Dalmatian territories.

6 Interview with Flavio Frezza: "Gli skinhead italiani e il libro 'Italia Skins'", in: *CrombieMedia* (6 marzo 2018; aggiornato 7 novembre 2020), blog.crombiemedia.com/intervista-flavio-frezza/ (last access 14.07.2025).

7 Review of *Skinheads A Passeggio*, in *Archivio Non Conforme* (archivionon conforme.it/recensione-album-legittima-offesa-skinheads-a-passeggio/, last access 10.07.2025).

8 Interview with Federico Oddone, in *The Old Blood* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqJjIQi3TBk, last access 12.07.2025).

9 Interview with Hate For Breakfast on their meeting with Federico Oddone (cf. Maspero/Ribaric 2020, 410).

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Appendix

Table A. Minimal codebook for frame elements in Italian White Power music

Diagnostic framing	
Past times	Nostalgia, exemplary figures and struggles of the past
Human dissatisfaction	General misanthropic repulse, unspecified need for change
Societal dissatisfaction	Degeneration of society (including feminist and LGBT issues), failed politics, economic disarray
Self-loathing	Own humble conditions (in a humorous tone)
Motherland	Various threats to the Nation and its people
Personal limits	Personal limits: own weakness, unspecified struggles requiring full sacrifice
Antifascism	Antifascism: historical antifascism, partisans, current-day communists
Oppression	Oppression: systemic leftist oppression, censorship, unjust rulings and institutions
Prognostic framing	
Cultural restoration	Celebration of the past, return to glorious roots (in mostly cultural and symbolic terms)
Memory	Keeping true bonds and memories alive, remembering loved ones
Fight	Disruption, active rejection of society, violent action
Camaraderie	Companionship, finding strength in peers
Heroism	Individual taking action against the world, last stand, sacrifice
Overachieving	Solipsistic will to overcome limits, bettering oneself, growth
Collective resilience	Common consciousness, passive resistance against the system
Introspection	Self-reflection on values, search for dialogic solutions
Cultural hegemony	Constructive view, broader metapolitical project, building a Europe of Nations
Motivational framing	
Medieval symbolism	Medieval aesthetic, references to chivalry, crusades, historical battles
Street life	Imageries of tough life in crime-infested suburbs
Fascist symbolism	References to Mussolini and historical fascism, events, practices and appearances of fascist-era Italy
Identity	Firm identity and moral statement, being true to oneself, detachment from a corrupt world
Faith	Concept of a higher will, sense of purity
Military symbolism	Contemporary military references, metaphors involving both World Wars, weapons, war equipment
Willpower	Personal will as driving force, virtues of courage and determination
Pagan symbolism	Mixed references to Celtic Europe, Norse mythology, Roman pantheon
Honor	Sense of public honor and duty
Eternity	Homage to heroes and martyrs of the past, eternal memory
Futurism	References to D'Annunzio and futurist tropes, beauty of chaos, fighting, and unrestrained passion
Fun times	Imageries of friendship, jolly everyday life
Fantasy symbolism	References to Tolkien and high fantasy imageries
Anti-system	Just fight against the system, collective freedom, rejection of authority
Natural predominance	References to nature and predation, social Darwinism, natural order