**Mark:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Endless Knot Podcast

**Aven:** where the more we know

**Mark:** the more we want to find out.

**Aven:** Tracing serendipitous connections through our lives

**Mark:** and across disciplines.

**Aven:** Hi, I'm Aven

**Mark:** and I'm Mark.

**Aven:** And today we're talking about heavy metal. First, very briefly. We have a new patron. Thank you very much to Wayne, our newest patron. Woo!

**Mark:** Today we have an interview episode. Back in the spring, we spoke to Jeremy Swist about heavy metal music and the ancient world.

**Aven:** Jeremy did his PhD at the University of Iowa with a dissertation entitled, "A principio reges: the reception of the seven Kings of Rome in Imperial historiography from Tiberius to Theodosius. He is currently a lecturer in the department of classical studies at Brandeis.

**Mark:** He has been giving a number of talks about heavy metal music and the classics recently, and is organizing an entire conference on the subject, Heavy Metal and Global [00:01:00] Pre-Modernity, happening online February 24th to 26th, 2022. Follow Jeremy @MetalClassicist and his co-organizer @NaylorDavis on Twitter to learn more and get updates when the conference website is available.

**Aven:** We're really glad to have him here to talk about this fascinating topic.

A brief content warning. There is discussion of racism and racist ideologies in this podcast.

Hi, Jeremy. Thanks so much for coming on!

**Mark:** Welcome!

**Jeremy:** Thanks for having me! Thanks for the opportunity to join you guys and talk about stuff.

**Aven:** All right! Well, we'll start with that stuff. We usually start with our guests asking some variant of this question. So I will ask-- I know that one of, and we can talk about some of your other interests, but one of your main interests is the combination or the overlap between metal-- music, as in-- and the ancient world.

So, can you tell us where that [00:02:00] interest comes from? Are those two different parts of your life that have ended up together? How did that happen?

**Jeremy:** Well, I think it's probably symptomatic of when you're an academic and your academic life slowly devours the rest of your life, because these are two worlds that started separate and then slowly came together in many ways. And partly just because the more that I saw them in the same context, the more similarities and parallels I could draw to the point where, you know, it's not just, 'here's a bunch of songs that sing about Julius Caesar and Medusa and Alexander and all of that'.

But there's actually-- culturally, heavy metal and classics have very similar kind of dynamics as well as problems, which we can get into. But we can [00:03:00] trace back to where things started for me. And an interesting coincidence is that the same time I got into classics was about the same time I got into heavy metal, which was around the beginning of high school back in 2003.

And that's when I took my first Latin class and about that same time, I was already getting into some of your typical gateway drug bands for heavy metal, like Linkin Park, Limp Bizkit, and then that kind of goes along to Metallica and that kind of surface level, really well known stuff.

And at the same time, I became friends with a guy in that Latin class named Nick Adams, who actually went on to the University of Toronto, which is why I'm familiar with that campus, cause I've visited there. It's a nice, nice place-- except for that library. Anyway, he got me into Slayer and he was getting into metal at the same time I was and we sort of became buddies.

We'd [00:04:00] go to the record store every weekend and buy some new records and CDs. We listened to them when we got home and we started going to concerts together and everything. And it kind of went from there, but we also had similar scholarly interests. You know, we're both taking Latin, we were into history. He went on to be a history major at UT. And by the time we got to AP Latin in our senior year of high school, we were really deep into kind of the underground metal scene at that point. And we were also taking AP Virgil, specifically. I don't know if you guys have the AP system--

**Aven:** --we don't have the similar in Canada. I know what it is though. It's basically preparation for a university, right?

**Jeremy:** It's basically an advanced course where you earn college credit in high school before you go to college. So with my AP Latin credits, I didn't have to take as many Latin credits once I got to college.

And so we read Virgil and we read the Aeneid and as-- especially when we got to [00:05:00] Book 2 where things got really violent with the sack of Troy and Laocoön being devoured by the serpent and all of this merciless slaughter, Nick and I turned to each other like, 'man, this reads kind of like heavy metal lyrics, like death metal lyrics', or where there's war and violence and the darkness of human nature on sort of this epic tableau.

And Nick was also learning guitar at this point, and so we decided, 'You know what? We don't know about any heavy metal bands that sing about Virgil's Aeneid! Why don't we do it ourselves?' And so we formed this little project and the music wasn't very good. We didn't really know what we were doing, but I wrote the lyrics and they were basically inspired by what we happened to be reading in AP at the time. So we have a song about Laocoön being torn apart by the serpent. We have a song about Neoptolemus breaking into the palace, et [00:06:00] cetera. And so that didn't really go anywhere, but it planted the seed of this idea that there was this congeniality between a lot of the themes in certain aspects of Classics, epic literature violence, war, but also other themes are there as well from mythology and history as well.

But it wasn't really until I got to grad school that I discovered that there was a lot more metal out there than I thought that engaged with these topics, to the point where there's entire concept albums out there on the Aeneid, on the Trojan War, on the Odyssey, on the career of Alexander, the battle of Thermopylae, Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars, the list goes on, right-- various Roman emperors, as well as just individual songs by bands that otherwise don't tend to engage with those topics [00:07:00] frequently. And that makes up the majority of the songs out there. They're these one-offs that a band does. For instance, Alexander the Great by Iron Maiden is only one of a handful of songs they've written on Classical topics, along with The Ides of March and Flight of Icarus.

And so if you count those songs, those individual one-offs, it adds up to a couple thousand songs total that you can go and listen to. One of my grad school professors, Robert Ketterer, has this kind of running joke. He studies classical reception and opera music, and so you could name a topic in ancient myth or history, and he would say 'there's an opera written about that!', you know, La clemenza di Tito and all of that.

Well, I could probably say the same thing and say 'there's a metal song about that'. If you name whatever myth or individual figure from antiquity, mythical or [00:08:00] historical or events or whatever --there's not a metal song on everything, not the more obscure stuff. But you'll be surprised at how deeply a lot of these artists read the sources to find stories that would be compatible with the themes that they explore in their music.

For instance, there's a band out of California called Serpent Rider and the vocalist is from Greece, and he's clearly read his Apollonius because they have a song about that episode from Book 2 of the Argonautika, where Polydeukes and Amycus, the King of the Bebrycians have that boxing contest. And that's just never been done before, and it's a wonderful little song called 'Pour Forth Surquidious', so I can probably put that in the show notes since I mentioned it.

**Aven:** Yeah. I'll get you to send me links afterwards.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, I can make a playlist or something! Cause yeah. And that's the other thing to keep in mind is, [00:09:00] just as comedies and tragedies were musical performance with sights and sounds, you can really only appreciate this music if you actually listen to the music, see the album artwork, see it in relation to the other songs, in addition to reading the lyrics to see how image and word and sound come together to create this powerful narrative that explores a lot of these topics, which we can talk about numerous examples-- but anyway, what got me interested in it research-wise was-- interestingly enough, there was a CAMWS panel back in 2014, 2015 at Baylor. And I ended up actually not making it to that conference but basically, two classicists, one is Osman Umurhan at University of New Mexico and Chris Fletcher, who's at Louisiana State University. They're the ones who got the ball [00:10:00] rolling on the scholarly study of what I would call heavy metal classicism. And so they did this panel basically on Classics and heavy metal. And I didn't actually submit to it because I didn't think at that time that there was really much to go on.

I thought that, as opposed to Vikings and other areas of history and mythology, classical topics were, you know, not as compatible or just not as frequent in heavy metal, that it wasn't really a thing, but really the issue was I just wasn't digging deeply enough. And what really made the difference here is that I discovered there is a search function on the website called the Encyclopaedia Metallum, and you can tell a classicist was not consulted in naming that, but partly because the Encyclopaedia Metallica was a thing from the early 80s that already took the name and has nothing to do with the [00:11:00] band Metallica.

But anyway, that's being pedantic as usual. It is also called The Metal Archives, if you go to metal-archives.com and basically it's an open source database of every metal band since the early 70s that has existed with recorded material and you can go onto that site and you can just search for any band and you can see photos of the bands, their discography, a lot of them have lyrics available, and a lot of other information that's very useful for doing this kind of research. It's my bread and butter, it's as essential to me as Perseus is to a classicist or the Liddell and Scott and all of that, or the OCD. And they have a very good search function where you can basically go and search for any song that's ever been recorded in any genre of metal that has the word 'Leonidas' in it, or [00:12:00] 'Cassandra'-- though, as you can imagine, some of the more common names, it gets a little harder to sift through-- you know, 'is this the Cassandra they're talking about?'. But that's a great way to basically discover that there is possibly a heavy metal song written about this particular topic.

And so, doing that sort of research has shown me that no, it's not just this really niche thing that a handful of bands do in like, Italy and Europe-- and Iron Maiden did it, sort of-- this is something that bands all over the world, on almost every continent except Antarctica do, is they are interested in Greek and Roman and Egyptian and Near Eastern antiquity as great bases for heavy metal music.

And it's a great way to bring these stories to life, I think. Because I think something that we lack to a large degree when [00:13:00] we just read these texts as philologists is the emotional connection. Okay? We kind of read them with our brains rather than our other senses and what I think-- heavy metal is a very visceral, emotionally charged genre of music.

And so when you-- if you can bring these stories to life with those sounds and then that atmosphere, and of course vocal deliveries then-- it really, it's reception, it makes you look at these original texts in a new light. You know, so for instance, there's a concept album by, I believe it's a Dutch band called Ex Libris on Medea, from Colchis to Iolcus to Corinth and there is a duet as one of the songs where it's basically her arguments with Jason in the Medea. It's not adapting the original lines, it's a new set of lyrics, but it really shows you the potential [00:14:00] to dramatize and bring these voices to life that we often just read silently.

**Mark:** Hmm. And can you also access album art easily? Because metal album art is some of the most detailed and interesting out there, really. And I imagine a lot of this also gets reflected in that place as well.

**Jeremy:** Absolutely. And the Metal Archives always have, usually they have album artwork with every release that you can look at and it's fair use, at least in the US, so you can use it.

And yes, you could do a lot of research just on album artwork, and how they transform antiquity to align with some of the core ethos of heavy metal with themes of power, violence, hyper-masculinity, sexual deviance, you know, all these sort of [00:15:00] transgressive themes and themes of power and tradition as well are often coming to the fore and that's reflected in the album artwork.

So for instance, I think one example of that would be-- there is a band from I believe Argentina called Ax Battler and they have an album that is about-- it's kind of an anthology of Greek mythology, but the album artwork, specifically their take on Theseus-- it's not Theseus, it's Perseus and Medusa, who are both represented on the album cover.

And Perseus, if you look at him, you can see how they transform Perseus into something that you would expect, a heavy metal hero to look like. He looks like Conan the Barbarian. He looks exactly like the members of Manowar on their album covers, okay?

He's wearing a loincloth, he has long black hair, he is hyper muscular and he's crouching down in the foreground looking away from Medusa. And Medusa, on the other hand, looks a [00:16:00] lot like the Medusa from Ray Harryhausen, the Claymation monster that she's represented as in the original Clash of the Titans film.

And this--where you see I might be going here is, heavy metal, in appropriating ancient history and mythology-- yes,a lot of them do kind of read the sources, but a lot of them are also at least inspired, if not entirely taking their conceptions of antiquity from popular culture, especially through the medium of film.

So you see this--for instance, tons of songs on the Spartans and Thermopylae are directly inspired by 300. And in fact, a lot of them came out within a couple years of the film and sort of go with that. But back to this album cover by Ax Battler, so we have Medusa represented that way, but there's also some differences.

So heavy metal is all of that-- at least traditionally, it has these themes [00:17:00] of rebellion and individuality and power and transgression. And it also has, at least traditionally, a highly patriarchal, masculinist bent, and the flip side of that is it often has themes when pertaining to women as sort of these femme fatales. And that's just one reason that Medusa is such a popular topic in heavy metal classical reception, is she seems the sort of archetypical femme fatale who, regardless of what the sources say, somehow becomes this figure who uses charisma, sexuality, and even black magic in order to lure men to their doom.

And she represents the threat to masculine control, and this is why, say, witches, for instance, are [00:18:00] also a very common topic in metal as well, cause they kind of represent the forces beyond the control of patriarchy that need to be subdued. So, the Perseus and Medusa myth is quite popular in these narratives-- though I'll get to another bit on that shortly. So, the Medusa in this album cover, which I was-- I've been talking about the past 10 minutes, sorry, there's a lot of digressions here, but this is how my brain works. She is represented in this highly sexualized form, much more so than the original Harryhausen Medusa and so just the-- there's a very stark contrast between how she appears and how Perseus appears. So she, according to this album artwork, she represents not just a threat of violence against [00:19:00] human beings, against men, but she represents the threat of sexual attraction to men. So that her petrification of men is a symbolic emasculation.

And we see-- and there's a fair amount of heavy metal songs that draw upon that symbolism. And ever since the band Anthrax had the song Medusa back in the mid eighties, and you can see if you read the lyrics to that song, there's a lot of sexual innuendo there.

So-- on the other hand, not every song on Medusa is like that, but some of the earlier ones are, and because what we're sort of getting at with this is that heavy metal began as a largely white, male, working class phenomenon. Okay? It started in Birmingham, England with Black Sabbath, and so the original audience for heavy metal were these, were people of that demographic who [00:20:00] gravitated toward this music because this music allowed them to channel their frustrations with various elements of society during the 1970s, during the Cold War, all of the economic problems during that time that Black Sabbath sang about in their music: the threat of nuclear war, drug use, all of these topics that rock and roll didn't really interrogate nearly as much.

And so when Black Sabbath and other heavy metal bands kind of approached it more open, more head-on, this sort of group of disenchanted youth, you know, after the dream of the 60s sort of was shattered for them, found a refuge. And so, up through the 80s and then even up to today, metal is still largely white male dominated.

Though by now it has grown to be globally comprehensive. So people of [00:21:00] all colors, classes and creeds have joined the metal scene, not just as fans, but as musicians, as journalists, and as scholars of heavy metal which is quite encouraging. And certainly there's a lot more women and people of color and LGBTQ+ people, which was really helped when Rob Halford of Judas Priest came out as gay a couple of decades ago. And how that affects classical reception in heavy metal is that we are getting more and more songs that are looking at these topics in a different light, in a more critical light.

So for instance, we have more bands with women musicians who are presenting Medusa more sympathetically, as having more agency. So there is a band from Italy called Evenoire, and they have women vocalists and they play symphonic metal. And they have a song [00:22:00] called Tears of Medusa, in which the vocalist sings as Medusa.

And it is-- the lyrics of the song are very much in the style of something like Ovid's Heroides, where she is actually writing a letter to Poseidon and she's basically trying to process what happens between her and him and what has happened to her as a result of that.

It really tries to bring the song into sort of a modern context of-- you know, the myth is, can be read more than just the literal 'Athena turned her into a Gorgon because she was assaulted in her temple' into kind of an encounter where she's not sure what happens between her and Poseidon, but she knows that it wasn't good and that she's kinda living the consequences of that.

And she feels like she's become-- I [00:23:00] don't like this term-- spoiled goods or something like that, or at least she kind of has this self-blaming sort of tone to it, not entirely. But basically, she has this idea that, 'Oh you know, nobody wants to look at me anymore'. That kind of thing, those kinds of frustrations, which is a very interesting take where neither is it making her a monster, but on the other hand, it's not just making her some voiceless victim. She is taking, claiming her own voice here, which we never get in the sources, which is another great thing that this kind of reception does. And she is reflecting on this and trying to make her own sense of it. So, there's an example there. There's another band from Quebec called Spectral Wound that also have a different take here.

They have a song called Slaughter of the Medusa. And in that song the real villain is both Perseus and Athena. So for instance they basically, it basically paints Perseus as this sort of a [00:24:00] coward who used deception and didn't--

**Aven:** didn't play fair?

**Jeremy:** --didn't play fair here.

And he was just some bastard son of Zeus and everything. And then-- but the real monster at the end of the song, it claims, is Athena. She is the real blight upon the world that leads to this suffering, which, you know, this being a black metal song, that genre is specifically very critical of religion. So there could be that kind of resonance there.

So, those are just a couple of examples. There's some songs on Alexander that are more critical of him kind of saying, ' this is not just-- this wasn't just some conquering hero. He had this dark side, this God complex' and even the Iron Maiden song acknowledges that a little bit where, you know, yes he became a god, but he still, he died in the end of a fever. It's a very kind of anticlimactic denouement there. So I think as metal has matured over what been now five decades since the early seventies, it has, [00:25:00] I think there's become more nuance in taking a look at these myths. And I think that's partly as a result of metal becoming more inclusive and diverse and kind of interrogating its own toxic elements that tend to subsist when your culture is traditionally kind of a white man type of thing.

And you can think of parallels with a certain other field that a couple of us are in...

**Aven:** I don't know what you're talking about...

**Jeremy:** So it's moving in good directions, but there's still a lot of toxicity and rot in the underbelly of the undergrounds that it continually has to confront just as with many other groups, academic fields, as well as other cultures and countercultures.

**Mark:** Do you find that the historical material and the mythological material are [00:26:00] used in largely the same ways or do they put them to different purposes?

**Jeremy:** As I see it, I think they don't see the historical material and the mythological material as being that much different. You know, kind of like how the Greeks and Romans would have viewed that, they would have viewed it as their history largely. At least, as they present it in various genres of poetry. I'm hoping to write a paper on this someday, but I think the best ancient example of what you're getting at is the poetry of Lucan.

**Aven:** I was wondering if Lucan-- I was thinking, 'Lucan surely has to be a fertile ground'. When you talked about finding the Aeneid as somewhat metal, all I can think of was Lucan. I was just like, 'there is not a scene in that epic that could not be a song'.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. Unsurprisingly, there doesn't appear to be much out there that directly adapts like, the Pharsalia as like, a concept album, but there's plenty of songs [00:27:00] on the civil wars, you know, plenty of songs on Julius Caesar, as well as Octavian, Antony and Cleopatra. So that whole period of Roman history is definitely-- that potential definitely has been tapped to the point where I'm hoping that more people branch out beyond those topics you know, further back or further forward.

But basically, what Lucan did with Livy and Caesar's commentaries is he basically turned it into epic poetry and made it much more mythological without necessarily putting gods and a divine apparatus in there, the same way that Homer or Virgil did. But that's essentially what heavy metal does with ancient history, you know-- with Alexander, the Spartans and various Roman topics is they present it with these various epic themes. So you have gods involved, you have kind of just supernatural occurrences and monstrosities [00:28:00] and things that you tend not to get in other--in, say, historical writing. So it really does blend together, I think.

**Aven:** So I know that-- I mean, you've touched on it already, but maybe we can talk a little bit about it directly-- one of the strands you've been looking at recently, cause I saw a paper you gave on it, is about the specific overlap or the specific use of the ancient world by bands that have white supremacist leanings, or that are explicitly white supremacist or even explicitly sort of hate groups basically.

And I know that that's-- I mean, you've already talked about how that's by no means the only way that this material is used, but it is one of the ways and it's probably in some ways, one of the ways that people might encounter it. So, do you want to talk a little bit about that and what you've been looking at?

**Jeremy:** Absolutely. So for some context here, as I said before, a lot of [00:29:00] the traditional themes of heavy metal are transgression and kinda reasserting individualism and power and in many cases, masculinity, as well as-- There's a lot of a nostalgia for tradition or for a past that was before capitalist, industrial, neoliberal society came in and created all of this social alienation and globalization. Heavy metal, being fundamentally antagonistic to the status quo, means that how it expresses that antipathy and rebels against it and expresses transgression against it can go in a number of directions, left or right. And a lot of bands do go to the right. In response to that though, many do go to the left as well.

Or many bands simply use various transgressive symbols in [00:30:00] order to channel that disenchantment with various institutions of political, social, economic conformity and control. So for instance, in metal we wear a lot of black, there's a lot of occult and satanic symbols that get thrown around. And the vast majority of people who use those symbols are not, you know, theological Satanists. They're not even LaVeyan Satanists or philosophical Satanists. That's not what those symbols are for, those symbols represent just simply--

**Aven:** yeah, a rejection rather than an allegiance--

**Jeremy:** -- they're celebrating transgression and rebellion for its own sake as a fundamental good.

It's basically saying that 'I am not a conformist to society, I reject a lot of what's going on today and I'm basically using this art in order to channel that antipathy'. And often the case to some is that you're expressing that simply to channel frustrations, but also it's [00:31:00] often connected to how you are active politically.

So, with bands that kind of go to the right with this transgression, when they also have an interest in ancient history or mythology, what often sort of intersects here is we start seeing them identify ancient Greece, ancient Rome as-- and you know what's coming here-- the foundations of our precious Western civilization and culture, eh? And this is especially the case with a lot of Italian bands and Greek bands, as you can imagine, but also a lot of European bands in general, they sort of toe that line, as well as bands in North America also.

So, a topic that I am not going to address anytime soon is a larger topic and it's a much thornier issue is the intersection of nationalism with classical reception and [00:32:00] heavy metal, because that is a big factor in a lot of this reception. And also simply this sort of valorization of European or Euro-American civilization and values and what those might be dog whistles for.

But-- so that's a very broad and difficult topic to address, which I may get to someday. But my priority now is for bands that go further than that, they are using narratives of the Persian Wars and of Alexander the Great and of various Roman emperors in order to advance a clearer political agenda that is clearly racist, xenophobic, antisemitic, and in some cases overtly fascist. [00:33:00] And so there are hundreds of bands out there that are like this. Most of them are, you know, very obscure, but some of them are-- they have name recognition in the metal scene, for better or worse. And just to put things in perspective, you know, these are a few hundred bands out of tens of thousands of bands worldwide.

So, this is not to sweep this under the rug because this is the case of 'this is a small minority of bands that still get a lot of air time'. And they're still very influential in some contexts. So the numbers say one thing, but not necessarily-- that doesn't mean that they aren't something that we can just ignore.

So that's kind of what I'm looking at because these bands use heavy metal and the messages that they encode in it in order to express not just transgression of the status quo, [00:34:00] but also advocating what they want to put in place of the status quo and who to blame for the status quo as it is. So, for instance, there's one subgenre of heavy metal called National Socialist black metal. And these are bands that, as the label suggests, their lyrics, their symbolism, their album covers and the political allegiances of their members are explicitly fascist.

And so a number of them do as the Nazis did themselves. They looked to the Spartans, for instance, as models of proper masculinity and these were kind of the archetype of the master race and the proper system of education, that their eugenics, their subordination of the helots, for instance-- you know, they looked at all of this and they said, 'this is an ideal that we need to to recapture here'.

And in the [00:35:00] broader context, a lot of these bands, and not just the NSBM bands, they kind of have these themes of a coming apocalyptic war-- you know, they're really into this kind of World War III stuff, but they specifically see World War III as restarting civilization, and clearing the tables so that the values of ancient Sparta and Rome can be reinstated and that, you know, the proper human beings, the master race and whatnot can reassert itself because they have this belief that if-- a social Darwinist belief-- that Indo-European people are the most fit to survive and to rule everyone else. Right? So that sort of militarism is a big theme in metal in general, okay. There's a lot of songs about war and everything. But this is-- this has [00:36:00] definitely more of an explicit intent. And sometimes it's hard to kind of parse out whether a band singing about the Battle of Thermopylae is of those allegiances.

Right, so, and this is where you have to exercise care. Just because a band writes a song about the Spartans doesn't mean that they are fascists or nationalists or right wing. You have to consider other factors about the band itself, its other songs, what circles they operate in, in order to then say, 'okay, in the context of the whole package here, this song about the Spartans seems to make sense in terms of what their ideology is'.

But again, you could write up a song about the Battle of Thermopylae and be left wing. So for instance, one of the early-- one of the first songs about the last stand of the 300 was [00:37:00] from back in 1997--no, 1999, rather and that's a song called Moment of Truth by the-- it's what you call a crossover thrash band called Stormtroopers of Death which was founded by Scott Ian, the lead guy in Anthrax-- and you know, crossover thrash is hardcore punk blended with thrash metal.

And basically this-- if you read the lyrics to this song Moment of Truth, and I encourage you to listen to it, it's a pretty you know-- it's a 'pump you up' kind of song-- the message of that is simply you know, this is Thermopylae, it symbolizes kind of the general struggle of the few against the many, against systems of imperialism and oppression. And just sticking it to the man, you can't tell us what to do, it's better to die on your feet than live on your knees-- you know, these kind of messages that have a pretty wide resonance. And also if you read the song clearly, we see [00:38:00] how narratives of battle and violence are also just ways of channeling our animal instincts in a way. The analogy I would say is like, playing violent video games. Just because you play violent video games, doesn't mean you're going to go out and murder people or whatever. It's a channel for that id, if you want to bring in kind of a Freudian thing in here, I'm not a psychologist.

And yeah, there's a big discussion of, you know re. death metal lyrics about serial killers and all of that. And just because Cannibal Corpse sings a song about literally smashing one's face with a hammer doesn't mean that either the band itself or people who listened to it are going to go out and do such a thing, it's there in order to respond to a need and fulfill that need rather than create that need.

And so I think a lot of-- and this gets into one of the major [00:39:00] reasons why I think a lot of topics in ancient history and mythology resonate with heavy metal so well, is it really gets at what one of the earliest writing on metal academically, Deena Weinstein theorizes. And she has this notion that metal can be read in sort of religious terms as a kind of ditheism. Okay, there are two gods of heavy metal. One is Chaos, and one is Dionysus. And so Chaos, more in the modern sense than-- but also the ancient sense of, it's fundamentally negation, a void, nihilism, but also kind of the antithesis of order.

Okay, so this is kind of the idea that metal is transgressive, it exists in order to always be there to challenge the norm, the status quo and to imagine-- [00:40:00] it kind of processes the breakdown of these various systems, whether it be religion or political systems or the human body, for instance, right?

So you can imagine that. But it's also Dionysus. And he is the God in many ways also of breaking boundaries, transgression, operating in these ambiguous spaces in terms of say, gender for instance. But he also represents as the God of wine the liberation of the senses, the ability to let loose, of ecstasy, to step out of the persona that we have to put on in our professional, social lives.

So for instance, a Dionysian ritual has many parallels with say, a metal concert, where you can put on a new identity, you can put on a different identity. There's a-- it's a kind of a communal ritual. There is loud [00:41:00] boisterous music, okay? And there are various movements, moshing, headbanging, whatnot, that induce kind of a trance.

And then of course, various substances are consumed that assist that, you know, quasi-spiritual experience, though it's not required. It's just as, you know, in a Dionysian ritual, you don't have to be on something. So the kind of the point here is that unlike Plato who says, 'we can't have the gods doing all these terrible things in our poetry, because that will corrupt our children's souls, and we can only have poetry that is praising the gods and everything'. Instead, heavy metal is much more like the tragic theater, where various taboos are transgressed and violence is represented in various ways. And kind of the dark side of human nature and of the universe is laid bare. And you could get into [00:42:00] sort of the Aristotelian theory of catharsis here, but I think that heavy metal definitely has that cathartic effect of when performing it, experiencing it even, or listening to it that I think helps-- is therapeutic in a way, in the way that Aristotle or even modern psychologists might understand it.

In fact there are-- there's a growing body of scholarship on the psychology of heavy metal and the notion of heavy metal as therapy. You know, we're all the way back to Pythagoras here, and various Pythagorean philosophers, saying that certain types of music are medicinal for the soul.

And I think heavy metal personally, at least to me, helps me remain as a well adjusted person. And I think if, despite the stigmas that have been thrown at heavy metal since the eighties with the Satanic Panics and everything, you know, the vast majority of metal fans are-- I'd like to think, at least-- pretty well adjusted [00:43:00] people who live normal lives and they just have this context that is either private or with a select group where they participate in this Dionysian ritual in order to maintain that balance in their lives.

And other psychological theories about Aristotle and everything that are probably anachronistic at this point. But, you know, that's how I like to make sense of it because it justifies that heavy metal is a good thing. And I think it is.

**Aven:** Yeah. But with the caveat and I-- just to bring it back to the, what you were talking about before that, you know, where that line is-- because when you're talking about say, the bands that are explicitly advocating for particularly fascist things the question is, to what degree is it that kind of cathartic play-acting or whatever you want to call it of the darkest impulses, which you would never want to put into practice? [00:44:00] Or is it a reflection of an-- and also, when you're talking about violence and then not doing violence, that's one thing. But when you're-- certain kinds of hate speech are violence in and of themselves, even if nothing more is said. So I guess that becomes then that slippery area where you're trying to navigate around and figure out what the edges are.

**Jeremy:** Absolutely. And that is a great question about-- yes, we have songs like Hammer Smashed Face, about, you know, brutally torturing and murdering people. But you also have songs by NSBM bands that talk about everything you'd expect, you know, violence against various ethnic groups. There's songs out there for instance, that glorify the emperor Titus, because he destroyed, you know, he sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and all of that.

And so where do you draw that [00:45:00] line? And I think the line for me is,' is this glorifying or advocating violence and discrimination against marginalized groups'? Because I think fundamentally, heavy metal should be about you know, antipathy to majority and privileged and powerful institutions.

Okay. That's why, for instance, a lot of heavy metal, especially black metal, death metal, maybe more extreme genres, a lot of songs are frequently critical of Christianity. Because the majority of metal bands traditionally have been from majority Christian countries. And so that is the establishment that they are rebelling against.

But as soon as, and so I think-- and that's how metal should be. It should always challenge and question the status quo, but also the Powers That Be. However, when there is a redirection toward groups that are not [00:46:00] in positions of power and privilege, groups that are marginalized, and you're directing all of that energy against them-- then I think-- to me, that is a perversion of what heavy metal is. Also the fact that heavy metal is very individualistic. And fascism is not individualism. It's about basically conformity to and obedience to, you know, an authority, whether it's Sparta's law of Lycurgus or Adolf Hitler or some combination thereof.

And so I just don't see-- that doesn't make much sense to me. But again, and this gets at another thing you brought up, Aven, is to what degree is say, fascist imagery or lyrics, to what degree is this a reflection of political convictions, an ideology that the musicians want [00:47:00] to advocate for and put into practice? And to what degree is this simply performative, as you say, this is simply transgression, it's--

**Aven:** --provocative--

**Jeremy:** --exactly!

It's transgression for its own sake. So for instance, in the 70s when punk rock became a thing, you may recall that Sid Vicious and Siouxsie and the Banshees, I think also were starting to wear swastikas, not because they were Nazis but because they found what could be probably the most transgressive symbol you could find. And that's basically what they thought it stood for.

Okay. That and, you know, think of The Sex Pistols with very irreverent depictions of the Queen and everything. And that was the point to them. However, it didn't take long before punk rock started having, you know, actual Nazis start to [00:48:00] infiltrate it to the point where--

**Aven:** --to see it as, sorry to interrupt-- but the problem with that is that it signals to people who want to find other fascists. Let's say, if you wear a swastika, they think 'I'm welcome there'. And so it's not even the Nazis were infiltrating them. Nazis were seeing them as like-minded, even if they weren't, because that's a signal you're giving off.

And so that can become something that happens when you pick up a symbol for one reason, people see that symbol as something will gravitate towrds you.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. And so with punk rock, it had that kind of Nazi infiltration problem, but it also largely exorcised that element. You might recall, I think it was the Dead Kennedys, what they said Nazi punks should do.

And they largely did! It didn't go away entirely, but the thing is that metal didn't have, you know, that moment where Nazi metal-ers or metal heads or [00:49:00] whatever, they very much found a haven in the genre. And it's very hard to get rid of this element, to deplatform it and to convince people not to support it. Partly because there is this kind of response from a lot of these artists who use this type of imagery saying, 'no, this is just a transgressive symbol, okay? These are meant to be shocking and provocative. Metal is fundamentally influenced by shock rock and all of that in transgression for its own sake. And that we're not actually-- we don't actually believe in this stuff.' And that's a problem because there is--in many cases, what they're doing is, this is essentially gaslighting. Okay, this is trying to hide behind plausible deniability. Because the problem is that, as you mentioned, Aven, a lot of people who do espouse those ideologies are drawn to this material that [00:50:00] these musicians make like moths to a flame.

And so-- and I'm going to bring in a bit more theory here-- so there's another important metal studies scholar named Keith Khan-Harris and in his fundamental study on extreme metal specifically, which tends to be the genres of metal, black metal, death metal, et cetera, where these kind of right-wing bands tend to populate. He came up with this sort of sociological term called 'anti-reflexive reflexivity'. And so let's--

**Aven:** Now that's a scholarly term!

**Jeremy:** Yeah. So what that essentially means is--I already mentioned, it's essentially gaslighting. It's when an artist knows what they're doing is problematic, but they pretend not to know that it's problematic. Okay. So the reflexivity is, you know, you're self-aware and you know what you're doing, whereas anti reflexivity is [00:51:00] at least you're pretending ignorance. And you basically use that, as I mentioned, for plausible deniability and it's often expressed with a band saying 'you shouldn't take the seriously, this is just art, okay? This is just provocation, we don't really mean it. Hey, this is just the way for us to channel our frustrations with society or whatever'. But on the other hand, that's what they have written. And so this is what makes this sort of problematic, as you can see, in a very thorny issue.

And the other thing is, it's not just interrogating, you know, the bands that do this, but also the fans. So, some bands that engage in this imagery and these lyrics, they're not card-carrying Nazis, but on the other hand, they are still-- you know, there's still evidence, even outside the lyrics that they are not-- that they are, you know, pretty far to the right.

[00:52:00] And they will still go out in interviews and say 'I'm not racist', when clearly they're on record saying racist things and they have white supremacy in their lyrics and everything. And people just take that at face value because-- what we're kind of getting at in here is again, because the majority, I think, of metal fans still, --at least in a lot of countries-- are white men, people of privilege, they don't see, you know, fascists or racist lyrics or imagery as threatening to them. So they are willing to ignore that and only decide 'does this music sound good to me? And if it does sound good to me, then I'm going to listen to it. Okay? I'm going to buy the CDs. I'm going to see them in concert. And I am going to do-- I'm going to separate the art from the artist'. And this is [00:53:00] something that I used to do. I didn't listen to explicitly Nazi bands years ago, but I did listen to a lot of bands that I don't listen to anymore because I tried to convince myself that regardless of what the artist believes or has done, what kind of character they have, that has no bearing on the art that they create, and I can enjoy the art without endorsing whatever the artist believes or has done whether the artist is a white supremacist or is a sexual abuser or has murdered people-- and when we're talking about artists in Norway where the maximum prison sentence is like, 20 years, then we have this-- we're in this actual kind of situation with some of those people.

But when I started getting more serious about looking at classical reception in metal and I came across this issue in many places I realized-- [00:54:00] I'm a philologist, you know? We class, we medievalists, we scholars of literature and culture and art and everything, art historians, we don't separate the art from the artist.

We don't separate Virgil's Aeneid from the context of either Virgil's personal experiences or, you know, Augustan Rome or anything. Yes, I know that there's some theories out there where we should read art that way, but ultimately we tend to keep those things as fundamentally inextricable and so why would we do that to metal artists?

Like, say, Varg Vikernes who is a Norwegian, a Norwegian black metal musician who created a band called Burzum, which is an incredibly influential band in the black metal [00:55:00] sub-genre, stylistically, certainly. However Varg Vikernes also, you know, murdered one of his bandmates. He torched several churches in Norway in the early 90s. And he also writes and broadcasts on-- at least he used to on YouTube and in books-- clearly Eurocentric, white supremacist views. And he often-- this happens a lot in metal-- he kind of appropriates Norse mythology for those purposes.

And this is certainly-- you know, those who see kind of the reception of medieval stuff in metal, this is also a thing that has to be contended with. But he also has ideas of a wider Indo-European mythology that he incorporates in his writings.

So for instance, he has an album where the artwork is a 19th century painting of the abduction of Persephone by Hades and he sort [00:56:00] of integrates that into his view of religion. He believes that-- a lot of artists who are sympathetic to his view in metal look at Christianity as not just Christianity, but also as an extension of Judaism.

And so he sees the say, the Christianization of Norway as ultimately as a Judaization of Norway and what he saw as the destruction of Norse-- original European, you know, purely European religion and culture and values because he sees Christianity as just as foreign as Judaism.

And so a lot of artists, certainly in National Socialist Black Metal but others have this-- they, they combine those two religions into a single scapegoat and monolithic enemy. And they use classical history and mythology as sort of [00:57:00] their ally in this.

So again, you know, songs that praise the emperor Titus, songs that praise Antiochus IV and others.

**Mark:** So what can a metal fan do who, you know, wants to improve their community and not give a safe harbor for people who would co-opt it for white supremacist, fascist reasons? I mean, I guess one thing is learn about the sources that they're drawing on, take a Classics course or a medieval studies course, and kind of better understand what they're doing, what else should they do?

**Jeremy:** Yeah. Certainly what I've been doing is simply providing the information. So for instance, a lot of these artists that I talk about, it seems that a lot of folks who consume that music are just not aware of these kinds of [00:58:00] problematic aspects of it or that the versions of antiquity that they are presenting are not, you know-- not necessarily the versions that either 1. Are accurate or 2. That we should be taking as a model. So for instance, bands that are inspired by the movie 300 will write lyrics and artwork and present the Spartans the way that the comic and the movie did and that will present to a metal fan, that will supply their understanding of Greek history, which obviously is highly skewed.

On the other hand, we have bands who also present things more or less accurately. Okay, so bands that-- there's some songs out there about the Spartan Krypteia and the terrorism against the helots and everything, and the [00:59:00] xenophobia, xenelasia and all that of the Spartans.

And it presents it as a positive model. And we don't--and so that's not good either, okay. So not just presenting false information, but also presenting value judgements that you know, we shouldn't be making. And so I feel an obligation as a public scholar who operates in these two worlds in order to kind of mediate the classical world and heavy metal in this way. And that's sort of what classicists in general-- sort of one of their functions for society or like that. So that's sort of what I do. In terms of what others can do is, I think it's just they have to approach, again, approach this with nuance, because heavy metal is fundamentally against things like censorship, political censorship and any form of [01:00:00] coercion. So we're not advocating that these bands, you know, be censored in any way. What we are advocating is that we suggest that they be de-platformed. Okay? And that's different from censorship, despite what many people on the right would say. So for instance, entities such as YouTube or concert venues, record labels, other streaming services, they are private entities and they have the choice not to provide a platform to these artists. And ultimately the fans themselves have the right to make that choice as well.

So the approach I take is, I might tell somebody, ' here's what's problematic about this music, I think it would be harmful in the grand scheme if you continue to give these [01:01:00] people your money, see them in concert and everything because you are essentially supporting people who are advocating for these harmful ideologies' and that it's basically up to the consumer to make an informed decision.

So really it's again, spreading this information and really, the more people in places of influence who can kind of make a stand against this stuff, the better. So we need journalists, we need prominent artists in the metal scene to take a stand against this stuff in order to kind of change the culture and change the way people think. It's really-- we need a critical mass of people standing against this stuff.

And the problem with metal is that there's way too many people who are not taking the stand because they don't want to alienate potential fans who would support them.

It's like if some influential person on [01:02:00] Twitter refuses to make a statement in support of a certain marginalized group because they might fear alienating people who are antagonistic to that marginalized group. And in metal it's similar, you--

**Aven:** --yeah, there's an economic incentive essentially to keep that group of people, because that's a big-- what you're saying is, again, not every fan. In fact, probably not the majority of fans by any means, but a big enough group of fans for some of these bands anyway, that there's a disincentive to speak out.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. But nor should we coddle these people, okay? We need to be frank in saying that you are supporting hateful, harmful ideologies by consuming this music. And that is-- this is ultimately an ethical decision that you're making, so there's that.

**Aven:** So they need to know-- first they [01:03:00] need to know the information, because as you say, it's not always out there or obvious. People need to think, to make a choice, to find more out and to realize that this is a potential problem with some of their music that they might be listening to, spend some time figuring it out and then make a choice as to whether or not to support it.

I mean that's what you're outlining, really.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. And again, I think one of the important ways to change the culture is to continue to not just deplatform these artists, but to platform and to support artists who are representatives--

**Aven:** Or more interesting, basically?

**Jeremy:** More interesting, but also representative of these marginalized groups.

So this is fundamentally a symptom of metal still being very white and homogenous. But if there is a greater diversity and inclusivity of [01:04:00] BIPOC and LGBTQ people and women and other groups, then I think the culture will change with it.

And the more willing people of any demographic are willing to take a stand against these toxic elements if they feel that they are surrounded by more people who are willing to have their back, for instance. Right? Yeah. So when you think about this on Twitter, for instance, we see this say, on Classics Twitter, where there's a lot of people who are in a position to take a stand on these things, because they know that there are allies. There's a critical mass of allies there to have their back.

Whereas in other contexts in the field of classics, they may not be as willing to speak up, either as an ally or as somebody from a marginalized group because they're more isolated in a situation [01:05:00] like that. They're the only one of a handful of people at say, an academic conference who isn't white, for instance. Suddenly they feel a lot less able and willing to advocate for what is right.

So-- and that's what needs to happen in metal. We need to make ways, we need to find ways in order to make metal just more welcoming of these groups and it's not-- and kind of doing away with the idea that metal is the province of certain types of groups, much as we have to get away with the idea of Classics as the province of certain groups from certain countries--

**Aven:** Right, it doesn't only belong to one group of people. Not only one group of people get to be the gatekeepers, et cetera. Yeah.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, and that change will come when the gatekeepers change [01:06:00] demographically, because the most prominent artists in metal are still largely the white men. And that there's only a handful of musicians who are very prominent who are of other demographics, who are certainly very influential.

So for instance, there's a band, one of the-- there's a very influential death metal band from New York called Suffocation. And their lead songwriter guitarist Terrance Hobbs, is a Black man. And so he's been very important in the moving for the inclusion of people into metal. But there's still a long way to go, so it's really about platforming certain people and deplatforming others, and not staying silent in the face of these inequities and these toxic and harmful ideologies, because--and this is something I should add here. If you want to go back to the right wing [01:07:00] stuff is-- yeah, we have this conversation about, 'Oh, they're just having fun or just being transgressive and shocking for its own sake, there's no harm in that. It's just like playing a violent video game, okay.' But the problem is, is that there's evidence to the contrary, that these artists are politically and personally connected to extremist groups.

And that-- there is evidence that their music is being taken as advocacy. So some examples, for instance-- so there are far-right bands in Greece that are members of Golden Dawn, even one of them was a Member of Parliament before the crackdown a year or so ago.

And in the US there are ties between various right-wing bands and groups like-- I think they're called Atomwaffen and the [01:08:00] Wolves of Vinland and others. So there's continuity between art and politics here in that degree. Also for instance, there was-- and it's not just the musicians, but also fans.

So for instance there were people at the Charlottesville rally who were wearing Burzum t-shirts, for instance, and also there was-- I think a couple of years ago-- somebody in Louisiana who was a a metal musician connected to a lot of those groups actually committed arson against a number of Black churches in Louisiana.

So they're sort of inspired by originally what happened in Norway and blending it with their own grievances against certain groups that they feel are--

**Aven:** Yeah. With specifically American anti-Blackness--

**Jeremy:** Exactly, exactly, exactly. Right. So again-- so it, so it goes beyond just 'this is [01:09:00] harmless art', and it's-- we gotta change the culture, we gotta get people in a position to feel comfortable speaking out and the onus is on those who are in positions of privilege and power to be the ones to do a lot of that speaking out because they are the least vulnerable for doing so. And also they are simply-- they have that capital, they have that influence by virtue of their-- not just their social privilege, but also their prestige within the scene to change the culture like that. So we just need more people stepping up and doing that.

And so that's what I'm trying to do myself, not just as a member of the metal scene, but as you know, as a public scholar advocating for this change in both Classics and the metal scene which, as we've discussed, you know, has a lot of the same issues given its history.

**Aven:** Yeah, definitely overlapping [01:10:00] issues for sure.

**Jeremy:** Yeah.

**Aven:** Well, this has been fascinating and really, like, I think you've done a really good job not only telling us lots of things I didn't know about the world of metal, which is great, but also drawing those parallels--it's sort of like, obviously they come out of different, specific demographics, but the problems that leads to and the ways you have to think about what needs to be done-- you've made those parallels really clear and I think that's really helpful.

**Jeremy:** Thank you. And again, those are parallels that are negative, that they're problems. But there's also parallels that are more positive between metal and Classics that are worth mentioning.

For instance, I always think of a Classics conference as like a heavy metal festival. You know, the headliners are the keynotes and then the panels are the various stages where bands are performing, you know, there's lots of drinking-- [01:11:00] Classics conferences or a medievalist conference-- and I think just--

**Aven:** -- you come together to socialize over shared interests. I mean, I think this is true.

**Jeremy:** And to be considered a member of the scene, there's a lot of that, you know-- a lot of this is gatekeeping, but on the other hand there is a-- there is a history of the discipline and of the art and the literature that we study that you're, you know, to some degree expected to be familiar with. So in Classics, you should be familiar with your Homer and your Virgil and your Cicero and everything.

Whereas in metal, you should be expected to be familiar with your Judas Priest, your Iron Maiden, your Morbid Angel, et cetera, even if you may specialize in certain sub-genres with metal like, 'Oh, I'm a-- I mainly listen to black metal from this [01:12:00] specific region, this specific style' much as somebody might specialize in Neronian poetry and all of that.

But on the other hand, you can go to a metal concert and not know any about any of this stuff and still have a good time and participate. And hopefully, there will be people there in that space who will welcome you, but there will also be the gatekeep-y people who will see you as an outsider, who is intruding into this hermetically sealed space that exists for the purpose of being elite and all of that. And so this sort of elitism and gatekeeping happens in both places. That is worth interrogating.

**Aven:** Yeah. The positive side of that is the joy of nerdery, right? Like the joy of finding somebody else who cares deeply about the details of whatever you care deeply about.

It's so wonderful in these things. And then the negative side is when that's [01:13:00] used as a way of dividing the newbies from the real fans or whatever. But I think those two tendencies can push against each other in both fields.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. And you know, just--and one last thing on this is, when you view heavy metal, its culture and its music and everything as a parallel to Classics, it really reinforces the idea that Classics is reception. So in heavy metal, there's new music being written and performed and recorded and that music is ultimately a reception of earlier music that was produced. There's a genealogy of influence here and style and everything. There's innovation, but there's also a lot of, you know, fundamentally-- reception of a tradition, of a canon, if you will. And if you look at [01:14:00] Classics that way, it really gives you a sense that the reception of classics, the Classical tradition, if you will, is very much in line with that.

And that's what we are studying here. We're not just-- a metal concert is not just, you know, either you're seeing Iron Maiden itself or you are watching people play Iron Maiden covers. You're watching people play something in the style of Iron Maiden, or combining various influences. And then in Classics, we shouldn't just be studying Virgil. We should be studying the reception of those myths later on in later traditions. So that's sort of my way of saying that, you know, classical reception is just as valid, reception studies is an important part of, a fundamental part of Classics.

And it's not just this trendy thing that you do if you aren't a serious philologist. That's like a metal fan who only listens to, you [01:15:00] know, the classics from the 80s, and I use the word classics there intentionally. 'I don't listen to any new bands because nobody plays the way that Metallica played in their first two albums' or something.

**Mark:** And now I'm looking forward to listening to that song about Medusa that you mentioned earlier. Cause that sounds really interesting!

**Aven:** You said you'd give us some links and playlists. So if you want to put something together and send it to me afterwards, I'd love to put up some links and some suggested listening, cause I'm sure lots of people would interested in following that up.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. I can throw together a Spotify playlist of as much as I can that's available on Spotify. Some of the music that I name-dropped--

**Aven:** Some of it's going to be hard to find, but--

**Jeremy:** Yeah, some of the stuff's obscure. Obviously I won't put any of the, you know, the fascist stuff on there--

**Aven:** --the good stuff that we should be interested in hearing. And we'll take your word on the other stuff.

**Jeremy:** Yeah. Thankfully Spotify [01:16:00] tends to not have as much of that stuff at least. But yeah, I can throw that together--

**Aven:** Yeah, I'll put that in the show notes for people.

**Jeremy:** Sounds good, yeah.

**Aven:** And on that note also, how can people find you if they're interested in following up on any of this, or for instance, talking heavy metal with you?

**Jeremy:** Well probably, the easiest way is to follow me on Twitter, I am @MetalClassicist. And you can also-- I have a Facebook page called Heavy Metal in the Ancient World. And also I have a blog which is heavymetalclassicist.home.blog, I believe--

**Aven:** I'll link these things as well, of course.

**Jeremy:** And yeah, I'm happy to talk about this stuff. It's my bread and butter. I also, you know, study other things. If you're--

**Aven:** --there's always more we could get to--

**Jeremy:** I'm not a one trick pony. I also, you know, [01:17:00] study things like the Roman emperor Julian, late antiquity and the reception of early Rome in Imperial literature.

**Aven:** You know, you can only talk about one large thing--

**Jeremy:** As usual with reception people, they usually have their more quote unquote 'traditional' disciplines as well as specialties in addition to, you know, the fun stuff.

**Aven:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**Mark:** Thank you very much! This has been a great conversation.

**Aven:** Really appreciate you sharing all of this with us.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, happy to! It really helps me kind of process what I'm doing here and reflect on it and remind myself that this is worthwhile, that this is something that is not only something that I hope is interesting to people, but also this is something important to talk about and to think about, and to see alongside, you know, some [01:18:00] larger issues that are going on in the world.

**Aven:** Absolutely.

**Jeremy:** So thank you for the opportunity to help me kind of muse about that because it helps me too.

**Aven:** That's great. Alright, thanks!

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**Mark:** Bye.[01:19:00]