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Learning from the Past through Metal Music?

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Today, history is institutionalised as an academic discipline in its own right.¹ Mainly starting from universities in Germany and Europe, the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the discipline encompass a history of more than two hundred years. Throughout this history, there has been a key question: can we learn from the past through professional historical research? To this day, this is a key question in historical theory and the philosophy of history.² Many answers to the question have been presented, but there is no consensus until today. Perhaps it is logical that no agreement exists yet because the discourse surrounding this question remains unfinished. History is itself an open-ended process of culture. Repeatedly, arduously and in small steps, our shared knowledge of the past must be linked to our changing vantage points in the present. As time moves on, the past moves on as well.

These brief remarks on historical theory were intentionally placed at the beginning of this chapter on the metal sub-discourse of 'Mesopotamian metal', which includes bands like Absu, Agga, Arallu, Bohema, Decimation, Melechesh, Svartsyn and Tiamat.³ Mesopotamian metal is a sub-discourse and substyle of metal music, specifically extreme metal music, which deals with the history of ancient Mesopotamia mainly thematically. Sometimes labels like 'Sumerian metal' are also used. Crucial here is the reference to ancient times in this region of the Middle East. There is no strict separation from other substyles of Middle Eastern-themed metal music by bands like Orphaned Land, Myrath, Salem, Distorted and Nile.⁴ Rather, this is a network of thematically closely linked discourses in which Mesopotamian metal is embedded. This chapter focuses on Mesopotamian metal because it is a lucid example for studying the role of history in metal. The question of learning from the past is at its centre.

Thematically, this metal sub-discourse is about the politics of history, of which value-oriented historical storytelling is a fundamental part. Trying to learn lessons from the culture of ancient Babylonia, this sub-style of metal proposes solutions to current conflicts, such as the conflicts in Israel or

Syria. For instance, Melechesh, as a paradigmatic band in the field, discuss the past and glean insights into present conflicts in Israel.

The first section of this chapter introduces the concept of Mesopotamian metal. The most relevant bands are discussed, with Melechesh serving as our paradigmatic example, as well as their views on their focal lyrical topics and musical styles. The next part focuses on the role of history, analysing how the construction of history is undertaken in Mesopotamian metal. It is shown that this discourse promotes a certain brand of historical politics to help solve problems in the present, most of all in the conflict-rich region of the Middle East. The third part of this chapter deals with the regional and global contextual linkages of Mesopotamian metal. Connecting the linkages to two other discourses on history in metal ('Oriental metal' and 'Viking metal') adds clarity to the general role of history in metal. In summing up this argumentation, the conclusion argues that we can possibly learn from the past through metal music.

The Concept of Mesopotamian Metal

Mesopotamian metal is the style of music that we play. That is what I call it . . . That is the only real thing that we are making a conscious effort to do with the music of Melechesh. We want it to have a real Mesopotamian metal sound. It is not really about paying tribute to our ancestors, but rather to just create a sound that we can call our own and be proud of.⁵

The quote was part of an interview conducted with Murat 'Ashmedi' Cenan in 2001 and explains the concept behind Mesopotamian metal from an artist's point of view. Cenan is the singer and guitar player for Melechesh, a black metal band formed in Jerusalem in 1993. He is the band's lead protagonist and songwriter, the most prominent Mesopotamian metal band. Melechesh's concept is paradigmatic of this discourse. Musically, a 'Mesopotamian metal sound' is a defining marker of this metal subgenre.⁶ According to an interview with Cenan, his aim is to create such a sound by integrating 'Phrygian scales, which are pretty much Middle-Eastern sounding' into his songwriting.⁷ However, a thorough musical analysis of the sound of Mesopotamian metal, in general and of Melechesh in particular, is missing in research. It is important to note that Mesopotamian metal not only has its own sound, but it also has its own semiotic sphere of distinct images and textual elements. This semiotic reference to ancient Mesopotamia is defining of the subgenre. Mesopotamian metal is a subcultural discourse in which a unique paradigm is constructed, including a distinct concept of how to compose, write, perform and narrate metal music.

To give an impression of how relevant this concept is on a global scale, searching for relevant lyrical themes on the *Encyclopaedia Metallum*, the biggest online database of metal bands, provides a heuristic indication. Advanced searches for relevant bands worldwide in this encyclopaedia resulted in 63 band entries for the keywords 'Sumerian' (as in Sumerian mythology), ten for 'Babylonian' (as in Babylonian mythology) and nine for 'Mesopotamia' (as the region to which the concept refers). Hence, it is a globally relevant discourse in metal. As already stated, there is a fluidity of boundaries between Mesopotamian metal and other discourses in which historical topics are equally relevant. The concept of Mesopotamian metal is not fully fixed yet, but it has reached a general level of stability. It has cemented its distinct inventory of sounds, narratives and images of 'Mesopotamian-ness'.

Originally hailing from Jerusalem, the extreme metal band Melechesh combine black metal, death metal and thrash metal with the mentioned Mesopotamian sounds, which in fact are sounds from Near Eastern music.⁸ Once more, one must note that a thorough analysis of this strand of metal music still represents a gap in research. Still, when listening to their tracks, a sensation and aural impression of Mesopotamian-ness is produced.⁹ This impression mainly comes from the use of folkloristic instruments. So far, Melechesh have released six full-length albums: *As Jerusalem Burns ... Al'Intisar* (1996), *Djinn* (2001), *Sphynx* (2003), *Emissaries* (2006), *The Epigenesis* (2010) and *Enki* (2015). In particular, the releases in the new millennium and touring activities made the band the paradigmatic artist of Mesopotamian metal. Keith Kahn-Harris labelled the band an 'exception' in the Israeli extreme metal scene of the 1990s because its 'members were of Syrian, Armenian and Palestinian Christian origin', in contrast to the majority of this regional scene, which predominantly consisted of 'secular Israelis of Jewish origin'.¹⁰

For Melechesh, the Near Eastern region and its history are the central topics the band addresses. Their music is a discussion of the region's conflict-rich past and present.¹¹ Even the band's name integrates two words of Hebrew and Aramaic origins: *melech* can be translated into English as 'king'; *esh* means 'fire' – thus, the band's name means 'king of fire'. Cenan comes from Syrian and Armenian ethnic backgrounds. So, as is the case with many artists from the regions, multiculturalism and migration experiences are parts of his biography.¹² Although the band left Jerusalem for Western Europe in 1998, the city, the wider region and its history are still the main sources of inspiration for their metal music.

Melechesh are a fitting example to study the concept behind Mesopotamian metal because all the characteristic elements of the concept appear in their

music. The concept consists of the classical sounds of extreme metal, the particular sounds of Mesopotamian-ness as described by Cenán, as well as distinct images and text elements supporting the feeling of Mesopotamian-ness. Blending different languages, the lyrics to the song 'Sacred Geometry' (2010) illustrate the paradigmatic semiotics of 'Mesopotamian-ness':

Sons of Sumer, open your eyes
 Awake, discover maze of the sublime
 Born within the cradle
 Voices of the essence
 Curious Enlil's legions forever watchful
 As we transcend plural psyche banishing
 The essence speaks to us
 In every cell in every stone and space
 Meen fee hali ou bali
 Meen bis'aal il wali il fee
 Blessed be the cosmic dust
 We are all of Enlil's plan
 Meen fee hali ou bali
 Meen bis'aal il wali il fee
 Blessed be the cosmic dust
 We are all of Enlil's plan
 Submit to the grace of chaotic order
 With his hands, he molded us
 Find the hidden meanings
 Facets inseparable from his plan
 Frequencies, pulsation, voices of the world
 Magickal stains vaporize from
 (The) proverbial, cosmic energy spheres
 Doorway to the other will unlock
 Neo-spiritualism
 Arcane arts' interpretations
 Sons of Sumer open your eyes
 Intrinsic unity of creation

The track's historical protagonist is 'Enlil', who was the chief deity of ancient Sumer, and who became a major influence on the whole region's religious discourses.¹³ The images in these intentionally fully quoted lyrics are those of mysterious ancient gods and their will for the people of the Earth. In combination with the sounds described by Cenán, this makes the concept of Mesopotamian metal complete. It is constructed as a 'bricolage' concept that includes an inventory of images, tales, narratives and sounds referring to ancient Sumer.¹⁴ It is held together by the mental associations between the

various elements. Melechesh being only the best-known example, bands such as Absu (the United States), Agga (the United States), Arallu (Israel), Bohema (Georgia), Decimation (Turkey), Svartsyn (Sweden) or Tiamat (Sweden) are also major contributors to the subgenre. It is worth listening to some of their music to fully grasp the concept. There is a certain variety in the approaches to the topic of ancient Sumer, but as a rule, the politics of history and learning from the past form the framework of the subgenre.

The Construction of the Past and the Politics of History in Mesopotamian Metal

So far, we have considered what Mesopotamian metal is as a set of conceptual ideas. For this concept, the distant past of ancient Sumer as a supposed cradle of civilisation between 6,000 BC and 2,000 BC provides the defining theme.¹⁵ It is not possible to give a broader picture of the respective history in this chapter, but the notion of ‘Mesopotamian’ is a marker for a time more than four thousand years ago. In the subgenre, historical storytelling is the core mechanism. This means that Mesopotamian metal, or Sumerian metal, is a discourse in which the very distant past is constructed in a specific way in the present. The past becomes part of the present. Historical storytelling in metal is always ‘presentist’ in this way. Through this construction process, it is connected to the values and perspectives of the modern world we live in. Similarly, Mesopotamian metal also encompasses the politics of history.¹⁶ The history of ancient Sumer is told under the auspices of an ethos that is promoted through it. On the one hand, this is the classical ethos of metal. On the other, these are liberal social values, which promote the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups in the Near East in particular and in the whole world in general. This brand of the politics of history comes with the specific methods of historical construction in Sumerian metal, analysable in the case of Melechesh.

The construction of the past takes the form of a culturally ‘hybrid’ method of historical storytelling. ‘Hybridity’ is a key concept of recent cultural history and postcolonial studies.¹⁷ Research in these fields has shown that any forms of identities, including the Mesopotamian-ness identity in Mesopotamian metal, are constructed from different sources. They are always hybrid combinations of cultural facets from various sources, and hence they are not natural. They change over time. Being aware of this fact, Cenani uses and combines different narratives of Middle Eastern history to create and construct a distinctive version of history.

Hailing from the conflict-rich cultural landscape of Israel and Jerusalem, his specific construction of the past and his politics of history reflect these conflicts. In all of this, Cenani's main strategy is to put the local elements into the framework of 'Western' extreme metal music. How exactly does this happen in Mesopotamian metal?

Mesopotamian metal employs the imagination of historical distance to create a new cultural sphere. In the concept of Sumerian metal, sounds, images, texts and practices from 'Western' and Near Eastern sources are combined to build up such a hybrid construction. This only works because these fragments are being presented as historical – they refer to the long-ago past of Sumer. This is what the Mesopotamian-ness is all about. The construction of the past in this metal subgenre is the imagination of a distant past, and this enables the construction of the promoted kind of politics of history – a suggested peaceful coexistence of 'multiple truths', as in a Melechesh song with the eponymous title 'Multiple Truths' (2015):

Arrogant vain, Nephilim
 They delegate the agents of chaos
 Assassins of thought,
 Shroud minds
 These savant theological impostors
 Shipwrecked in the sea
 Of confusion
 Adam's language
 Enochian paradox
 Sons of Enki,
 Daughters of Ninma
 Owners of methodical absolution
 Agents of chaos make order
 Induce one truth for all
 Shipwrecked in the sea
 Of confusion
 Abstract of religion
 It's all lies,
 Multiple truths
 Heterodox dissident
 Sons of Anunnaki
 Tear the chrysalis around the spirit
 May it grow, defy these chambers
 Deny the absolutes
 Shipwrecked in the sea of Apzu
 Adam's language, shroud DNA

Words from the soil
Enochian paradox
Enochian paradox.

In these lyrics, we see the full scope of the semiotics of Mesopotamian-ness. The crucial lines for the imagination of historical distance are: 'Shipwrecked in the sea, Of confusion, Abstract of religion, It's all lies, Multiple truths'. Melechesh use the setting of ancient Sumer in a critique of the religious sphere as experienced in Israel and Jerusalem. According to Melechesh, the tolerance inherent in the acceptance that there are generally always multiple truths perfectly encapsulates their brand of politics of history. They promote liberal social values in metal music. This type of politics of history and its relevance in metal music can be evaluated better if we compare them to other discourses on history in metal.

The Bigger Picture: Related Discourses on History in Metal

Mesopotamian metal is not the only discourse in metal grounded in history. On the contrary, since the first days of metal, historical topics have been popular with fans and musicians alike.¹⁸ Several classic metal songs from the 1980s like Iron Maiden's 'Alexander the Great' (1986) (about the historical figure) and 'Invaders' (1982) (dealing with the Nordic invasion of Britain in the Middle Ages), or even earlier from the 1970s, such as Judas Priest's 'The Ripper' (1976) (about 'Jack the Ripper'), are meant to transport their listeners into the past. History and the construction of the past are a staple of metal culture, and in many cases, also the politics of history. Yet, a more comprehensive perspective on the role of history is a desideratum in metal studies. The articles on history in this Companion illustrate the need for further research. For the consideration of the role of history in metal, the interdisciplinary engagement in metal music studies with specific research by historians trained on metal is needed.¹⁹ Such forms of academic dialogue must be encouraged.

In order to broaden the perspective, it is instructive to place Mesopotamian metal in the context of other discourses dealing with history in metal. In the following, two other relevant discourses that relate to Mesopotamian metal, the roles of history, the construction of the past and the politics of history in them, will thus be considered.

The first discourse is 'Oriental metal'. It comprises bands and music that deal with the Middle East. In academia, the debates on the term 'Orient' and whether this notion is a purely 'Western' construction coming from racism and colonialism are still ongoing.²⁰ There is an

academic discourse on Oriental metal and on metal music in the Near East from a broader perspective, but there is still no consensus. Most of all, the works by Keith Kahn-Harris, Pierre Hecker and Mark LeVine are noteworthy.²¹ In these works, 'Oriental metal' is interpreted in relation to the dynamics of 'localising metal' in the Near East.²² Today, it is clear that very much like the Mesopotamian-ness in Sumerian metal, the 'Middle Eastern-ness' in the music of bands such as Amaseffer (Israel), Distorted (Israel), Myrath (Tunisia), Nile (the United States), Orphaned Land (Israel) and Salem (Israel) is also a discursive construction. Musically and semiotically, the label 'Oriental metal' describes an even more diverse and broader spectrum of bands than Sumerian metal. Basically, it means any kind of metal music in which a hybridisation of 'Western' and Middle Eastern sounds, folklore or topics is palpable. Once more, we see how important it is to be aware of the generally heterogeneous and constructed character of metal identities. If one looks at the function of history in 'Oriental metal', one discovers a rather broad spectrum of approaches. Some of the bands like Nile, or even Iron Maiden in some of their classic songs, use history as a sort of escapism. Historical settings like Sumer, Egypt or others are presented as entertaining landscapes for metal lyrics. But in some cases, such as in the case of Orphaned Land, the band exploit history in exactly the same way as Melechesh. History is used to promote a rather liberal politics of history. Not all bands' values and perspectives are in this vein, but as a general trend, the plea for an inclusive resolution of current conflicts is dominant. History here seems to be a way to learn from the past.

Another discourse related to Mesopotamian metal is 'Viking metal'. As the title of the subgenre indicates, the past of the Scandinavian Viking era in the Middle Ages is the central theme. Viking metal has gained broader attention in academic research.²³ Not all studies explicitly label the subfield Viking metal. Sometimes it is treated under the auspices of an analysis of folk metal and pagan metal, which blends various styles of folk music and heathen ideologies with metal, or the study of 'Northern-ness' in metal culture.²⁴ In this, history has quite a broad range of functions and purposes. As a source of inspiration for groups as diverse as Manowar (the United States), and to some extent Iron Maiden (UK), Enslaved (Norway) or Amon Amarth (Sweden), the Viking period is a semiotic source for identities of adventurism, escapism, heathenism, naturalism and, in some cases, also of hetero-normativism and nationalism.²⁵ The decisive point is that also in Viking metal, the construction of the past is connected to the present in terms of values and thus becomes the source of a range of politics of history.

In Viking metal, the association with progressive values is not as clear as in Mesopotamian metal and Oriental metal. Often, rather conservative or even nationalist values are promoted.

If we consider the bigger picture of these three interconnected discourses on history in metal, the general function of history in metal becomes clearer. As a rule, history is constructed in the present and linked to current sets of social and political values. In Mesopotamian and Oriental metal, a distant past has the role of serving as a historical utopia or a social role model for the resolution of current problems. Also, it is often a source of escapism or, simply, entertainment. The deep connection between Oriental and Mesopotamian metal comes from their alliance in terms of the promotion of liberal social values. Finally, the question of whether we can learn from history through such constructions of an idealised past today is connected to this realm of morality and values.

Conclusion

This chapter on Mesopotamian metal explored whether we could learn from the past through listening to metal music in general and this brand of metal in particular. We now have the necessary elements at hand to give an answer to the question, though perhaps not a fully satisfying one.

Considering Mesopotamian metal (or Sumerian metal) as a unique artistic paradigm within the global network of metal cultures and scenes, as a *first* point, it was concluded that this concept is a set of unique sounds and semiotic sources (pictures, texts, narratives) of how metal should be. The concept is stabilised but open to adaption. At its heart are sense-making resources of references to the remote past of ancient Mesopotamia. Thus, as a *second* point, how the construction of this past happens in this subfield of metal was analysed. As a core mechanism, this construction happens via the imagination of historical distance. Ancient Sumer is a temporally distant place. The remoteness of this culture enables bands like Melechesh to present it as a historical utopia of peace and tolerance. Such a kind of liberal politics of history is at the concept's centre. As a *third* aspect, we reflected on discourses on history in metal, which are closely interrelated with Sumerian metal. In this, 'Oriental metal', which in many cases strongly overlaps with Mesopotamian metal, was a logically related discourse. In it, the construction of the past and the politics of history have analogous qualities. Also in Viking metal, the imagination of historical distance is crucial. But here, the role of the construction of the past and the politics

of history are less homogenous. In several cases, conservative or even intolerant views are promoted. What all three concepts have in common is a shared discursive logic in their approaches to history. The construction of the past in the present has the function of taking an ethical standpoint in the current world of metal, and sometimes even providing answers to crucial problems in this world.

The fact that the construction of the past in the present has the purpose of enabling us to reflect on the present, and sometimes even address current problems, is the central finding. For the question of learning from the past in metal music through dealing with history, this is essential. In Mesopotamian metal, the attempt to learn from the past is clear now. This attempt happens through presenting the past of ancient Sumer as the significant Other, a world of tolerance and self-reflection. This is the good side. To be sure, the attempt to promote tolerance and peace in this way can have positive effects on listeners. However, we clearly note that this has a constructed and imagined character, of which metal listeners are usually aware. The same holds true for the other discourses on history, such as Oriental and Viking metal and the role of historical topics in metal in general. In a nutshell, Mesopotamian metal creates a cultural sphere in which possible answers to current problems are constructed. These are imagined suggestions. Thus, metal fans can *potentially* learn from the past via critically reflecting upon these suggestions.

The act of listening to metal music itself would also need more scholarly attention. There is some phenomenological and other research on it, but it is not fully clear how metal music is taken in by listeners.²⁶ So, also from this point of view, it is important to take the ‘potentially’ seriously in the answer. In metal music studies as a growing academic field, more interdisciplinary engagement with the specific expertise of historians promises new insights. History as an established academic discipline has at its disposal the methodological and theoretical tools to understand the function of history in metal discourse. Integrating this expertise into research on how the act of listening actually occurs seems to be the next step forward.

Notes

1. See Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Cornell University Press, 2001).
2. See Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, *Postnarrativist Philosophy of History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

3. For a first analysis of the subgenre with the paradigmatic band Melechesh, see Peter Pichler, 'The Power of the Imagination of Historical Distance: Melechesh' "Mesopotamian Metal" as a Musical Attempt of Solving Cultural Conflicts in the Twenty-First Century', *Metal Music Studies* 3/1 (2017): 97–112. In the following, my interpretation of Melechesh's art refers to this article.
4. See 'The Best Oriental Metal Band', *Ranker* (2019). www.ranker.com/list/oriental-metal-bands-and-artists/reference (accessed 25 August 2021).
5. Adrian Bromley, 'Mesopotamian Hunger', *Chronicles of Chaos* (2001). www.chroniclesofchaos.com/articles.aspx?id=1-365 (accessed 24 August 2021).
6. On the way culture can affect sound, see for the case of 'Teutonic Metal': Jan-Peter Herbst, 'Teutonic Metal: Effects of Place- and Mythology-Based Labels on Record Production', *International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure* 4 (2021): 291–313.
7. Raymond Westland, 'Interview: Ashmedi from Melechesh', *Echoes and Dust* (2015). <https://echoesanddust.com/2015/04/interview-ashmedi-melechesh> (accessed 24 August 2021).
8. For scholarship on metal music from Israel, see Keith Kahn-Harris, "'You Are from Israel and that is Enough to Hate You Forever": Racism, Globalization and Play within the Global Extreme Metal Scene', in Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger and Paul D. Greene (eds.), *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music Around the World* (Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 200–26; and Keith Kahn-Harris, 'How Diverse Should Metal Be? The Case of Jewish Metal', in Niall Scott (ed.), *Reflections in the Metal Void* (Interdisciplinary Press, 2012), pp. 39–48; for scholarship on metal from Middle Eastern, Turkish and 'Oriental' sources, also see Pierre Hecker, 'Taking a Trip to the Middle Eastern Metal Scene: Transnational Social Spaces and Identity Formations on a Non-National Level', *Nord-Süd aktuell* 19/1 (2005): 57–66; and Pierre Hecker, *Turkish Metal: Music, Meaning, and Morality in a Muslim Society* (Routledge, 2012).
9. See Bromley, 'Mesopotamian Hunger'; Herbst, 'Teutonic Metal'.
10. Kahn-Harris, 'Racism, Globalization and Play', p. 202.
11. For an introduction to Near Eastern history, see Arthur J. Goldschmidt and Ibrahim Al-Marashi, *A Concise History of the Middle East* (Routledge, 2018).
12. See Markus Endres, 'Interview mit Ashmedi zu "Enki"', *Metal.de Webzine* (2015). www.metal.de/interviews/melechesh-interview-mit-ashmedi-zu-enki-60255 (accessed 25 August 2021).
13. See Marc Van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 BC* (Blackwell, 2004); Daniel C. Snell, *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (Blackwell, 2005).
14. For the notion of 'bricolage' as a concept of metal cultural sociology, see Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture* (Da Capo Press, 2000).
15. See Susan Pollock, *Ancient Mesopotamia: The Eden that Never Was* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Roger Matthews, *The Early Prehistory of Mesopotamia: 500,000 to 4,500 BC* (Brepols, 2005).

16. See the classic by Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (University of Illinois Press, 1990); for a more recent discussion, see Charles Tilly, 'Why and How History Matter', in Robert E. Goodin (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 521–541 <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.013.0026>; in a broader perspective, see Andy R. Brown, 'A Manifesto for Metal Studies: Or Putting the "Politics of Metal" in its Place', *Metal Music Studies* 4/2 (2018): 343–63.
17. See 'Hybridity', in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2013), pp. 135–9; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994); Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?* (Polity Press, 2004).
18. See Peter Pichler, *Metal Music, Sonic Knowledge, and the Cultural Ear in Europe since 1970: A Historiographic Exploration* (Franz Steiner, 2020); Peter Pichler, 'Metal and History w/ Peter Pichler', *ISMMS* (2021). <https://metalstudies.org/mms101/history> (accessed 27 August 2021).
19. See Pichler, *Metal Music*.
20. For the academic discussion on 'Orientalism', see Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
21. See Kahn-Harris, 'Racism, Globalization and Play'; Kahn-Harris, 'Jewish Metal'; Hecker, 'Taking a Trip to the Middle Eastern Metal Scene'; Hecker, *Turkish Metal*; Mark LeVine, *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam* (Three Rivers Press, 2008).
22. See Hecker, 'Taking a Trip to the Middle Eastern Metal Scene'.
23. See Imke von Helden, 'Barbarians and Literature: Viking Metal and its Links to Old Norse Mythology', in Niall Scott (ed.), *Reflections in the Metal Void* (Interdisciplinary Press, 2012), pp. 257–64.
24. See Imke von Helden, *Norwegian Native Art: Cultural Identity in Norwegian Metal Music* (LIT, 2017); Ross Hagen, *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* (Bloomsbury, 2020); Karl Spracklen, "'To Holmgard . . . and Beyond": Folk Metal Fantasies and Hegemonic White Masculinities', *Metal Music Studies* 1/3 (2015): 359–77.
25. See Hagen, *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*; Spracklen, 'Folk Metal Fantasies'.
26. For a phenomenological approach, see Harris M. Berger, *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience* (University of New England Press, 1999); and Francesca Stevens, 'Blackened Audiopia: Privatized Listening and Urban Experience', *Metal Music Studies* 6/2 (2020): 161–74.