

17 | Subgenre Qualifiers and Prescribed Creativity in Technical Death Metal

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Pay attention to metal discourse in print, online or in person, and a simple fact becomes evident: genre labels abound. A cursory glance at almost any metal studies text, metal album review, or comment section on a metal music video reveals a diverse genre vocabulary about which metal participants routinely disagree. One person's symphonic death metal is another person's post-black metal, or so it would seem. The present chapter is concerned with how participants interact with these genre names in their practice, focusing on how writers position artists (and artefacts) as well as how artists position themselves in relation to genre and subgenre.

Drawing on metal's extensive genre discourse, both academic and otherwise, this chapter explores the significance and effects of subgenre qualifiers. After demonstrating the prevalence of genre and subgenre terms in metal, I outline how subgenre qualifiers function to both describe and prescribe participants' conceptions of metal music culture. Technical death metal acts as a case study of how these qualifiers can be utilised by musicians, critics and fans to variously focus or limit one's approach to producing and receiving music. For some, 'technical' serves as a descriptive term that expresses a general attitude toward music-making and listening, while for others, it demarcates a series of relatively finite rules within which one must operate. Finally, I discuss how artists variously reject or embrace technical death metal in their creative practice.

Conceptions of Genre and Subgenre in Metal

As aforementioned, genre terminology is ubiquitous in metal discourse, 'academic' or otherwise. Throughout this book and almost any other metal studies text, readers will find numerous examples of genre names, some widely encompassing and well-known, others ostensibly specific and novel. Moreover, such genre discourse pervades non-academic discussions of metal

in newspapers, magazines, press releases, blogs, social media and, of course, in conversations among metal fans of all stripes. Building on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Sarah Thornton, Keith Kahn-Harris elucidates one of the main drivers behind metal's apparent obsession with genre: 'mundane subcultural capital and transgressive subcultural capital'.¹ Metal fans may claim mundane subcultural capital 'by knowing the complex histories of the scene and by having heard the music of its vast number of bands',² and given that '[n]ew (generally young) members entering the scene are frequently disparaged',³ there is a clear incentive to accrue subcultural capital in order to be accepted by other genre participants. To this end, innumerable books, magazines and websites (including blogs and online forums) construct extensive histories of artists and artefacts grouped within genres or scenes of varying specificity. It is this notion of (varying) specificity with which this chapter is most concerned, but exploring how we might understand sub-genre qualifiers requires a brief overview of how these genre histories are constructed.

Whether communicated through prose or illustrated taxonomies, metal historiography is often presented in a broadly chronological manner, and sometimes further arranged by genre. This mode of presentation tends to result in constructions of metal history as consequential; that is, individual genres are regularly characterised as developing in a unidirectional, linear and fixed fashion, separate from one another, and demarcated by an apparent generic lifespan. Most salient for present purposes are those taxonomies that seek to illustrate both the links between various metal genres and the artists or artefacts proffered as representative of those genres.⁴ Sam Dunn's 'Heavy Metal Family Tree' – an arborescent model of metal history displaying genres and relevant example artists alongside inter-generic familial relationships – is perhaps the archetypal exemplar of this model.⁵ Comprising a series of genre titles with lists of representative artists as well as links between genres designed to illustrate their genealogical lineage (for example, 'grindcore' is begotten by 'first wave of black metal' and 'thrash metal'), subsequent revisions to the family tree commonly focus on individual genres. Here we locate the significant tension between generality and specificity, an issue most frequently addressed through the notion of subgenres.⁶

Despite this chapter's title, I have thus far sought to avoid using the term 'subgenre' if for no other reason than to circumvent the obvious linguistic problem of relative scale: if metal is a genre, and death metal a *subgenre* of metal, then technical death metal must be a *sub-subgenre* of metal

(a subgenre of death metal). Moreover, while it is accurate to suggest that 'death metal' denotes a smaller grouping than 'metal', referring to the former as a subgenre connotes, to my mind, a much smaller, less varied construct than one finds in death metal (or black metal, etc.). Consequently, I refer to metal as a genre as well as exploring metal genres (for example, death metal), perhaps suggesting a designation more akin to Roy Shuker's 'meta-genre'.⁷ In essence, this is a recognition of what David Brackett calls 'different *levels* of genre',⁸ and while his usage of the term generally refers to more broad musical categorisation,⁹ it highlights a number of key points regarding the relationship between genres and subgenres. Most obviously, each level corresponds to some notion of specificity, from the general (metal) to the specific (technical death metal), but (sub)genre labels may also be relatively arbitrary and contingent in the sense that an artist might be referred to as death metal by one observer and technical death metal by another. Benjamin Hillier seeks to 'propose a means for categorizing the different "levels" of subgenres in metal' through a taxonomy that favours a synchronic view of the relationships between metal genres.¹⁰ In Hillier's framework, death metal is deemed a major subgenre of extreme metal, while technical death metal is a minor subgenre, thereby avoiding a model wherein genres 'fragment into sub-subgenres' and even 'endless permutations of sub-sub-subgenres that become almost farcical'.¹¹ Absurdity notwithstanding, how might we understand these terms productively?

Subgenre Qualifiers

In literal terms, subgenre qualifier refers to a word or affix added to a genre title that 'qualifies' or modifies some element of the genre: if death metal is a genre and technical death metal a subgenre, then 'technical' functions as the subgenre qualifier. While the connotations of 'technical' are more circumscribed and convoluted than one might assume upon first reading (see below), the term 'technical death metal' is nonetheless relatively straightforward inasmuch as one can clearly identify qualifier and qualified. This distinction is deliberately blurred in terms like 'death doom' or 'deathcore' such that the genre titles are most productively understood as an explicit amalgam of two distinct genres – death metal and doom metal in the former instance, death metal and hardcore in the latter. Perhaps, then, the simplest way to identify a *subgenre* is to identify a clearly recognisable subgenre qualifier – *technical* death metal – while those terms without clear distinction are more indicative of genres. Even when easily

identifiable, subgenre qualifiers do not carry obvious connotative meaning: what does it mean to speak of 'blackened' death metal? Does 'symphonic' mean the same thing when prefixing death metal as it does prefixing black metal? Most immediately, these qualifiers are describing something about the artist or artefact to which they are being ascribed (much like a genre title) but also describing something about the genre itself. At the same time, however, subgenre qualifiers can be interpreted as prescribing something about the artist or artefact and, indeed, the genre. Principally, therefore, subgenre qualifiers function as a way to account for the variety encompassed not only by metal but by metal genres themselves.

In developing a 'musical syntax' of heavy metal comprising a 'set of codes based on musical elements', Andrew L. Cope utilises a 'core and periphery model, identifying and situating "key" codes that appear to be present in all forms of metal (the core) and the peripheral codes that become important in the formation of sub-genres; for example, the use of synthesisers in black metal and symphonic metal'.¹² In one respect, then, we might interpret subgenre qualifiers as dictating which codes are deemed core and peripheral within a given subgenre. As such, subgenre qualifiers may function as 'a sort of "hyper-rule" which establishes [a subgenre's internal] hierarchy' or even the "'ideology" of that [sub] genre'.¹³ In other words, qualifiers like 'technical' and 'brutal' not only imply the core or peripheral status of given codes but also (seek to) establish a hierarchy or system of organisation of those codes. Technical and brutal death metal may share many compositional devices, for instance, but ways in which these devices are employed – frequency, function, position in a song, etc. – alongside other devices provide points of departure between the two subgenres.

Having outlined some of the ways we might conceptualise subgenre qualifiers in abstract, we can now turn our attention to how these qualifiers are applied in practice. Death metal provides particularly fertile ground when exploring subgenre qualifiers, including but not limited to melodic death metal, technical death metal, old school death metal, brutal death metal, slam, deathcore and deathgrind. Technical death metal generally refers to death metal bands that play at faster tempos than regular death metal and make heavier use of techniques like sweep-picking and blast beats, while melodic death metal is used to describe death metal bands that play at a slower pace, utilising melodies closer to those found in New Wave of British Heavy Metal than in standard death metal. Prefixes like 'technical', 'progressive' and 'melodic' are also used when referring to subgenres of metalcore and hardcore, while 'old school' and 'neo' have been applied to

thrash metal, and 'symphonic' or 'post' regularly accompany black metal. Similarly, goregrind utilises human autopsy-inspired imagery, and electro- or cybergrind integrates electronics, specifically including digital drum machines rather than physical drummers, into the wider genre of grind-core. Despite the seemingly arbitrary subgenre qualifiers, each has come to denote a relatively specific meaning in metal discourse.

Some qualifiers are affixed to multiple genre titles, suggesting that such meaning may be transferrable. When prefixing genres like death-core, metalcore or, simply, metal, 'progressive' connotes relatively specific small-scale details: the use of keyboards and/or clean vocals, less reliance on verse-chorus song form, deliberate incorporation of non-metal genres, and a propensity for concept albums. In short, the progressive prefix suggests that the band in question are drawing influence from the lineage of progressive rock, albeit remaining within the boundaries of their particular genre. Progressive metalcore might include '[s]ampling, peculiar structures or the introduction of unexpected genres (like jazz, for example) [that] seek to modify the basic metalcore formula', clearly combining elements of progressive rock without compromising too many elements deemed fundamental to metalcore.¹⁴ Here, 'progressive' connotes the incorporation of elements from outside the genre's normal boundaries. In a similar vein, symphonic black metal introduces new elements into black metal by combining keyboards (regularly utilising orchestral string patches), a more polished production style and clean vocals (solo or choir) with standard black metal genre traits, not too dissimilar from the qualifier's function in symphonic death metal.¹⁵

While some qualifiers represent the integration of 'outside' elements within a genre, others signify a deliberate focus on certain internal elements. Both 'neo' and 'old school' bands aim to uphold older genre standards, largely eschewing overt stylistic changes that have occurred since the genre first became popular. While 'neo' usually refers to bands forming since a genre's supposed heyday but emphasising older aspects of that genre, most 'old school' bands have continued to make music in a certain genre past its initial period of popularity and have avoided straying too far from the original incarnation of that genre. Interestingly, some newer artists are also ascribed the old school qualifier if their music is deemed to carry a similar essence or attitude toward the genre without actively sounding like older artists.¹⁶ Hence, subgenre qualifiers can be understood as circumscribing both the datable, locatable elements of style (for example, riff types, song form, etc.) *and* the more abstract concept of approach or attitude towards a genre.

Technical Death Metal

As a subgenre qualifier within the title ‘technical death metal’, ‘technical’ functions foremost as an adjective *describing* a certain version of death metal. On one hand, this descriptor is relatively broad and connotes an approach to death metal that privileges ‘technicality’, ‘a frequently used word roughly meaning “complicatedness”, as the primary facet of the music (as opposed to ‘melody’, as in melodic death metal, for instance).¹⁷ On the other hand, however, through consistent usage by critics, fans and musicians, technical death metal has come to describe a comparatively narrow set of stylistic markers. In this guise, ‘technical’ routinely connotes death metal that utilises fast tempos, irregular metres, unconventional song structures and the recurrent employment of instrumental techniques that are less frequent in other forms of death metal (to say nothing of the non-sonic implications of the qualifier).¹⁸ These discrete readings are at play when commentators construct lists of the best, greatest or essential technical death metal bands that include artists like Atheist, Death and Cynic (representative of the broad conception of the qualifier), alongside artists like Cryptopsy, Necrophagist and Spawn of Possession (representative of the narrow conception).¹⁹ Readers familiar with these artists will note that the former three bands are older than the latter and, significantly, these older bands might also be deemed representative of other metal subgenres, while the newer bands are almost universally recognised as representative of technical death metal. One of the reasons for this discrepancy, and that between the two readings of ‘technical’ as descriptor, is what I have elsewhere termed ‘generic codification’: a recognisable period (or series of periods) during which certain, specific elements of style come to be identified with a genre or subgenre.²⁰ While some artefacts by the older bands might be accurately described as technical death metal, they do not necessarily include all of the specific stylistic elements connoted by the qualifier, whereas the newer bands mentioned above incorporate most if not all of these elements in their music as a matter of course. Over time, through the ongoing processes of generic codification, technical death metal has become a term both descriptive and prescriptive; that is, in order to be deemed technical death metal, a band must adhere to the unwritten rules of that subgenre by consciously displaying their technical ability at the forefront of their music and do so by utilising a circumscribed variety of compositional and performance techniques.

Read as prescriptive, ‘technical’ carries connotations of constraint, as evidenced when technical death metal band Rings of Saturn were accused

of recording parts of *Dingir* (2013) at half-tempo before speeding them up digitally.²¹ Regardless of their veracity, claims that the band had digitally manipulated their recordings in a presumed bid to sound more technically advanced harmed the artist's credibility with some participants due to the nature of the subgenre. Rings of Saturn guitarist Lucas Mann is 'part of a technical metal band; he's part of a scene which is supposed to value musicianship', and since his 'is a band that sells itself on dizzying technicality, breakneck speed and little else. If those two traits are proven inauthentic, nothing is left'; thus, the specific connotation of 'technical' is connected directly to the way in which the composition and performance of this music are judged.²² Tellingly, Brad Sanders notes that if 'the same accusation [was] leveled against Cannibal Corpse, whose chief aim is brutality rather than technicality. Doubtless, the same outrage would ensue, but in this case, it wouldn't be warranted', as Cannibal Corpse are not a technical death metal band, when understood in this prescriptive sense.²³ Marcus Erbe notes a similar phenomenon in relation to metal vocalists who uphold an 'ideal of a voice that remains as unspoiled as possible, either onstage or in the studio', observing that this concept seemed most prominent among 'people from technical death metal bands, which is to say by vocalists who place a high value on very controlled ways of growling and/or pig squealing'.²⁴ While the notion of technicality is present in many forms of metal, technical death metal prescribes fastidious attention to displays of a specific *version* of technicality.

Given the additional level of specificity entailed by subgenre qualifiers, it is unsurprising that artists or albums may become difficult to accurately classify. Some commentators decide, therefore, to avoid ascribing such artists a subgenre at all, while others simply stack multiple qualifiers; thus, Simon Handmaker describes Rivers of Nihil as 'technical progressive blackened death metal juggernauts'.²⁵ This positioning of Rivers of Nihil suggests a very specific oeuvre that does not correspond neatly to any one death metal subgenre, but neither is it captured by the more general title of death metal. In combining three subgenre qualifiers, Handmaker attempts to marry the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of subgenre titles, describing the amalgam of different subgeneric traits while also implying the flexibility with which the artist uses these traits to avoid prescription. This tension between description and prescription leads to inevitable disagreements when attributing (sub)genres to a given artist or artefact. For example, Hillier classifies Cannibal Corpse as 'slam/brutal death metal' while Eric Smialek and Méi-Ra St-Laurent consider them a technical death metal band.²⁶ Likewise, while I have described Rings of Saturn as technical death metal in relation to

Dingir, Andrew Rothmund expresses some reservations about the band's apparent move from deathcore to technical death metal on their later album *Ullu Ullu* (2017), 'an okay deathcore album because it's a pretty great tech-death album'.²⁷ These examples of contested subgeneric affiliation are a direct result of subgenre qualifiers that simultaneously describe the music in general terms while prescribing it in specific terms.

Artist Perspectives on Prescription

Not only the preserve of the fan or critic, but metal artists are also often conscious of these (sub)generic terms. Although members of Rivers of Nihil do not necessarily identify with such a specific subgenre title as Handmaker ascribes them above, both generic label (death metal) and subgeneric qualifier (technical) are clearly known to the band. Hence, former guitarist Jon Kunz contends that '[a]t the end of the day, we are a death metal band. We may have some technical stuff going on, but it's never tech for the sake of tech'.²⁸ Kunz is aware that some may refer to his band as technical death metal, or some variant thereof, but his assertion that any 'technical' elements the band employ are not done so in order to be considered technical death metal suggests that he understands the subgenre as prescriptive. Acknowledging the band's common categorisation as technical death metal, Obscura vocalist and guitarist Steffen Kummerer suggests that 'it doesn't matter if a riff or an idea is technical or easy to play [since] [t]he song itself is most important'. Moreover, echoing Kunz, Kummerer contends that '[t]here is no need to write a technical song just for the sake of being technical!'.²⁹ In other words, these artists seek to convey both that the term 'technical death metal' is too limited to accommodate their musical expression and that while parts of their music might be described as 'technical', those parts were not written and performed specifically in order for the artist to be described as such. Nile vocalist and guitarist Karl Sanders goes one step further when stating that for the band's eighth album, *What Should Not Be Unearthed* (2015), he 'decided we were going to be anti-technical death metal'. Sanders explicitly recognises his band's common subgeneric categorisation as well as their consequent affiliation to artists he may not wish to be associated with: 'A lot of people call us tech-death, but when I hear tech-death nowadays, there's lots of amazing playing in those records, but sometimes it gets hard to hear a f**king song'.³⁰ In wanting to be 'anti-technical death metal', Sanders is

rejecting an overtly prescriptive reading of the subgenre as privileging a notion of technicality above all else, even songwriting.

There are, however, some artists who actively seek to create technical death metal. According to bassist Þórður Hermannsson, Ophidian I formed 'due to shared affinity for technical death metal, and bands like Spawn of Possession and Necrophagist. . . . The original plan was simple – to spend time together, party and play technical music'.³¹ Unlike those bands for whom technical death metal is constraining, Ophidian I took direct inspiration from the subgenre and wanted to compose and perform in a style similar to artists who are widely heralded as archetypal of technical death metal. Perhaps no other artist is more emblematic of this positive approach to technical death metal than Archspire. Appropriating and championing a label that other artists seek to avoid, Archspire employ 'stay tech' as what vocalist Oliver Rae Aleron calls the band's 'catchphrase', emblazoned on merchandise, used to sign-off social media posts and displayed prominently in album liner notes.³² Indeed, Archspire's affiliation to a prescribed notion of technicality leads some to suggest the 'band is a gimmick . . . they are technical, some may say, to a fault'.³³ But Aleron conceptualises the band's approach in a more positive light: 'taking a subgenre of a subgenre of music and elevating it and making it even more obscure, but just really trying to break it down and focus on each individual element to create something that's more complex and more orchestrated as a total'.³⁴ Rather than feeling constrained by the prescribed nature of technical death metal, Archspire use this perceived limitation in a creative way to explore further those musical elements that seem to dictate subgeneric affiliation.

Insofar as their music is prescribed, Archspire are often regarded as emphasising common technical death metal tropes. Thus, the band are 'held up as an example of Technical Death Metal at its most outrageously and enjoyably OTT' thanks, in part, to showcasing a 'shameless dedication to ludicrous speed'.³⁵ Similarly, the use of 'compound' riffs that combine disparate, sometimes contradictory time feels and riff types, 'requires a high level of proficiency, on which musicians in the technical death metal subgenre (which includes Archspire) pride themselves'.³⁶ Suggestions that the band's third album, *Relentless Mutation* (2017), might best be understood by 'someone who gives it a few careful listens back-to-back' is evocative of Smialek's concept of technical death metal's 'pleasurable disorientation' that encourages and 'reward[s] repeated listenings' wherein a listener focuses on different elements and their interaction to better comprehend the music's dense texture.³⁷ Moreover, recalling accusations about Rings of Saturn's supposed inability to perform their music at tempo, Aleron suggests that Archspire's 'goal is that

somebody will listen to the album and be like, “Oh, they can’t play that live, there’s no way”, and then they come and see it live, and like, “Oh, you guys can play it live”.³⁸ In each of these cases, Archspire deliberately embrace components (and criticisms) of technical death metal and utilise them as creative impetus rather than limitation.

Not content to simply accentuate the subgenre’s extant tropes, Archspire have also sought to develop the range of musical expression *within* technical death metal. According to Aleron, the members of Archspire ‘wanted every element of the band to be as impressive as possible to try to make us stand out a bit’. Whereas ‘in a lot of death metal the vocals are a bit more simple and slower, and then the drums are going hyper-speed and the guitars are crazy’, the members of Archspire ‘wanted the vocals to match the music’. To this end, Aleron studied ‘speed rappers like Tech N9ne and Busta Rhymes and Twista’, focusing specifically on their ‘really interesting vocal patterns’.³⁹ Notably, rather than incorporate rap vocals directly, Aleron utilises a distorted growl vocal tone and builds intricate vocal patterns through a process wherein he ‘count[s] the amount of snare hits on some sections and I’ll try to match my syllables to those snare hits’.⁴⁰ The influence of speed rappers is demonstrated most literally during the introduction to ‘Calamus Will Animate’ (2017) when Aleron matches his syllables to the rhythmic patterns of sampled gunfire, which, according to the band, they ‘blatantly ripped off’ from Tech N9ne’s ‘Stamina’ (2001).⁴¹ While this influence clearly emanates from beyond the traditional purview of technical death metal, Aleron’s integration of the compositional technique – ‘applying this principle of phrasing and of speed to death metal’ – is done in such a way as to support and perhaps further Archspire’s avowed commitment to technical death metal. Rather than draw inspiration from genres outside metal and display those elements prominently as originating from elsewhere as one might encounter in, say, progressive or experimental subgenres, Archspire’s assimilation of a specific type of rap-derived vocal delivery seems motivated by a drive to be more ‘technical’. Aleron developed this technique in order to remain within the confines of technical death metal, to ‘stay tech’, but also ‘to try to give ourselves a unique sound’ in a subgenre that is markedly prescribed.⁴²

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explore some of the ways in which generic and subgeneric terminology functions in relation to metal participants’ experience of the music culture. In the twenty-first century, genre and

subgenre terms are ubiquitous in metal discourse, with participants seeming to employ increasingly esoteric vocabulary to categorise their musical experiences. The accrual and demonstration of subcultural capital offer a compelling motivation for the prevalence of genre in metal discourse, not to mention the variety of genre histories and taxonomies from which participants may become enculturated within this discourse. The ostensibly highly-stratified nature of contemporary metal is achieved through the use of what we might call subgenre qualifiers – those words or affixes that denote a particular version of a given genre. Qualifiers function to circumscribe genre both broadly, referring to a general approach or attitude, and narrowly, connoting relatively specific elements of style as well as the potential arrangement of those elements.

In technical death metal, we encounter a qualifier that generally signifies an approach to death metal that privileges technicality while simultaneously delimiting the forms within which that technicality may be expressed. In this formulation, technical can be understood as variously descriptive and prescriptive. Unsurprisingly, some artists move to reject this apparent constraint and attempt to position themselves as something other than technical death metal. By contrast, a few artists are not only comfortable with this affiliation but, in Archspire's case, actively situate themselves within the ostensible confines of the subgenre. For Archspire, death metal provides a space in which to interrogate the broad ideology of 'technical' through an exploration of the very limits of the subgenre, scrutinising the supposed constriction of stylistic elements to produce something conventional and innovative, a prescribed creativity.

Notes

1. Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (Berg, 2007), p. 121. Kahn-Harris draws this concept, in part, from Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Routledge, 1986), and Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Polity Press, 1995).
2. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal*, pp. 122–3. 'Mundane subcultural capital is accrued through a commitment to the collective. In contrast, transgressive subcultural capital is claimed through a radical individualism, through displaying uniqueness and a lack of attachment to the scene' (p. 127).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

4. For thorough analyses of metal genre taxonomies see Eric Smialek, *Genre and Expression in Extreme Metal Music, ca. 1990–2015*, doctoral dissertation (McGill University, 2015), pp. 29–64, and Lewis F. Kennedy, *Functions of Genre in Metal and Hardcore Music*, doctoral dissertation (University of Hull, 2018), pp. 40–52.
5. Sam Dunn, *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (Banger Productions, 2005).
6. These revisions began in Sam Dunn, *Metal Evolution: The Series* (Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2012), and continue in the YouTube-based *Lock Horns* series beginning in 2015, see BangerTV, 'Metalcore Bands Debate with Liam from Cancer Bats' (2015). www.youtube.com/watch?v=69bJiqfpJk4 (accessed 31 August 2021).
7. Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* (Routledge, 2008).
8. David Brackett, '(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover', in David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus (eds.), *Popular Music Studies* (Arnold, 2002), pp. 65–83; original emphasis.
9. Brackett's model distinguishes between labels used by different participants within the music industry: 'marketing category', 'chart name', 'radio format', and 'media-fan genres' (p. 69). It was explored further in David Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth Century Popular Music* (University of California Press, 2016).
10. Benjamin Hillier, 'Considering Genre in Metal Music', *Metal Music Studies* 6/1 (2020): 5–26.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
12. Andrew L. Cope, *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music* (Ashgate, 2010), pp. 3–4.
13. Franco Fabbri, 'A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Application', in David Horn and Philip Tagg (eds.), *Popular Music Perspectives* (IASPM, 1982), pp. 52–81.
14. Heavy Blog, 'Heavy Blog Is Heavy's Best of: Progressive Metalcore' (2014). www.heavyblogisheavy.com/2014/08/07/heavy-blog-is-heavy-s-best-of-progressive-metalcore (accessed 31 August 2021).
15. Richard Street-Jammer, 'Dimmu Borgir's *Stormblast* Turns 20', *Invisible Oranges* (2016). www.invisibleoranges.com/dimmu-borgirs-stormblast-turns-20 (accessed 30 August 2021).
16. Langdon Hickman, 'Blood Incantation's "Hidden History of the Human Race" is Death Metal Infinite, Incarnate', *Invisible Oranges* (2019). www.invisibleoranges.com/blood-incantation-hidden-history-review (accessed 26 October 2021).
17. Jose Manuel Garza, Jr., *Adapt and Prevail: New Applications of Rhythmic and Metric Analysis in Contemporary Metal Music*, doctoral dissertation (Florida State University, 2017), p. 57. <https://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A604968> (accessed 30 August 2021).
18. For instance, technical death metal bands are well-known for frequently utilising a variety of blast beats on drums, sweep-picking on guitar and tapping

on bass, to name only a few techniques ubiquitous in technical death metal but less common elsewhere.

19. See, for instance: Heavy Blog, 'Heavy Blog Is Heavy's Best of: Technical Death Metal' (2015). www.heavyblogisheavy.com/2015/05/05/best-of-technical-death-metal; Loudwire, '10 Greatest Technical Death Metal Bands' (2017). www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBXmdtLW4bE; BangerTV, 'Tech Death Essential Bands Debate' (2017). www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkRLexEjKOO (all accessed 30 August 2021).
20. See Kennedy, *Functions of Genre*, pp. 237–47. Uses of the more recent term 'tech-death' are as much a product of referring to a more strictly delimited technical death metal post-codification as they are an attempt to shorten the subgenre name.
21. Vince Neilstein, 'Did Rings of Saturn Record Their New Albums at Half-Speed?', *MetalSucks* (2012). www.metalsucks.net/2012/11/05/did-rings-of-saturn-record-their-new-album-at-half-speed (accessed 31 August 2021).
22. Axl Rosenberg, 'Video: Rings of Saturn Guitarist Lucas Mann's Criminal Abuse of Guitar Pro', *MetalSucks* (2013). www.metalsucks.net/2013/10/08/video-rings-saturn-guitarist-lucas-manns-criminal-abuse-guitar-pro (accessed 30 August 2021); Brad Sanders, 'Metal's Physical Bias', *Invisible Oranges* (2013). www.invisibleoranges.com/metals-physical-bias (accessed 30 August 2021).
23. Sanders, 'Metal's Physical Bias'.
24. Marcus Erbe, 'By Demons Be Driven? Scanning "Monstrous" Voices', in Eric James Abbey and Colin Helb (eds.), *Hardcore, Punk, and Other Junk: Aggressive Sounds in Contemporary Music* (Lexington Book, 2014), pp. 51–71.
25. Heavy Blog, 'Singled Out (7/4 – 7/10): New Music from Soilwork, Scale the Summit, Coheed and Cambria, and More!' (2015). www.heavyblogisheavy.com/2015/07/10/singled-out-74-710 (accessed 31 August 2021).
26. Hillier, 'Considering Genre', p. 15; Eric Smialek and Méi-Ra St-Laurent, 'Unending Eruptions: White-Collar Metal Appropriations of Classical Complexity, Experimentation, Elitism, and Cultural Legitimization', in Ciro Scotto, Kenneth Smith and John Brackett (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Popular Music Analysis: Expanding Approaches* (Routledge, 2018), pp. 378–99.
27. Andrew Rothmund, 'Not (Really) Deathcore: Rings of Saturn's "Ultu Ulla"', *Invisible Oranges* (2017). www.invisibleoranges.com/not-really-deathcore-rings-of-saturns-ultu-ulla (accessed 31 August 2021).
28. Jon Kunz in Kevin Stewart-Panko, 'Upfront Profile: Rivers of Nihil', *Decibel* (January 2014), p. 22.
29. Steffen Kummerer in Rich Taylor, 'The Sound of Perseverance', *Terrorizer* 267 (January 2016): 46.

30. Karl Sanders in José Carlos Santos, 'How the Gods Kill', *Terrorizer* 262 (August 2015): 24.
31. Dom Lawson, 'New Noise: Ophidian I', *Metal Hammer* 351 (Summer 2021): 30.
32. Oliver Rae Aleron in Lingua Brutallica, 'Episode 11: Oliver Aleron of Archspire (Canada)' (2021). <https://linguabrutallica.podbean.com/e/lingua-brutallica-episode-11-oliver-aleron-of-archspire-canada> (accessed 31 August 2021).
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