

THEMATIC PATTERNS IN MILLENNIAL HEAVY METAL:  
A LYRICAL ANALYSIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research on heavy metal music has traditionally been framed by deviant characterizations, effects on audiences, and the validity of criticism. More recently, studies have neglected content analysis due to perceived homogeneity in themes, despite evidence that the modern genre is distinct from its past. As lyrical patterns are strong markers of genre, this study attempts to characterize heavy metal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by analyzing lyrics for specific themes and perspectives. Citing evidence that the “Millennial” generation confers significant developments to popular culture, the contemporary genre is termed “Millennial heavy metal” throughout, and the study is framed accordingly.

Utilizing prominent metal albums from the 2000-2009 decade, 250 randomly selected songs are analyzed for the inclusion of 115 different themes and their contextual usage. The frequency of each theme is then ranked by prevalence in order to illustrate common focus in the genre. Results showed that themes of death, storytelling, violence, and social commentary prevail; overall, accentuated topics and their usage point to an aptitude for confronting tenebrous realities and personal attempts to understand them. Characteristic connections between Millennial metal and the Millennial generation are also noted through emphasized individuality, social awareness, and civil liberalism.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: HEAVY METAL, MILLENNIALS, AND CONVENTIONS IN LITERATURE. 4	
A Brief History of Heavy Metal .....	4
Heavy Metal as Characteristically Deviant.....	6
The Cultural Link between Emerging Millennials and Heavy Metal.....	8
Identified Themes in Heavy Metal .....	10
CHAPTER 3: METHODS .....	16
Sample Albums.....	16
Analysis of Songs .....	17
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....	19
Prevalent Themes.....	21
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION .....	22
Discussion of Significant Themes .....	23
Rare and Contemporarily Marginalized Themes .....	33
Conclusions.....	35
APPENDIX A: RANKED THEME FREQUENCIES TABLE .....	41
APPENDIX B: LYRICAL ANALYSIS TABLE .....	45

REFERENCES ..... 55

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1 - Ranked Theme Frequencies ..... 42

Table 2 - Lyrical Analysis of Themes..... 46

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Music has long been a prominent topic for the social sciences. In modern society, it has become a significant source of personal identity and a forum for collective experience. As such, researchers contend the exploration of music and the surrounding cultures may better our understanding of that which contributes to social cohesion and distinguishes human groups. The relevance of music research is similarly renewed with each passing generation and developments in popular culture. Therefore, significant ideas and concepts developed by general sociology can be applied in ways that “enhance our understanding of music and of the social contexts in which it is created, performed and heard” (Martin 1997: page x); hence, musical sociology.

Within the sociology of music, the heavy metal genre has garnered considerable attention. One particular focus of this interest has been the music’s cultural ramifications and the activity of heavy metal fans. In the 1990’s the social relevance of heavy metal was highlighted by connections between fandom and deviant, occasionally tragic behavior – Columbine High School shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold’s alleged interest in Marilyn Manson being one such example.

Researchers and interest groups alike have examined a wide range of issues regarding heavy metal; namely potentially subversive content in the music. In the early 1980’s the PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center) and the Parent Teacher Association launched high profile attacks on the genre based on beliefs that the music contained a slew of morally adverse themes (*Record Labeling* 1985). Similarly, work from Jeffrey Arnett has analyzed the link between heavy metal and reckless behavior, lyrical themes, adolescents, and alienation (1991; 1993;

1996); psychological research has suggested that preference for heavy metal music may predict psychological maladies (Baker and Bor 2008); and more recent research has analyzed heavy metal in terms of specific institutions such as power (Gross 1990), masculinity (Rafalovich 2006), and the dichotomy between self-indulgence and chaos (Weinstein 2000). Much of this literature hinges upon or directs criticism at the subject matter and effects of heavy metal; though very little research is devoted to exploring and describing the content of the genre in comprehensive detail, especially more modern forms. Despite Adam Rafalovich's thorough, updated, and objective analysis of content, the selection of sixteen prominent bands represents a narrow sample of modern heavy metal and attempts no characterization of the genre as a whole.

Whereas "metal studies" represents a shrinking fraction of sociological literature, academic interest in "Millennials" is on the rise. In particular, Sweeney notes that this generation of "digital natives" represents manifold changes to art, education, government, technology, and lifestyles, and is thus a critical topic for social research (2005:165). Portions of research also cite that shifts in technology, norms, and popular culture have altered the way music is rendered, regarded and consumed (Winograd and Hais 2011). This shift intuitively includes the heavy metal genre, and may ultimately mean dramatic changes in its character and thematic content.

Various scholars have noted the divergence of modern heavy metal from its 1970's and 80's era antecedents, suggesting that the contemporary form of the genre represents something very different (if not simply more diverse) than it did in prior decades (Kotarba 1994; Rafalovich 2006). For this reason, "Millennial heavy metal" may be characterized as a separate (if not evolved) form of its historical self. As evidence suggests that literature on heavy metal music

depends on outdated concepts and lacks modern examinations of theme, descriptions of Millennial heavy metal seem incomplete at best.

This study seeks to develop an understanding of themes within “Millennial” era heavy metal in order to distinguish the flourishing genre from its past. Within, “Millennial heavy metal” itself is defined as that which falls under the umbrella music style heavy metal, and has been produced / released since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000. By referencing a broad spectrum of this modern music, this study quantifies the various themes embedded and attempts to characterize the genre accordingly. Thus, this research provides an inclusive and objective foundation for the future of metal-studies, a valuable data set for continuing research, and a grounded definition of Millennial metal.



## **CHAPTER 2: HEAVY METAL, MILLENNIALS, AND CONVENTIONS IN LITERATURE**

The following chapter presents a brief history of heavy metal music, addresses academic and editorial conventions, describes the recent swell of interest in Millennials, and finally reports on the thematic content of heavy metal as indicated by various sources. Forays into metal's history and customary character are important (and presented first) as they illustrate its social impact and significance to popular culture, as well as the forces that have driven its place within it. Likewise, descriptions of Millennialism and themes indicated by metal-studies offer context for the research at hand, as well as provide a reasonable benchmark of thematic character.

### ***A Brief History of Heavy Metal***

Various authors note the process by which the rock genre "heavy metal" emerged in the late 1960's - early 1970's from antecedent blues and psychedelic rock. As the 1970's wore on, touchstone groups such as Led Zeppelin, Mountain, Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Aerosmith led a "distorted, wailing shift" in musical style that erupted into a broader "cultural complex of rock music," drawing increasing numbers of fans to live concerts (Weinstein 2000). In the following years, novel aesthetics such as "moody...complex guitars", "stagecraft" and "showy vocals" propelled the musical style to international fame and paved the way for heavy metal to become "a true genre unto itself" (Christe 2003:19-20).

Following this period of meteoric popularity, the 1980's saw the genre undergo significant fragmentation while its overall cultural force continued to thrive (Luhr 2000). Numerous bands adopted or developed sub-genre identities such as glam-metal, speed-metal,

thrash-metal or hardcore-punk (Weinstein 1991). Throughout this decade glam-metal enjoyed the majority of commercial success, and many popular metal bands were identified by theatrical acts, hedonism, and (occasionally ambiguous) sexuality. But as the popularity of glam and hair-metal waned in the 1990's, more aggressive forms of the genre came to fame.

Highlighted by bands such as Metallica, Soundgarden, Primus, and Marilyn Manson, heavy metal began to mingle with experimental genres and branched out into alternative metal, industrial, funk, psychedelia, and garage rock ("Alternative Metal"). As the 90's drew to a close, popular heavy metal drew from stylized hip-hop, rap, and death-metal as well (Christe 2003). Overall the social influence of metal continued to grow, and despite public outcries and accusations of turpitude, wide-recognition culminated in a number of prominent bands enjoying impressive bouts of fame and economic success throughout the decade (Luhr 2000).

Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, heavy metal seems to be better characterized by the diversity of its form rather than a particular musical styling. Although certain elements bridge the majority, the genre is splintered. Many of the budding metal bands of this era are characterized by crossover styles and rampant "underground" success— notably metalcore, black-metal and so-called extreme-metal (Christe 2003; Kahn-Harris 2007). As such, countless sub-genres tinge modern metal, and although the early 2000's are over, it is difficult to look back so soon and understand what the prior decade means for heavy metal's present. Regardless, the commercial success and cultural relevance of heavy metal remains. fans are increasingly "attending metal concerts, buying new albums, putting up metal websites, and endlessly talking and posting views and news on the net." (Weinstein 2000:294). The significance of this history and the diverse

status of the genre today is that modern heavy metal represents an evolutionary and distinct form of its original self. As such, we may expect the thematic content of heavy metal in the Millennial era to represent a similarly distinct set of ideas and motifs.

### ***Heavy Metal as Characteristically Deviant***

With a history of controversy nearly as rich as its artistry, heavy metal's presence in American culture has been tenebrous. Throughout its existence, the genre has attracted scrutiny and ridicule due to stylistic themes, performances, and supposed effects on audiences. Ample research tells the ongoing process by which heavy metal was socially defined as "deviant" – departing from norms of acceptable behavior (Brunner 2006; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000; Luhr 2010). Though spurious concerns were raised about heavy metal throughout the 70's and 80's, the criticism generated by the PMRC and PTA pitted the genre against a moral crusade (Epstein 1994). Arguing that the music contained themes such as drug use, promiscuity, sadomasochism, Satan-worship, murder, and suicide, the PMRC targeted heavy metal in a movement to regulate "overtly violent" and "sexually explicit" forms of rock music (Arnett 1990; Lynxwiler 1988). In effect, a moral panic was stirred among critics and parents that famously termed the genre "porn-rock" (Martin and Segrave 1988). Legislative action then followed that resulted in the infamous "parental advisory" labels that adorn countless albums of "questionable" content (Luhr 2010). Entering the 90's, negative coverage of metal music persisted, associations with violence multiplied, and the reputation of the genre spiraled. Survey measures from that same decade reveal that heavy metal was in fact "the most disliked music" among Americans (Bryson 1996).

Heeding decades of controversy, evidence shows that socially constructed problematic conditions, associations with deviance, and critical rhetoric denigrated heavy metal to something absolutely censurable (Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). Unfortunately, traditions that tainted the public view of metal may contribute to bias in academia as well. Review indicates that negative perspectives of the genre have regularly seeped into academic thought and driven research – many of which are oriented toward the detriments of heavy metal on society and behavior (Scheel and Westefeld 1999; Burge et al. 2002; Reddick and Beresin 2002; Smith and Boyson 2002; Jobes et al. 2003; Weisskirch and Murphy 2004; Hargreaves and North 2006; Young et al. 2006; Mulder et al. 2007; Baker and Bor 2008; Selfhout et al. 2008; Miranda and Claes 2009). While much of this research constitutes psychological approaches, the framing of heavy metal as a “social problem” in sociology persists; and overall, academia has consistently presented the genre in a negative light (Brown 2011; Walser 2006).

In light of its cultural legacy, the pervasive concept of heavy metal as “deviant music” is ostensibly the product of critical reports rather than objective research. Thus, metal-studies in the past may have been tinged by pervasive claims-making, debates, and political hearings. Recognizing this disservice, Arnett notes that political attention has generated “far more heat than light,” and very little in the way of unbiased research on the matter (Arnett 1990:574). In effect, dependence on select literature and acrimonious descriptions disable continuing research in metal. More importantly, deviant assumptions may bar our understanding of its modern character and effects on today’s culture; this study aims to fill that gap and provide the necessary foundation for future research.

### *The Cultural Link between Emerging Millennials and Heavy Metal*

Alternately referred to as “Echo Boomers”, the “Internet Generation”, “Generation Y”, the “Boomlet”, and “Nexters”, the cohort born approximately between 1979 and 1994 (a compromise between sources) has settled into the title “Millennials.” Gleaned from several thousand suggestions to ABC news’ Peter Jennings, the name describes a generation of group oriented, educated, optimistic, sociable, and diverse individuals who have come of age in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Sweeney 2005; Howe and Strauss 2000). As these Millennials have entered adulthood, evidence shows that they represent permanent changes to our cultural landscape and likely control key electoral and social decisions for many years to come (Raines 2002; Sweeney 2005). Due to such potential, social research hastens to understand exactly who “Millennials” are and what they mean for the future.

Studies indicate that much of what distinguishes Millennials from prior generations are their values, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, Millennials favor immediacy via technology and generally expect instant gratification (Holliday and Li 2004; Kiesa et al. 2006). In the workplace, they are enthusiastic about learning, want meaningful tasks, and are keen to work in teams (Zemke 2000). Despite emphasis on group-work, research also reveals that Millennials value individuality. Specifically, they prefer to be identified as unique personalities composed of such things as various group-belongings and community-oriented activities (Mcglynn 2005; Kiesa et al. 2006). Tim Manners adds that Millennials consider the expression of one’s individuality a fundamental right (Manners 2010). In turn, they increasingly believe in the power

of individual action, and generally expect personalization in the things they buy and use (Kiesa et al. 2006; Sweeney 2005).

Millennials are politically oriented as well, especially valuing community involvement, authenticity, and transparency in public figures (Kiesa et al. 2006). Politically speaking they tend to be liberal, and celebrate diversity, inclusivity, and environmental consciousness (Sweeney 2005; Nowak et al. 2006; Manners 2010). Finally, Sweeney notes that Millennials value education and experience, which may be associated with high expectations for wages and career satisfaction (2005). Though recent, the emerging presence of Millennial values has already inspired the restructuring of key institutions – from the arts, entertainment, education and leisure, to marketing, economics, politics and religion (Howe and Strauss 2000; Holliday and Li 2004; McGlynn 2005; Nowak et al. 2006; Kiesa et al. 2006).

Overall, the general consensus is that the Millennial generation is something unique, and their definitive characteristics seem to be momentous influence and sweeping change (Sweeney 2005; Howe and Strauss 2000). In kind, it is important that we understand art and media in the Millennial era, as these institutions describe our cultural approach to future generations as well as the path we have taken. Among other things, the complex values that distinguish the Millennial generation has great potential to shift the perspectives, norms, and themes embedded within popular music – heavy metal being no exception.

The Millennial era has seen the emergence of countless musical styles and diverse sub-genres, but interest in heavy metal has not waned (Kahn-Harris 2007). More so, Millennial heavy metal seems a bastion for new forms. Over 40 subgenres are currently listed under the umbrella

term “metal,” not including a plethora of crossover efforts. As interest in the genre persists, it may be important to heed the presence of Millennial values in order to see their interplay with heavy metal’s most recent developments. One possibility is that Millennials’ purported ability to “see problems and opportunities from fresh perspectives” may inject heavy metal with a very different tone regarding social problems and conflict (Myers and Sadaghiani 2010:226). Additionally, Millennial advancements in technology have permitted heavy metal to be distributed globally and instantaneously, complementing its international success in prior decades. Hence, it is valuable to demarcate “Millennial heavy metal” from past characterizations of the genre. The operationalization of the year 2000 as the starting point for “Millennial heavy metal” represents the period where Millennials began to significantly create and influence the direction of popular culture – notably trends in music.

Combined with gaps in metal-studies, the exhaustive diversity of modern heavy metal and the influence of a new generation conjure a number of questions. E.g. what *is* Millennial metal? Has recent splintering and decades of creative liberties denatured the genre, or is there a thematic character that ultimately ties it together? And perhaps most relevant to the social sciences – does the thematic identity of Millennial metal match negative depictions of the genre throughout history?

### ***Identified Themes in Heavy Metal***

Discerning embedded themes is key to understanding the character of heavy metal past and present. Over time media and critical positions have generally vilified the content of metal, while sources aligned with the genre have naturally defended its nuances; somewhere between,

academia has highlighted a multitude of topics that traditionally define its place in popular culture. While no single source provides a complete or current characterization of the genre, their collected assertions offer the most usable concept of thematic identity.

Various topics appear consistently throughout academic, critical, and editorial work on heavy metal. Continuity alone lends relevance to these themes, yet their true importance lies in the power of prevalence to construct popular perceptions. Discussions of sexuality, for example, have pervaded research and publicity with reports ranging from ambiguous eroticism to specific sexual deviance (Arnett 1993; Ballard and Coates 1995; Binder 1993; Hansen and Hansen 1991). Promiscuity has shared similar focus, along with homosexuality, sadomasochism, rape, and assorted “violent sexual acts” (Singletary 1983; Chandler and Chalfant 1985; Weinstein 2000; *Record Labeling* 1985:6). In the words of Deena Weinstein: “love in its earthy sense of lust and sex is a staple of the genre” (2000:36); and though somewhat unattended by research, the PMRC has identified masturbation as a problematic commonality (*Record Labeling* 1985).

Violence has been a common rallying point for critics and researchers, with a primary focus on the presence of homicide and suicide in lyrics (Took and Weiss 1994; Ballard and Coates 1995; Stack and Gundlach 1994; Wass et al. 1989). Along with these acts, literature details the company of torture, war, trauma, and various forms of physical pain (Brunner 2006; Kahn-Harris 2006; Rafalovich 2006). Note that despite these distinctions academia generally forgoes specificity in violent content, generally framing heavy metal as hyper-violent by essence. Additionally, perceived violence in content has occasionally been inflamed by publicized “mosh” and “slam-dancing,” album art, and tragedies like the Columbine high school massacre.



Ample reports cite that heavy metal lyrics have long promoted substance use (Arnett 1993). As such, critics and researchers point to prominent themes of illicit drug use, drug-related experiences (“highs” / “trips”), and glorified drug abuse (*Record Labeling* 1985; Weinstein 2000; Kahn-Harris 2006). One study of terms used in psychology-based heavy metal articles shows that “drugs/substance use/abuse” was the seventh most mentioned – just below “violence/aggression/”, “sex”, “Satan/Satanism”, and “risk” (Brown 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that the most prominent substance mentioned in the genre is alcohol, and that such content usually concerns “paeans to getting crazy drunk” (Weinstein 2000:37).

Heavy metal’s link to Satanism and the occult is one of the most consistently researched and discussed claims in recent history. The prevalence of this characterization has inspired everything from outright accusations of demonic rituals amongst fans to scholars settling on the genre’s basic “preoccupation with the darker side of life” (Brown 2011; Gross 1990). In some cases, critical arguments on Satanic influence warn that adolescents’ could “wreak havoc” under the music’s spell, and select academia has been framed accordingly (Binder 1993).

Considering the glut of faith-based attacks, litigation, and legitimate research into the matter, heavy metal’s alleged relationship with Evil (whether via Satan or the occult) can simply not be understated. Tangentially, metal has been linked with obscenity for decades; and though many of the themes already discussed might be considered “obscene,” this characterization encompasses profanity, graphic depictions, and objectionable content in general (Ballard and Coates 1995; Ballard et al. 1999; Binder 1993). Thus, the assertion of “obscenity” within heavy metal seems to serve as a catch-all of sorts for deviant themes.

Lastly, rebellion has been consistently related to heavy metal since its inception. As an initially “rebellious” form of music, metal (and the vast amount of Rock n’ Roll) is practically entwined with this convention and numerous resources detect it throughout (*Record Labeling* 1985; Reddick and Beresin 2002). Analysis of one hundred and fifteen metal songs released between 1988 and 1992 revealed that “protest” themes were second only to violence (Arnett 1996). More recently, the rebellious motif has been termed anti-authority, anti-religion, anti-social, and anti-patriotic, but the spirit remains the same (Lynxwiler and Gay 2000; Ballard and Coates 1995; Binder 1993). Notably, rebellion may also tie into heavy metal’s common focus on youth, adolescent culture, and lawlessness (Gross 1990; Weinstein 2000).

Though updated and comprehensive analyses of content are lacking, the themes above represent the general direction of research and publicity – obviously the terrible trinity of sex, drugs, and violence resonates. Whereas we may conclude that these themes embody the dominant interpretation of heavy metal, additional themes have been presented by contemporary studies that suggest more complexity. Said research focuses on nuanced social and personal topics like culture, homophobia, media references, and social roles (Luhr 2010; Hinds 2004). In turn, many studies have shifted from broad strokes of Satanism to notice heavy metal’s overall fascination with various religions and spirituality, e.g. apocalyptic prophecies, mythology (primarily those of Norse, Celtic, and Germanic tradition), and paganism (Moberg 2012). Certain research has even countered concepts of prevalent Satanism, suggesting that heavy metal simply contains a wealth of Judeo-Christian symbolism (Weinstein 2000; Luhr 2010).

Masculinity in heavy metal has long been noted, yet more recent studies consider it a central theme (Brown 2009; Krenske & McKay 2000; Rafalovich 2006). In terms of performance and audience, metal purportedly showcases male power and a core “masculinist” subculture (Brown 2011; Weinstein 2000:104). In lyrics, masculinity has been a driving perspective of the genre, propelled topics of domination, and occasionally transgressed into misogyny (Arnett 1991). More specifically, Rafalovich explored dichotomous motifs of the dominant self and the dominated self, Binder refers to male domination of women, and Kahn-Harris points to domination of the abject (2006; 1993; 2007). Academia often links these modes of domination to suffering and hopelessness in lyrics, both of which are further related to the prevalence of depression (Rafalovich 2006; Walser 1993; Binder 1993; Baker and Bor 2008).

Researchers have regularly acknowledged individuality in metal music as the genre emphasizes strong personal identity and typically shuns mainstream beliefs (Sylvan 2002). In separate analyses, Messner and Rafalovich each contend that social isolation is linked to masculinity through matters of “aleness” that demonstrate individualistic strength (1994; 2006). Themes of alienation similarly reflect this convention as metal utilizes topics of estrangement, loneliness, and powerlessness (Arnett 1996; Epstein and Pratto 1990). Referencing the whole of topics discussed above, “power” underlies much of metal’s content. Power can intuitively be linked to domination, misogyny, individualism, mythology, rebellion, violence, and even the occult. As such, heavy metal’s overall fixation with power is evident (Gross 1990; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000; Rafalovich 2006).

Altogether, the themes above represent a pattern of perceptions that characterize modern heavy metal. Despite extensive developments in the genre and the emergence of Millennial influence, little change has come to this characterization. Whereas the first set of themes discussed represents the common direction of research and opinion, it also illustrates a limited and dated focus in academia. The majority of themes cited in metal-studies derive from assertions formed in the 1980's and 1990's – approximately heavy metal's culmination of intersecting popularity, controversy, and budding research. Furthermore, even when research attempts to refute the saturation of such themes, it remains framed by them (Binder 1993; Luhr 2010; Walser 1993). However divergent, the second set of themes presented remains problematic as they represent typically troublesome ideas. In short, review of the concepts and techniques driving metal-studies reveals a “largely negative account” of the genre, as well as the fact that it has been dominated by frames developed long before the Millennial era (Brown 2011:213).

The characterization above provides a useful composite of literary perspectives that we may compare to a more objective analysis of content. Doing so, this study illustrates how Millennial heavy metal has thematically aligned with or diverged from that of the past. On metal-studies' methodology, Brown notes that the framing of heavy metal as a social problem has not disappeared, but rather negative themes pervading research have met with declining contest (2011). Such assumptive traditions call for redress of the frames that drive research, as well as an updated study of subject matter; only then can Millennial heavy metal be properly defined and explored.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Social research evidences that texts such as lyrics are important purveyors of culture (Riessman 2003; Rafalovich 2006). Furthermore, lyrics have been shown to represent significant symbols that establish shared meanings among people and disseminate social values to a larger audience (Epstein 1977; Monson 1990; Lewis 1993:271). Here, modern heavy metal lyrics are treated as a reflexive element of Millennial culture, thus thematic patterns within can reveal the extent of its influence on the genre. This study utilizes a lyrical content analysis in order to catalogue themes embedded in a selection of Millennial heavy metal songs. The songs analyzed were pulled from a collection of albums released between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2009, then individually coded for thematic content based on a matrix of themes. Following coding, themes were ranked according to prevalence and each analyzed according to heavy metal's character in the Millennial era.

### *Sample Albums*

Though Millennial heavy metal is operationalized as beginning in the year 2000 and continuing, the period selected provides a distinct decade of material and a proper source for sampling. As album sales and mainstream measures of success traditionally have little to do with influence and recognition in heavy metal, the albums selected were gathered from sources that represent cultural icons, respected institutions, or otherwise experienced individuals. Therefore, a catalogue of highly recognized, influential, and/or respected albums was collected from *Decibel* magazine's "Top 100 Metal Albums of the Decade," Metal Storm.net's public forum of top 200 metal albums, the A.V. Club's "Decades Best Metal," Metal Review's "100 Most Essential

Albums of the Decade,” *Terrorizer* magazine’s “Top Ten Essential Hardcore Albums of the Decade,” and a small composite of lesser known web-based sources. Note that considerable overlap occurred throughout these lists, and ultimately formed a master list of 275 albums.

The subculture surrounding heavy metal is notably subjective in preference, so great strides were taken to compile a list of influential albums that most satisfies audience members across a broad spectrum. That said, this composite is intended to provide a sample of albums that captures Millennial heavy metal from mainstream staples to obscure underground talents. Using the master list of 275, a subset of 200 albums (yielding a catalogue of 2073 songs) was randomly selected to control for selection bias.

Visibly, the majority of sources used to develop the master catalogue are web-based lists and forums. The rationale for this provision is two-fold: First, the majority of (relevant) information that exists in the modern era is “online,” often times in ways that no hard-print form parallels. After searching for print-based evaluations of modern heavy metal, it is apparent that little exists outside of sparse magazine articles and album reviews. Second, digitized media seems to be the “way” of the Millennial era. Countless news outlets and institutions have shifted toward digital media, and many portend the end of print. Thus, we must reference the digitized products of the Millennial generation, e.g. forums, blogs, fan-sites, etc., in order to gain an understanding of the cohort’s unique characteristics.

### *Analysis of Songs*

Prior to coding, a matrix of 95 possible themes was developed by referencing relevant literature on heavy metal (most of which cited in Chapter 2, Section 4), as well as a series of

common lyrical topics noted in the “Encyclopaedia Metallum.” These data were corroborated by over ten years of personal experience with the genre in order to form the most comprehensive matrix of themes reasonable. In order to avoid framing bias, any prominent / frequently occurring themes revealed in coding were added to the matrix, and all prior coded songs were reanalyzed accordingly. For ease of coding, each theme included was also assigned a corresponding numeric value (e.g. Violence = 93, Suicide =87).

From the subset of 200 albums, 250 songs were selected using simple random sampling without replacement, rendering songs from 180 separate albums by 157 separate bands. Once selected, song lyrics were examined for distinct themes and underlying motifs, and coded for thematic content; each song was thus assigned a set of numeric values that identifies its thematic content. The complete matrix of themes, their individual codes, and their observed frequencies is shown in Appendix A. The thematic coding of each song is displayed in Appendix B. Important to note is that titles of songs were considered, as title indispensably contributes to a song’s thematic profile. However, instrumental and cover songs were not analyzed, and in the event of their selection were replaced with another at random.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Below is a summary of observations made in the lyrical analysis, including measures of prevalence, methodological notes, and demographics that supplement the data. Themes themselves are positioned according to frequency and are reported through the top 20%; the remainder of ranked themes can be found in Appendix A – table 1.

Methodologically, themes were discerned through metaphors as well as explicit wording. Prior research reports that heavy metal lyrics are frequently metaphorical in nature, and often open to significant interpretation (Arnett, 1996). Thus, lyrics were interpreted literally to account for themes included at “face-value,” as well as interpreted metaphorically when meaning was apparent or intuitive according to context. For example, ISIS’s usage of “like liquid was the sadness, until into the light he stepped” may be plainly interpreted as sadness, but also contextually interpreted as suicide (“From sinking” - *Oceanic* 2002). For the sake of enriched data, all metaphorically interpreted themes are denoted with an asterisk in table 2.

Similarly, certain themes were commonly presented with denouncing or condemnatory language. Of the themes applied to the final analysis, eight were noted for regular use of negative connotation and each instance is marked with a double asterisk in table 2. Those eight – violence, war / combat, substance use / abuse, sex / sexuality / lust, suicide, rape, sexual promiscuity / infidelity, torture, and masculinity – also display secondary frequencies in table 1 that represent their condemned mention. As expected, analysis revealed a number of themes to append the existing 95. In all, twenty themes were added to the end of the matrix and each assigned a numeric code, yielding a final bank of 115 themes.



Attending to the fixed relevance of race, gender, and nationality in social research, a small peripheral analysis was conducted to record demographic patterns in the bands selected. The demographics of the sample are as follows: The vast majority of groups whose lyrics were analyzed hail from North America or Northern European nations, with few from the Asian, Australian, and South American regions and none from Africa, the Caribbean, or the Pacific Islands. Specifically, 78 of the 157 bands are American, 19 Swedish, 12 English, 10 Norwegian, 7 Finnish, 6 German, 4 from each France and Canada, 3 Japanese, 2 from each Poland and Israel, and 1 from each Brazil, Denmark, Greece, Wales, the Netherlands, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Armenia, and the Czech Republic. Such geographic concentration comes as no surprise, citing that heavy metal and countless splinter genres trace their origins to Northern Europe and America.

Likewise, the majority of bands are entirely Caucasian-white. Of the 16 containing non-white members, the races represented were Latino, Asian, Middle-Eastern, Indian, and Native American (listed in descending frequency). As expected, males dominate the sample (as they do the genre) with 140 of the 157 bands being all-male. Note that the remaining 17 generally contained one or two female members, but no more than four (whom still represent only 22% of the 18 piece metal outfit, Haggard). Also, all women present in the sample were either white (n=17), Asian (n=3), or of Middle Eastern descent (n=1). These demographics are further acknowledged in discussion below.

### ***Prevalent Themes***

In analysis, the most frequently occurring theme in lyrics is death (31.6% of songs), followed closely by storytelling / narratives (28.4%), violence (21.2%), society / social commentary (18.4%), and personal relationships (16%). Intersected, these top five themes represent nearly 75% of the songs analyzed, with only 63 not including at least one. Rounding out the top ten in prevalence are blood, failure (14.8%), pain / suffering (14%), decay / social decline (12.4%), conflict, darkness, destruction, dreams / dreaming (12%), and nature (11.6%). Continuing downward, war / combat, hatred / disdain, Judeo-Christianity, personal growth, and romance / love are found in 11.2% of songs, domination and fear found in 10.8%, Personal struggle and human power in 10.4%, and dedication / perseverance and night in 10%.

Following those above, all other themes regarded fall below 10% prevalence; those remaining above 6% being individualism, paganism / occultism, substance use / abuse (9.6%), anti-religion / anti-god (9.2%), depression / sadness, gods / deities (8.8%), psychological pain / anguish, desire / longing (8.4%), occult power (8%), hopelessness / despair, hope / inspiration (7.6%), cosmic events / space, Satan / Satanism, sex / sexuality / lust, vilified others / enemies (7.2%), fatalism / resignation, monsters / beasts, mistrust / betrayal, murder, and isolation (6.4%). Note that the themes listed constitute the 45 most frequent of the analysis; the remaining 70 themes and their corresponding prevalence can be found in table 1, the ranked theme frequencies. Although most themes observed are acknowledged below, discussion primarily focuses on those that appear in ten percent or more of songs sampled.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Superficially, the persistence of motifs like death, violence, and destruction, and the relative scarcity of others like homosexuality, politics, and joy speaks volumes on the contemporary focus of heavy metal. Additionally, the consistency of personal growth and the apparent abandon of anti-authority in lyrics turns the tide of traditional concepts. Though thematic patterns alone are not an episteme for Millennial heavy metal, these frequencies provide a valuable glimpse at dominant interests and topics in today's genre. As such, these findings gain further significance in context of Millennial character and valuation. The following discussion focuses that glimpse by looking beyond prevalence and into how themes are actually used, thus drawing meaningful conclusions of character, perspective, and ideology.

Numerous interesting trends in thematic usage were revealed through lyrical analysis. In a predominant example, death frequently alluded to an emotionally jarring experience as opposed to the actual end of life. Also, dreams often stood for aspirations, blood and night were nearly always used as contextual minutiae, violence was regularly depreciated, and the prevalence of fear as a theme was offset by the context of overcoming it. As mentioned, regular celebration or condemnation of certain actions, objects, and ideas were recorded that offer telling evidence of heavy metal's common social convictions. All considered, usage a basic characteristic of thematic identity. As such, these results supplement the main analysis by offering a more detailed understanding of the ways that prominent lyrical themes are wielded; Their implications for the character of Millennial metal corroborate the discussion below.

### *Discussion of Significant Themes*

At nearly 32% prevalence, mention of death in 79 of the 250 songs sampled is considered a primary finding. This result is striking, if not just for the overwhelming presence of what would seem so morbid. Regardless, the mere prevalence of death is not entirely surprising considering the grim visuals that are displayed on albums and merchandise, the macabre titles of groups, and the “death-metal” subgenre that has gained popularity over the past two decades. Important as prevalence may be, usage unravels more nuanced intentions and begins to shape an understanding of the character of Millennial heavy metal.

First, death was not glorified through lyrics; countering a common criticism that it may be lauded, or even promoted by the genre. While not outright “condemned,” death was almost always presented as something undesirable. A large percentage of songs utilized death as a metaphor for various forms of loss, defeat, exhaustion, or failure. Where Soilent Green’s “Afterthought of a Genius” reads “envied idols die, thru these eyes of a jealous mind,” death is used to describe the fall of a magnate; This is Hell’s “Broken Teeth” uses the refrain “we are the walking dead” to personify defeated individuals; and Scarlet’s “Dead America” alludes to a failed nation. In these examples, death is generally treated with the neutrality of an eventual certainty.

Where death was not symbolic failure, analysis revealed that it usually served a larger narrative structure. In specific, it was frequently observed as an undeniable outcome of war (Bolt Thrower’s “At First Light,” Fucked Up’s “Crusades”), audacity (Mastodon’s “Blood and Thunder”), or inevitable expiration (Be’lakor’s “Countless Skies, Argus’ “Eternity – Part I).

Alternatively, death was used to describe hyperbolic discomfort. That is, distress was often exaggerated as death or dying in order to punctuate the anguish caused by an event or disdain for a certain object; Drowningman's "Radio Tuned to the Sound of Hearts Breaking" uses such language to exemplify hatred for popular music. In sporadic cases, death was also used as a circumstantial feature of dystopian society or occult ritual.

On a related note, most descriptions of murder observed in the sample were passing details embedded in an overarching story. Such is the case with "Hand of Stone", "Hereditary Taint", "Covenant of Souls", "Megalodon", "Raunioilla", "Tide of Blood", "Windir", and "The Patriot Virus," where murder is not promoted, but rather a piece of larger narratives concerning genocide, social injustice, war, or the supernatural. Relying on the frames observed – neutral acceptance, inevitable outcome, social circumstance, and narrative detail – the absolute prevalence of death points more to personal confrontations with reality than morbid fixation, albeit tempered with gloom.

Admittedly, much of death's prevalence in Millennial heavy metal owes to some form of storytelling – the second most prevalent theme, and one that canvassed a number of others. Embedded in narratives, death, blood, darkness, nature, Judeo-Christianity, filth / rot, and night all received frequent mention through minor thematic detail. Observations of death as a central theme were infrequent, and blood, darkness, filth, and night as central themes were never observed. Ensiferum's "Hero in a Dream" utilizes the lyrics "his life would turn into darkness" as foreshadowing, "night turns into dawn" for imagery, and "rides in the wind of fire and snow" as imaginative natural context.

Likewise, many lyrical narratives of Millennial metal center on fantasy and medieval-fantasy, occasionally conjuring images of paganism, the occult, mythological gods, deities, warfare, victory, heroism, and gore. Such narratives naturally include paeans to power – predominantly that of humans and the occult, but also pertaining to nature, monsters, and the paranormal. These findings buttress reports of heavy metal’s historical interest in fantasy and power, and evidence that the tradition persists today. Outside these typicalities, narratives described out of body experiences, violent confrontations, glory, competition, warfare, cosmic events, society, adventure, and personal strife.

Despite a history of its inclusion, the modern prevalence of storytelling is significant as it lends imagination and purpose to the perception of the genre. The diverse topics contained in these narratives counter concepts of thematic homogeneity and monotonous negativity. Between poetry, science fiction, and hypothetical apocalypse, much of the sample songs are better defined as elaborate fictions than attempts to undermine the status quo, and none were geared toward corrupting youth.

Interestingly, substance use was paired with narratives in a number of cases, as figures were often characterized through their use of ambiguous drugs and the ensuing effects. Presentation of substance use generally straddled negative and condoning portrayals (e.g. “In Her Shadow,” “Bangover,” respectively), with very few instances of clear promotion. Where substances did appear to be advocated, they (hallucinogens) were credited with enlightening the speaker (“Closed Eye Visual,” “Lateralus”). Note that both “advocating” instances represent metaphorical interpretations, and explicit promotion of substances was not observed. Since

approximately 38% of substance references outright condemned their use, little evidence supports the notion that heavy metal glorifies drug abuse in the Millennial era.

At 21.2% prevalence, violence was the third most frequently observed theme. Analysis revealed that nearly one third of lyrical violence was in the context of storytelling / narratives. Violence was also regularly coupled with failure, loss, gore, explicit injury, and various forms of power. Concerning usage, the theme seemed to strike a fairly even dichotomy between violence experienced personally and violence experienced by others; More importantly, the vast majority of violence in lyrics appeared to be perpetrated by anonymous third-persons. Also, violence was outright condemned in 20% of uses, and violence inflicted upon the self was exceedingly rare.

Not surprisingly, violence was frequently coupled with war and general conflict, yet the prevalence of war is notable in and of itself. Arguably, the frequency of these themes combined in lyrics reflects a realistic global circumstance as armed conflicts burgeon. While the amount of thematic conflict in metal songs and the prevalence of real global combat has likely not significantly varied over the past decades, these findings evidence that heavy metal has experienced no loss of social awareness through time. More tenably, Millennial heavy metal takes a stance on the topic, condemning war / combat in 34.5% of cases, and assuming a cynic “matter-of-fact” frame in most others. In kind, violence was regularly linked to themes of society and social commentary, further evidencing that Millennial heavy metal often deals in the unwieldy realities of contemporary life.

Physical pain and suffering was mentioned frequently (albeit thematically minor), and psychological pain and anguish was presented fairly regularly. Usage of the former was

generally applied to narratives, contexts of war, and descriptions of subjugation, while the latter often detailed one's personal struggle, failed relationships, indecision, guilt, or general failure. Adjoining violence and war, destruction was also relatively frequent; however, destruction's coupling with war and violence was relatively infrequent, as the theme was more often used to symbolize irrevocable ruin and demonstrate great power. Alternatively, conflict was paired with war or violence in 40% of instances. Where not paired with either, the theme was also used to describe personal struggles (Ayreon's "Day Eighteen"), private skirmishes (This is Hell's "Double Grave"), moral disagreements (Sworn Enemy's "Labeled"), and social problems (Kreator's "Dystopia"). Therefore, facets of reality also drive the inclusion of conflict in Millennial heavy metal.

Though relatively frequent, the theme of domination came in various forms – religious conquest ("Raunioilla"), cultural dominance ("Time Waits for no Slave"), domination of the individual ("Submission is for the Weak"), and even social oppression ("Toxicity"). References to domination similarly conjured images of social hierarchy and power dynamics; for instance, At the Drive In's "Quarantined" seems a metaphorical description of a segregated class, dominated by those with social leverage. Linking the prevalence of domination to violence, the dichotomy between violence received and violence dealt in heavy metal parallels Rafalovich's concept of narrative split between the dominant and dominated self. Thus, the findings discussed here reinforce the relevance and poignancy of such research, simultaneously demonstrating the prevalence of power relationships throughout modern forms of the genre.



The importance of power in heavy metal has long been cited, to which this study contributes further evidence. Looking broadly, “power” themes were present in 24.8% of the songs analyzed, positioning it just below storytelling in prevalence. Elaborating on assessments of heavy metal’s “fixation with power,” the analysis shows that power is most often placed in human actors experiencing valiant action and rising from intolerable adversity. Power is also positioned in spiritual and supernatural dynamism, at which point its presence predominantly alludes to the occult and is narrative in nature. To lesser extent lyrics focus on the incomparable power of nature, in which many instances accredit cosmic events as something to be beholden – a symbol of incredible vastness and the chaotic nature of the universe. Interestingly, where power itself prevails, power struggles are exceedingly rare, suggesting that power relationships are often cemented in Millennial metal lyrics.

At near 20% prevalence society / social commentary represents the fourth most frequently observed theme, and analysis shows that social sentiments may drive the inclusion of congruous other themes in Millennial metal. As discussed, social commentary can ostensibly be linked to death, violence, pain, suffering, social decay, conflict, domination, power, and war. The potential for this motif to net or explain the presence of several others surely lies in the fact that many of what we may term “themes” are invariably facets of society anyway. Nonetheless, the zeal of Millennial metal to present social realities and draw distinct judgments on them is outstanding, and definitively extends the genre beyond convictions of “porn-rock.”

In use, themes of society and social commentary are often critical and occasionally delivered through means of sarcasm, satire, hyperbole, or disdain. In many cases, socially

oriented lyrics seem to issue from critical observers (“Small Stone”, “Never Knowing Peace”) or the subjugated (“Grinning Mouths”), highlighting problematic conditions and invoking reform. Themes of filth and rot are occasionally paired with such lyrics to convey the decay or sad state of social structures (e.g. “Reduced to Slavery”, “The Furnace”). Looking on the prevalence and usage of social commentary in Millennial metal, it is apparent that the political interest and social awareness of Millennials themselves is manifested by cynical portrayals of civic dilemmas, wider global maladies, and social decay. In this way Millennial metal may position itself as a cultural conduit between material events and social actors – a lens by which listeners and artists understand and organize social facts.

Citing the overwhelming majority of White, male, and Anglo-Europeans / Americans that make up the heavy metal genre, we must remember that the perspective offered through lyrics is dominantly that of the white-skinned American or Northern European man. Though not necessarily problematic, the trend bears mention as the reality confronted via Millennial metal is that perceived by this dominant group. Therefore, while not necessarily racially exclusive the perspective is neither universal, racially encompassing, or particularly feminine. Likewise, the prevalent social commentary of the genre is positioned, albeit generally civil and politically progressive.

In the lyrics analyzed, personal relationships were utilized in one of two ways: as minor characters surrounding socially-infused themes, or as the crux on which themes like desire, hatred, a vilified other, and romance were based. As the latter frame dominated, personal relationships sporadically took the form of family (“Wolves”), invaluable friends (“Declare Your

War”), fathers (“Follower”), brothers (Thorns in the Planet’s Side”), and the anonymous (“Epic Problem”), but were most often represented through a significant other. Normally, the significant other subject was either vilified and regarded with hatred (e.g. “Everything Ends”), or (more often) longed-for and ameliorated as an irreplaceable object of affection (e.g. Warning’s “Bridges”); Hence the thematic prevalence of romance / love over heartbreak.

Much of the hatred and disdain observed in the sample was oriented toward one who wronged or impeded the progress of the speaker or central character of a song. As such, nearly 40% of hatred / disdain was paired with a vilified other or enemy. Remaining incidence of hatred was mostly directed toward broader society, popular culture, and the status quo in a manner that straddles individuality and oppressed frustration. The commonality such hatred reflects a general disdain for prevailing social structures, and although not entirely “fatalistic,” these lyrics point to a trend of disdain and cynical social awareness that runs throughout much of the sample.

Conversely, common pessimism in narratives alludes to an inclination toward fatalism in lyrics. Occasional songs were embedded with resignation – usually in a narrative context – and concerned themes from social decay, to war, to heartbreak. Still, lyrics predominantly focused on the multiform failures and losses that confront modern life. Failure and loss were prior mentioned as typical results of death-metaphors, but the loss itself is most often related to personal struggle and relationships (e.g. “Intimate Slavery”, “Heaven in Her Arms”). Whether in the form of physical defeat, personal failure, bereavement, or calamity, the thematic use of loss was highly varied, but its prevalence partially explains the frequency of hopelessness.

Hopelessness / despair is important to heed for its relative prevalence, but more so due to the identical frequency of hope and inspiration. As these two categories represent apparent opposites in theme, their mirrored prevalence may speak to a significant attitudinal shift in heavy metal. That is, this finding evidences that today the genre is not in fact a paragon of “doom and gloom,” but more emotionally varied than overtly pessimistic. At the least, this result infers that Millennial metal is equal parts hope and harrow.

Prevalence of hope / inspiration itself corroborates higher frequencies of themes like personal growth, dedication, perseverance, dreams (lyrically intended as aspirations), and the reasonably less prevalent integrity / morality. Yet, these frequencies are still paralleled by those of personal struggle, fear, anguish, and longing. However opposite, such themes are often linked in lyrics and function symbiotically; Personal struggle leads to personal growth (“Healing to Suffer Again”), fear is commonly offset by appeals to overcome it (“The Fluke”); dedication stems from longing (“Serenity”), perseverance from anguish (“Lonewolves”), and aspirations come embodied in integrity (“Shadows”). In light of this, I assert that Millennial metal is far more encompassing than it is emotionally extreme, frequently presenting a reality of detail and potential rather than abiding misfortune.

Much of the discussion thus far has referred to nuanced experiences of the individual (however subtly), from narrative perspectives to personal enunciations of kinship, tragedy, perseverance, substance use, and hatred. Likewise, overt themes of individuality are fairly prevalent in the sample lyrics, and evidently indicate an overall emphasis on uniqueness of character. In analysis, individualism was mostly evoked through personal power (“Alone I Stand

In Fires”), independence (“Don’t Need Your Help”), and enriched character (“No Heroes”). As such, individuality was often portrayed as a source of strength and particular consciousness, especially concerning paired themes of dedication, perseverance, personal growth, and struggle. Even as songs penned individuality emerging from failure and loss, and select occurrences of the theme conveyed alienation, an aura of self-awareness and personal demarcation shone through.

Instances of individuality also typically defined a central personality from others, the usage of which necessarily alienates but moreover buttresses focus on a distinct character. Herein lies a strong marker of Millennial ideology in modern metal; and as the prominence of individuality shapes and penetrates contemporary culture, so does it apparently manifest itself in popular culture. Heavy metal in particular seems to turn focus inward, whether pondering the effects of society on the individual, questioning one’s part in a greater whole, or exploring the diverse ways in which we cope and falter.

Devil-worship has long embodied the antipathy between the status quo and heavy metal, in part because of its supposed saturation in lyrics and visuals. Though not considered a pervasive theme, Satanism and the occult occur with moderate frequency in lyrics, along with anti-religious motifs. Though not directly anti-religious, paganism / occultism appeared with nearly equal frequency to anti-religion / anti-god / the unholy, maintaining that the interests are linked. While each of these references were prevalent, specific mention of evil was relatively rare, suggesting that those writing lyrics may disassociate the two.

Notably, Satanic and occult themes nearly always occur in a fantasy / narrative context and were observed considerably less than broad Judeo-Christian themes. Even so, the observed

usage of Satanism and the occult offers credence that the overtly deviant and obscene surely exists in Millennial era metal, though its presence is usually confined to doom and black metal – subgenres practically defined by misanthropy and anti-religion. Despite the potential for rich personal narratives and astute social commentary elsewhere, the genre evidently has remaining potential for thematic extremity. Occasional songs with central themes of Satan / Satanism are tinged with violence and morbidity, while select others antagonize the whole of accepted morals. In example, Goatwhore’s “Apocalyptic Havoc” revolves around Satanic domination, the fall of God, and overwhelming conflict, driven by Judeo-Christian imagery and themes of torture, death, insanity, plague, genocide, and suffering.

Pertaining to anti-religion itself, prevalence is best explained by the propensity of broader heavy metal to eschew organized religion. Still, works such as “Apocalyptic Havoc” are interesting paragons of deviance – often to the extent that one may question whether cultural clash is the overall intention, not unlike the well-publicized shock-tactics of artist Marilyn Manson or talk-personality Howard Stern. In this frame, the intention of overwhelming deviance seems to be an affront to accepted culture, and a concerted effort to upset a status quo of political correctness and moral conduct. That said, future metal-studies may assess the purpose and origin of “extreme” lyricism, as well as the extent to which obscenity and deviance is purposively embedded to upset convention.

### ***Rare and Contemporarily Marginalized Themes***

Whereas the abundance of some themes is essential to a concept of Millennial metal, the relative lack of others is an equal marker of character and efficiently distinguishes the modern

genre from historical conventions and critical concepts. An important deviation is Millennial metal's apparent neglect of rebelliousness in lyrics (4% prevalence), countering numerous contentions of thematic orientation. Likewise, the results demonstrate that Millennial heavy metal is considerably lacking in thematic recklessness, despite the oft-analyzed behavior surrounding young fans in the 80's and 90's. Combined with the scarcity of anti-authority and anti-patriotism, evidence testifies that heavy metal of today deals more in alternative, autonomous lifestyles and values than aimless defiance and hedonism.

In kind, metal's once bustling concentration on youth has apparently faded, with the theme present in only 2% of the sample. While sexuality was not unusual in lyrics, its relatively modest frequency and trends of normative usage do not match the pervasiveness of lust and sexual deviance advanced by research and rhetoric. Case in point, promiscuity was even more scant and clearly decried in 3 of its 6 appearances. Hypothetically, heavy metal has thematically matured in the Millennial era and been increasingly carried by socially aware enthusiasts as opposed to audacious party animals.

Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century masculinity became somewhat of a rallying point for metal-studies, though the analysis finds its explicit inclusion in Millennial metal rare (2% prevalence). As many actions may be associated with "masculinity" per se, it becomes difficult to pin down its overt usage through themes like violence, power, domination, or victory. That said, understanding that the vast majority of bands are composed of males and that many of the themes listed in the matrix connote traditional masculinity, it is reasonable to call the construction an overarching atmosphere of the genre.

Though it is apparent that heavy metal retains its preoccupation with “the darker side of life,” the genre shows a significant trend of condemning negativity and dysfunction. For example, lyrics disparaging suicide, infidelity, and masculinity were regular. Such condemnation of suicide is particularly important as it counters the blighting criticism that heavy metal may promote such an act. On a related note, explicit mention of “chaos” in lyrics is limited; however, the assertions of Deena Weinstein are not discredited as her concept of “chaotic” topics encompasses many of the more prevalent themes discussed above.

Concerning the allegations of the PMRC and similar groups, evidence shows that their convictions are dated, if not sensationally embellished to begin with. Though present, drug use in Millennial metal is moderate in frequency and commonly condemned; presence of Satan in the sample is generally narrative and rarely alludes to actual worship; violence was often lamented and almost never glorified in lyrics; murder was infrequent; suicide rare; and sadomasochism was entirely absent from the sample. As mentioned, sexuality experienced reasonable mention, yet promiscuity and sexual deviance were exceedingly rare and highly condemned. Regardless of former validity, cautious monitoring and moral criticism in the fashion of Tipper Gore and the Washington Wives simply does not apply to Millennial metal.

### ***Conclusions***

The dearth of specific themes in Millennial metal that characterized the genre in the 1970s, ‘80s, and ‘90s maintains the need for a modern distinction. Importantly, the infrequency of themes projected by prior literature extricates Millennial metal from convictions of juvenility, offering objective evidence of astute intentions and unveiling caustic assumptions. Today, the



genre's thematic evolution and artistic integrity is evidenced by novel commonalities – the propensity for social commentary, Individuality, condemnation of drug use, and inclinations toward personal growth, perseverance, and hope.

Looking on bands themselves, it is clear that many organize themselves around unique combinations of themes, establishing personas from motifs that may be borrowed and shared but never duplicated in priority or usage. In example, those bands that present frequent themes of the occult and Satan are those whose image may be maintained by their continued usage; e.g. black metal outfits such as Watain, Goatwhore, and Akercocke. That is, the lyrical themes utilized reflect the wider image of the band performing them. Other groups like Isis and Converge exemplify this convention with consistency in lyrics, artwork, and performance styles that are less “dark” in nature, but nonetheless significantly persistent.

The thematic organization of bands emulates Millennials' common emphasis on unique personalities, such as those defined through various group-belongings and personal interests. Moreover, this conclusion evidences that Millennials' delight in variety extends to temporal media. This conclusion also raises the topic of modern music's complex relationship between sound, lyricism, performance, and artwork. Though select literature has explored that which coheres genre, current academia lacks an understanding of how and to what extent bands thematically organize themselves. Future inquiries into this matter may further our understanding of “thematic solidarity” and its importance to contemporary music.

Looking comprehensively, the themes observed in lyrics vary significantly; though they generally contribute to intricate central meanings. As illustrated, themes are often arrived at

metaphorically and indeed assign many songs cryptic, evasive meanings. Occasionally, lyrics defy thematic categorization: Tool's "Lateralus" is practically a paragon of mysterious, yet complex meaning with a slew of metaphors and suggestive language. Citing analysts, "Lateralus" invokes Buddhism and Summum using specific colors, references LSD through imagery, and is mathematically significant due to the use of Fibonacci sequencing (Norris 2001). Despite regular ambiguity and complexity, the data gleaned in this study enumerates thematic direction toward a comprehensive concept of Millennial metal. As such, more detailed research on themes in the genre promises to explain the value systems and unique perspectives fostered. Future studies of popular culture can also benefit from detailed studies of thematic usage as such focus invariably offers context, depth, and direction to basic understandings of popular topics.

Let alone, the diverse handling of death – an outwardly flat and morbid theme – in metal indicates the possibility of revealing surprising trends through assessing usage in greater detail. Prominence of death in theme alone concludes that Millennial metal is preoccupied with the concept; however, assuming that the use of death extends far beyond the literal definition renews lyrics with poignancy and depth of meaning. Therefore, usage offers new frame to what would otherwise be quantitative trends; in this example coloring Millennial metal's preoccupation with death poetic, analogous to Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay" as a narrative realization of inevitable degradation, and a restless lament therefrom.

Heavy metal's historic temerity is demonstrated through the continued use of volatile subjects in the sample. Though abrasive, this radical nature may enable the genre to confront social issues to a depth that others are unfit. That is, social problems can be considerably

unwieldy to art that is characteristically optimistic and entertainment-oriented; in contrast, heavy metal cultivates a rawness and pessimism that (though frequently off-putting) allows it to put social problems in a realistic context and omit false hopes of deliverance. Evidently, heavy metal in the Millennial era has embraced that allowance, and adopted it as a chief lyrical device.

Admittedly, discerning social acumen in heavy metal often requires a keen eye. Songs such as Electric Wizard's "I, The Witchfinder" demonstrates that proper attention can reveal a depth of moral ideology in heavy metal profoundly ignored by critics. At first glance the piece exalts violence, yet underneath illustrates villainy and wanton sadism in the narrator through hubris. To critics' credit, such metaphors and satirical suggestions are not a constant, and commonly hide beneath layers of veiled sarcasm, explicit morbidity, and trying sounds. Nonetheless, intentions of poetry and social commentary are there.

Aside from exemplifying discourse, abounding social commentary in Millennial metal indicates a propensity for realism. The prevailing usage of themes observed in the analysis attest that nowadays the genre is rife with personal endeavors to confront, organize, and understand the realities of life. However negative the focus of these lyrics, it is remembered that reality itself is often great and terrible, rife with powers and dominations, tinged with conflict and loss, and constructed through personal relationships and social affects. Especially concerning explicit gloom – war, violence, destruction, etc. – Millennial metal consistently undertakes troublesome certainties and attempts to contextualize them personally. The genre today may thus be characterized as a multitudinous forum of understanding the self, society, and inevitability.

One of the most apparent findings of the analysis is modern heavy metal's great use of figurative speech, delivering near as much metaphorically as it does literally. Archaic at times and admittedly esoteric at others, this tradition nonetheless demonstrates salient artistry in lyrics. Moreover, profuse metaphors, critical standpoints on culture, and heightened social awareness suggest that contemporary metal is indeed a "thinking man's" genre; continued research on its contemporary conventions may bring the insight of "porn-rock" to the surface of a Millennial era embroiled in social change and activity. The hope is that continued and renewed attention dispels past vilification, and ensures that modern poeticism, however morbid, conflicted, or confrontational, falls not on deaf ears. At minimum, exploring the flourishing genre offers a divergent perspective on society, reality, and ourselves.

In short, evidence shows that Millennial metal is realistically and cynically framed, endowed with story arcs, socially-minded, and occupied with personal bonds. Comprehensively, the genre is profoundly more intricate: It is romantic and sexual, but reflects on these with lasting cynicism and distrust; it tells stories with highly imagined organic and occasionally macabre detail; it advocates individual power through overcoming fear; it knows that personal growth comes through personal struggle; it knows failure and it feels desire; it believes deeply in love, and it has dealt deeply in loss; it feels pain and sorrow, and heeds the conflict of war and rampant destruction that colors our world; it seeks to enchant the mundane, yet it eschews conventional spirituality; it dreams of the past and of tomorrows, it watches over society and it mulls over decay; it builds villains and reflects on personal bonds; it hopes, and it despairs, but it knows death is coming all the same.

Millennial heavy metal has diverged from the past in key ways, but as far as it has evolved it has also clung to enduring roots. Thematically, Millennialism itself is reflected through the prevalence of individuality, awareness, and socially liberal attitudes. That said, Millennial heavy metal is diverse more than it is whole, and no single thematic thread runs throughout. Nonetheless, the single tradition of progress has driven heavy metal to proliferate in a multitude of thematic directions, and has cemented its relevance to Millennial society.

## **APPENDIX A: RANKED THEME FREQUENCIES TABLE**

**Table 1 - Ranked Theme Frequencies**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1	Death	16	79 - 31.6%
2	Storytelling / Narrative	84	71 - 28.4%
3	Violence	93	53 (11) - 21.2%
4	Society / Social Commentary	82	46 - 18.4%
5	Personal Relationships	52	40 - 16%
6	Blood / Bleeding	100	37 - 14.8%
6	Failure / Loss	22	37 - 14.8%
7	Pain / Suffering	48	35 - 14%
8	Decay / Social Decline	112	31 - 12.4%
9	Conflict	12	30 - 12%
9	Darkness	15	30 - 12%
9	Destruction	113	30 - 12%
9	Dreams / Dreaming	107	30 - 12%
10	Nature	45	29 - 11.6%
10	War / Combat	94	29 (10) - 11.2%
11	Hatred / Disdain	28	28 - 11.2%
11	Judeo-Christianity	37	28 - 11.2%
11	Personal Growth	51	28 - 11.2%
11	Romance / Love	72	28 - 11.2%
12	Domination	20	27 - 10.8%
12	Fear	25	27 - 10.8%
13	Personal Struggle	53	26 - 10.4%
13	Power - Human	60	26 - 10.4%
14	Dedication / Perseverance	17	25 - 10%
14	Night	47	25 - 10%
15	Individualism	32	24 - 9.6%
15	Paganism / Occultism	49	24 - 9.6%
15	Substance use/abuse	86	24 (9) - 9.6%
16	Anti-Religion / Anti-God / "Unholy"	5	23 - 9.2%
17	Depression / Sadness	18	22 - 8.8%
17	Gods / Deities	98	22 - 8.8%
18	Psychological Pain / Anguish	64	21 - 8.4%
18	Desire / Longing	111	21 - 8.4%
19	Power - Occult	58	20 - 8%
20	Hopelessness / Despair	31	19 - 7.6%
20	Hope / Inspiration	103	19 - 7.6%
21	Cosmic Events / Space	13	18 - 7.2%
21	Satan / Satanism	74	18 - 7.2%

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
21	Sex / Sexuality / Lust	78	18 (5) - 7.2%
21	A Vilified Other / An Enemy	102	18 - 7.2%
22	Fatalism / Resignation	24	17 - 6.8%
23	Monsters / Beasts	41	16 - 6.4%
23	Mistrust / Betrayal	99	16 - 6.4%
23	Murder	42	16 - 6.4%
23	Isolation / Alienation	36	16 - 6.4%
24	Shame / Guilt	81	15 - 6%
24	Gore / Explicit Physical Injury	96	15 - 6%
24	Apocalypse / Doom	106	15 - 6%
25	Integrity / Morality	35	14 - 5.6%
26	Fantasy / Medieval Fantasy	23	13 - 5.2%
26	Filth / Rot / Repulsiveness	26	13 - 5.2%
26	Power - Natural	59	13 - 5.2%
27	Chaos	10	12 - 4.8%
28	Power - Medieval / Fantasy	57	11 - 4.4%
28	Rebirth / Transformation	67	11 - 4.4%
28	Suicide	87	11 (3) - 4.4%
28	Self Deprecation	77	11 - 4.4%
28	Victory	92	11 - 4.4%
28	Indifference / Apathy	114	11 - 4.4%
29	Heartbreak	97	10 - 4%
29	Rebellion	66	10 - 4%
30	Insanity	34	9 - 3.6%
30	Mythology / Folklore	44	9 - 3.6%
30	The Paranormal / Supernatural	50	9 - 3.6%
31	Escape / Escapism	108	8 - 3.2%
31	Evil	104	8 - 3.2%
31	Rape	65	8 (3) - 3.2%
31	Sickness / Plague	105	8 - 3.2%
31	Anti-Patriotism	4	8 - 3.2%
32	Crime	14	7 - 2.8%
32	Holiness / Blessing	109	7 - 2.8%
33	Psychological Disorders	63	6 - 2.4%
33	Satire	75	6 - 2.4%
33	Promiscuity / Infidelity	80	6 (3) - 2.4%
33	Torture	88	6 (1) - 2.4%
34	Masculinity	38	5 (2) - 2%
34	Politics	54	5 - 2%



<u>Rank</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
34	Praise of Music	62	5 - 2%
34	Reference - Literature	70	5 - 2%
34	Youth	95	5 - 2%
34	Joy / Happiness	101	5 - 2%
34	Heroes / Heroism	110	5 - 2%
35	Abuse (physical / psychological / sexual)	1	4 - 1.6%
35	Confession	11	4 - 1.6%
35	Disasters	19	4 - 1.6%
35	Misogyny	40	4 - 1.6%
35	Recklessness	68	4 - 1.6%
35	Sexual Deviance	79	4 - 1.6%
35	Trauma	90	4 - 1.6%
36	Celebration	9	3 - 1.2%
36	Injustice	33	3 - 1.2%
36	Possession (e.g. demonic)	55	3 - 1.2%
36	Reference - Film	69	3 - 1.2%
36	Reference - philosophy	71	3 - 1.2%
36	Science Fiction	76	3 - 1.2%
36	Afterlife	115	3 - 1.2%
37	Alternative Religion	2	2 - .8%
37	Anti-Authority	3	2 - .8%
37	Fun	27	2 - .8%
37	Masturbation	39	2 - .8%
37	Mutilation	43	2 - .8%
38	Cannibalism	8	1 - .04%
38	Elitism	21	1 - .04%
38	Homosexuality	30	1 - .04%
38	Poverty	56	1 - .04%
38	Power Struggles	61	1 - .04%
38	Thrill-Seeking	89	1 - .04%
39	Androgyny	6	0 - 0%
39	Bullying	7	0 - 0%
39	Homophobia	29	0 - 0%
39	Necrophilia	46	0 - 0%
39	Sadomasochism	73	0 - 0%
39	Stalking	83	0 - 0%
39	Straight-Edge Ethics	85	0 - 0%
39	Vegetarianism	91	0 - 0%

## **APPENDIX B: LYRICAL ANALYSIS TABLE**

**Table 2 - Lyrical Analysis of Themes**

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
(The Public Gets) What the Public Doesn't Want	Napalm Death	2000	28*, 75, 77, 82
A Call to Awake (The Quest)	Orphaned Land	2004	37, 49, 84, 98
Abandoned	Kamelot	2005	31, 36, 47, 64, 84, 98, 107, 111
Addendum Galactus	The Lord Weir Slough		
Aftermath	Feg	2003	20, 55
Afterthought of a Genius	Strapping Young Lad	2003	2, 37, 65**, 82, 93**, 94**
Alone I Stand in Fires	Soilent Green	2001	12, 16, 35, 72, 80*, 81, 82, 97, 99, 108, 112
Among Sorrow	Disillusion	2004	17, 28, 32, 36, 48, 51, 53*, 60, 103
An Addict's Lover	Withered	2005	16, 18, 20, 26, 100
And With Her Came the Birds	Soilent Green	2001	1, 19, 31, 53, 68, 78, 82, 84, 86**, 87*, 100
Anointing of Seer	Cult of Luna	2006	16, 45, 47, 81
Antarctica	High on Fire	2005	23, 25, 50, 60, 72, 84, 106, 111, 113
Apocalyptic Havoc	Immortal	2002	45, 59
At First Light	Goatwhore	2009	5, 16, 20, 34, 37, 42, 48, 49, 58, 74, 88, 93, 105, 106
Aurora Borealis	Bolt Thrower	2005	12, 16, 84, 93, 94
Bangover	Eternal Tears of Sorrow	2001	13, 15, 45, 47, 60, 84, 110, 115
Battalions	Municipal Waste	2005	27, 48, 62, 68, 86, 89
Beyond the Dark Sun	I	2006	10, 15, 20, 23, 47, 57, 60, 84, 92, 93, 94
Black Salvation	Wintersun	2004	15, 18, 31, 32*, 47, 51, 84
Blackpowder Orchard	Watain	2003	5, 37, 49, 58, 74, 84, 86**, 93, 100, 104, 109, 113
Blasphemy	Baroness	2009	25, 93
Blood and Thunder	Yyrkoon	2004	5, 22, 51, 60, 98
Blood Witch	Mastodon	2004	15, 16, 37, 41, 60, 70, 84, 100
Breathing's for the Birds	The Melvins	2006	49, 100
Bridges	Poison the Well	2007	17, 51*, 52, 60, 72, 111, 113,
Bring on the Young	Warning	2006	15, 22, 36, 47, 48, 52, 64, 84, 101, 111
Broken Teeth	Strapping Young Lad	2003	28, 82*, 93, 94, 95, 98, 113*
Caecus	This is Hell	2006	16, 17, 100, 103, 112
	Ulcerate	2009	20, 22, 24, 31, 48

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Canada	Devin Townsend	2001	45, 52, 111
Carnal Malefactor	Deathspell Omega	2004	16, 20, 22, 26, 31, 40, 41, 49, 58, 74*, 78, 79, 81, 96, 109
Carving Out the Eyes of God	Goatwhore	2009	5, 12, 16, 20*, 33*, 37, 43, 48, 58, 60, 65, 66, 74, 82, 93, 94*, 96, 98, 100, 102, 104, 105
Cataclysm Children	Dimmu Borgir	2003	5*, 17, 20, 35, 49, 60, 66, 92, 99, 103, 113
Catatonic	Slayer	2009	16*, 25, 26, 39, 42, 48, 88, 93, 96, 100
Center of the Universe	Kamelot	2003	13, 36, 44, 94, 103, 107
Change (In the House of Flies)	The Deftones	2000	22, 37, 67, 93
Clean My Heart	Khanate	2009	20, 26, 77, 84
Clean Today	Katatonia	2001	15, 22, 47, 51, 53, 86, 110
Closed Eye Visual	Meshuggah	2002	22, 25, 34, 48, 67, 84, 86, 107
Cnestorial	Krallice	2008	22*, 98, 112*
Colony of Birchmen	Mastodon	2006	16, 41, 45, 93, 96, 100
Compiling Autumn	Discordance Axis	2000	24, 32, 45, 113
Confessions of a Suicide Advocate	Tragedy	2000	4*, 11, 48, 75, 82, 84, 87, 93**, 94**
Conjuring of the New Apocalypse	The Chasm	2004	16, 19, 23, 26, 49, 58, 59, 66, 67*, 84, 106, 113
Consfearacy	Slayer	2006	22, 28, 34, 54, 66, 82, 93, 94, 102, 112
Countless Skies	Be'lakor	2009	16*, 45, 59, 84, 107
Crawl Back In	Neurosis	2001	12, 22, 47, 48, 52, 96, 97
Crusades	Fucked Up	2006	16, 20, 67, 84, 94*
Dance of Mortal Lust	Windir	2001	15, 16, 25, 42*, 58*, 74, 78, 104
Day Eighteen: Realization	Ayreon	2004	12, 25, 36, 52, 53, 64, 72, 84
Day Five: Voices	Ayreon	2004	25, 53, 81, 84, 111
Day Nineteen: Fucking Viva	Trap Them	2008	12, 16, 22, 24, 47, 53, 72, 84, 93*
Dead America	Scarlet	2004	16, 25, 112
Deathripper	Pig Destroyer	2007	43, 52*, 78, 90*, 93, 96
Declare Your War	Throwdown	2003	12, 17, 32, 35, 51, 52, 70, 94, 103
De-Evolution Ad Nauseum	Napalm Death	2009	4*, 16, 75, 82, 107, 112
Devils, Devils	Argus	2009	11, 49, 77, 104, 107
Dim	Cult of Luna	2006	31*, 36, 52, 72, 81*, 84, 93, 111*
Dimensions Intertwine	Decrepit Birth	2008	13*, 58, 84, 98

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Diminished to Be	Necrophagist	2004	15, 22*, 24, 41, 64
Dirge for November	Opeth	2001	28, 77, 16, 87*
Dispossession	Katatonia	2001	18, 24, 31
Doctor X	Yyrkoon	2004	15, 16, 34, 84, 96*
Don't Need Your Help	Terror	2003	17, 32, 36, 53, 102
Doom	Rotten Sound	2002	14, 20*, 53, 64*, 106, 112
Double Grave	This is Hell	2006	12*, 16*, 18, 52, 72*, 111
Double the Pain	Heaven and Hell	2009	17*, 22, 48, 60, 88, 93, 101, 107
Drink the Devil's Blood	Deathspell Omega	2000	5, 16, 20, 26, 37, 49, 55, 58, 74, 78, 81, 84, 93, 94, 109**, 112
Dystopia	Kreator	2005	5, 10, 12, 15, 16, 37, 82, 87**, 94**, 99, 112
Echoes	Warning	2006	52, 64, 103, 107, 111
Egypt	Symphony X	2000	23, 25, 44, 47, 57, 94, 113
Embers of a Dying World	Deathevokation	2007	12, 16, 60, 82*, 84, 93**, 94**, 92, 100, 106*, 112, 113
Endlessly	Pharaoh	2006	18, 24, 34, 41, 48, 51, 52, 64, 81, 84, 88, 97*, 99, 102
Epic Problem	Fugazi	2001	11, 12, 52, 53, 77, 82
Epitaph	Necrophagist	2004	19*, 24, 31*, 45, 63
Eppur Si Muove	Haggard	2004	5, 13, 18, 31, 48, 51, 84, 107, 110
Eternity (Beyond, Part I)	Argus	2009	15, 16, 52, 72, 115
Everything Ends	Slipknot	2001	12, 22, 24, 28, 36, 48, 52, 64, 72, 84, 87*, 97*, 99, 102, 114
Fallen	Symphony X	2000	10, 16, 28, 32, 47, 58, 94, 112, 113*
Falling Unknown	Neurosis	2001	45, 53, 113
Father, You're not a Father	Immolation	2000	1, 5, 14, 16, 36, 37, 38, 64, 65, 79, 90, 95, 114
Fear is the Key	Grand Magus	2008	15*, 16, 25, 32, 45, 59
Fire Above, Ice Below	Agalloch	2006	16, 18, 45, 48, 84, 100, 107
Fixation on Plastics	The Red Chord	2005	51*, 69, 82, 106, 112
Flowering Entities	Lykthea Aflame	2000	35, 51, 60, 103
Follower	Katatonia	2006	1*, 24, 31, 51, 52, 77, 81
Forest	System of a Down	2001	45, 51*, 54*, 82*
Forgotten (Lost Angels)	Lamb of God	2006	16, 19, 24, 26, 28, 82, 102, 112, 113, 114
Framce	Botch	2002	18*, 22*, 28*, 52, 86*, 93

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Genies, Sorcerers, and Mesopotamian Nights	Melechesh	2001	13, 49, 50, 58, 59, 84, 106
Gently	Slipknot	2001	51, 108
Gift	Old Man Gloom	2004	13, 59
Gin	Cobalt	2009	12, 16, 52, 70, 72, 84, 86, 99, 100, 108*, 111
Grey	Emperor	2001	13, 15, 16, 24, 36, 84, 112
Grim Heart / Black Rose	Converge	2006	15, 18, 52, 53, 64*, 81, 97
Grinning Mouths	ISIS	2004	82*, 105
Hand of Stone	Mastodon	2006	26, 28, 42, 45, 59, 60, 86*
Harvest	Opeth	2001	16, 22, 52, 72*, 84, 112
Healing to Suffer Again	Hatebreed	2002	28, 32, 48, 51, 53, 77, 81, 86**
Heaven In Her Arms	Converge	2001	16, 18, 22*, 52*, 72, 97, 108
Heavy Number One	Evergreen Terrace	2002	16, 36*, 52, 99*, 100, 113
Her Sisters They Were Weak	Witchcraft	2004	20*, 74, 84
Hereditary Taint	Arghoslent	2002	12, 16, 37, 42, 82, 94**
Hero in a Dream	Ensiferum	2000	15, 23, 25, 45, 47, 49, 50, 57, 67, 84, 94, 99, 104, 107, 110
Hex Omega	Opeth	2008	22, 52, 53, 84, 108
Hold This Woe	Swallow the Sun	2003	15, 16, 18, 45, 47, 48, 88
Homage for Satan	Deicide	2006	5, 12, 36, 37, 58, 74, 93, 96, 104, 113
Homewrecker	Converge	2001	22, 24, 31, 52, 53, 64, 97
Hospice Residence	The Red Chord	2005	5*, 15, 16, 48, 53*, 63*, 98
Hym	ISIS	2002	25, 72, 87*, 107
I Long	Saturnus	2006	18, 48, 52, 64, 107, 111
I, the Witchfinder	Electric Wizard	2000	16, 32, 49**, 58, 74, 82, 84, 88**, 93, 104
In Exodus	Disfear	2008	15, 17, 60, 66, 82, 112, 113
In Her Shadow	Converge	2004	53, 78, 80**, 84, 86**, 100, 108
In the Failing Hour	In Mourning	2008	15, 17, 18, 22, 28, 48, 52, 81, 84, 99, 112
In the Rectory	Reverend Bizarre	2002	13, 14, 37, 45, 47, 49, 52, 84
In the Stream of Commerce	Cave-In	2000	82, 54*
In the Wilderness	Gojira	2005	13, 23, 45, 59, 76, 113
Incendium Between Mirage and Time	Melechesh	2003	10, 45, 47, 49, 58, 98*, 107
Interlude III: Midnight -	Kamelot	2005	9, 101

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Twelve Tolls for a New Day			
Intimate Slavery	Pig Destroyer	2001	22*, 93, 96, 97, 113
Into the Black Holes of Oblivion	Mithras	2007	13, 16, 58, 84, 106, 107*
Jack Ass in the Will of God	Eyeategod	2000	37, 72, 77, 98, 106, 112
Jake Leg	Baroness	2009	86**
Jupiter's Eye	Pig Destroyer	2007	10, 13, 22, 47, 59, 64, 93, 97*, 107, 111, 112
Key is a Fact That a Cat Brings	Melt-Banana	2003	86, 107
Kill Theme for American Apeshit	Agoraphobic Nosebleed	2002	4, 14*, 16, 37, 40*, 42*, 68, 82, 86, 93, 96, 114
Kinetic	Arcturus	2002	13, 15, 76, 84
Labeled	Sworn Enemy	2003	12, 17, 52, 102
Lai Lai Hei	Ensiferum	2004	13, 16, 23, 45, 47, 84, 92, 107
Last Light	Converge	2004	17, 22, 60, 103
Lateralus	Tool	2001	2*, 51, 59, 60, 71*, 86*, 103
Le Figlie Della Tempesta	My Dying Bride	2001	16*, 20, 41, 44*, 57, 58, 72, 78**, 99
Legend	Elite	2008	5, 15, 45, 47, 49, 50
Lex Talionis	Akercocke	2005	10, 34*, 53, 100
Lines of Seperation	Dead Swans	2009	12, 28, 52, 53, 97, 102, 112, 114
Litany	Vader	2000	20, 25, 26, 28, 51, 53, 63, 72, 93, 102, 113
Little Judas Chongo	The Melvins	2002	16, 25, 34, 37, 38**, 86
Lonewolves	Converge	2006	17, 35, 51, 80**, 82, 94**
Longing for Domination	Skeletonwitch	2009	15, 16, 20, 55*, 60, 111
L'Via L'Viaquez	The Mars Volta	2005	12*, 17, 31, 47, 81, 84, 100, 108, 111*
March of Mephisto	Kamelot	2005	16, 18, 28, 36, 37, 70*, 74, 98, 111
Matrimony	Blacklisted	2008	32, 52, 72, 82
Mechanical Babylon	Septic Flesh	2003	42, 78, 82, 84, 86**, 95, 112
Megalodon	Mastodon	2004	25, 41, 44, 42, 57, 93
Mellotron Scratch	Porcupine Tree	2005	18, 22*, 24, 52, 84
Molec Codices	Krallice	2008	20*, 58*, 106
Morning on Earth	Pain of Salvation	2000	22, 26, 32, 42*, 48, 72
Mother Puncher	Mastodon	2002	17, 28, 51, 72, 93*, 103

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
My Heart Beats in Breakdowns	Evergreen Terrace	2002	16, 62, 72, 93, 100, 107, 111
Naked Trees	Pig Destroyer	2001	16, 37, 45, 84, 107, 112, 113
Never Knowing Peace	Tragedy	2000	16, 82, 93**
New Number Order	Shellac	2000	10, 27*, 68*, 114*
Next on the List	Napalm Death	2000	12, 28, 93, 102
Nietzschean Conspiracy	Sigh	2001	5, 12, 20, 32, 48, 60, 71, 82, 98, 109
No Donnie, These Mean Are Nihilists	Evergreen Terrace	2002	16, 37*, 69, 102, 114
No Heroes	Converge	2006	5*, 17, 32, 35, 60, 66, 92, 103
No One Knows	Queens of the Stone Age	2002	16, 31, 52, 80*, 82, 86
Oh	Fugazi	2001	54, 66*, 75, 82, 112
Omnivore	Nachtmystium	2008	82*, 86*
Ore o Sute Ta Tokoro (Just Abandoned Myself)	Boris	2005	10, 16, 20, 32, 36*, 112
Our Blessed Frozen Cells	Blut Aus Nord	2003	51, 52, 108
Our Fortress is Burning II - Bloodbirds	Agalloch	2006	5, 16, 22, 84, 100, 113
Part III: The Creation	Wintersun	2004	13, 59, 84
Pillars of Mercy	Absu	2001	20, 23, 25, 60, 84, 93, 94, 100, 110
Pink Noise Waltz	Diablo Swing Orchestra	2006	31, 37, 48, 53, 78*, 84, 109
Poison Pen Attack!	Taint	2005	9, 17, 25, 35, 103
Pornograthery	Every Time I Die	2003	75, 82, 78**, 65**, 86**, 37, 93, 69, 80**
Prophetian	Eternal Tears of Sorrow	2001	15, 28, 44, 49, 100
Protection From Enemies	Agoraphobic Nosebleed	2002	22*, 24, 53*, 112
Quarantined	At the Drive-In	2000	20*, 33*, 82, 105
Queen of Bees	Witchcraft	2005	22, 52, 72, 84, 95, 98, 99, 101
Radio Tuned to the Sound of Hearts Breaking	Drowningman	2000	12, 16, 28
Raunioilla	Moonsorrow	2003	16, 20*, 42, 45, 98, 100
Razorblades Under the Dashboard	Agoraphobic Nosebleed	2002	28*, 30**, 87**, 93, 90, 96, 100, 102
Reach Out for the Light	Avantasia	2000	37, 49, 53, 64, 74, 84, 109
Reduced to Slavery	Dying Fetus	2000	4, 12, 16, 26, 31, 33, 35, 56, 61, 65**, 82, 112, 114*



<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Released from the Catacombs	Skeletonwitch	2009	5, 8, 16, 26, 41*, 58, 59, 74*, 100, 104, 105
Robert Flaig	Ed Gein	2005	14, 35, 81, 102
Rope Ends	Pain of Salvation	2002	18, 22, 25, 31, 36, 53, 64, 81, 84, 87, 95, 100
Safe Passage	The Bronx	2006	16, 47, 86**
Sail On	Masterplan	2003	17, 25, 32, 37, 51, 60, 67, 103
Scar Spangled Banner	Exodus	2004	4, 5, 16, 93**, 94**, 96, 100, 113
Scrape	Warhorse	2001	18, 22, 24, 28, 36, 48, 53, 77, 100, 112
Second Life Syndrome	Riverside	2005	22, 32, 51, 52, 111
Serenity	Shadows Fall	2000	17, 32, 111
Shackled to Guilt	Anata	2004	10, 16, 67, 77, 81, 98, 103, 107
Shadows	Nasum	2000	15, 17, 22, 35, 52, 62, 64, 82, 107
Shed	Meshuggah	2005	32, 51*, 107
Silent Winter	Draconian	2003	14, 18, 22, 45, 84, 107
Sin Nanna	Sunn 0)))	2005	15, 44, 50, 98, 112*
Slaughter of Dreams	Mayhem	2004	5*, 50, 105, 107
Sleep and Dream	Battle of Mice	2006	1, 16, 84, 93, 94, 107
Small Stone	The Bronx	2006	32, 75*, 78*, 82
Soft Assassin	Pig Destroyer	2004	12, 52, 84, 93, 113
Sound Out the Braille	Discordance Axis	2000	24, 50, 71, 82, 87
Spirit Never Die	Masterplan	2003	17, 51, 60, 62, 64, 84, 92, 103, 111
Steel That Sleeps the Eye	Baroness	2009	12, 16*, 18, 84, 94*
Stellar Master Elite	Thorns	2001	13, 20, 21, 41, 49, 57, 84, 98
Stomach	Cobalt	2009	42, 60, 72, 78, 79, 93, 114
Submission is for the Weak	Anaal Nathrakh	2004	16, 20, 38*, 48, 93
Suffer	Rotten Sound	2002	32, 48
Sunrise	Pharoah	2006	15, 47, 59, 72
Swim	In Flames	2000	17, 35, 54, 60, 67, 82, 103, 106, 112
Sword Chant	Ensiferum	2004	16, 23, 45, 47, 57, 84, 92, 94, 100
The Dead Stare	Enslaved	2003	16, 22, 23, 48*, 84, 93*
The Face Of My Innocence	Arsis	2004	47, 78*, 96, 111
The Fluke	Devin Townsend	2001	25, 39, 53, 77
The Furnace	Disfear	2008	4*, 26, 82, 113

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
The Golden Horns of Darash	Watain	2003	5, 16, 20*, 22, 37, 49, 58, 74, 93, 106, 113
The History of Rape	Leviathan	2004	18, 28, 40*, 48, 65, 74, 93, 96, 100, 102
The Mannequin Campaign	Scarlet	2004	78**, 82, 86**
The Other	ISIS	2002	15, 16, 65, 72, 80*, 84
The Patriot Virus	Darkest Hour	2003	4*, 16, 25, 42, 82, 87**, 93**, 94**, 100, 108
The Penance	Akercocke	2005	9, 15, 16, 49, 78, 79, 74, 100
The Professional League	Nasum	2000	18, 35, 51, 53, 82, 93**, 100, 103
The Psalm of Lydia	Nevermore	2005	13, 22*, 45, 48, 49, 57, 106, 107
The Shiver - A Clown's Mindtrap	Unexpect	2006	10, 11, 16, 64, 84
The Suffering of Others	Craft	2005	48, 84
The Tide	Neurosis	2001	45, 115*
The Yeti	High on Fire	2002	13, 41, 44, 57, 76*
This Cannot be the End	Anaal Nathrakh	2004	17, 51*, 67*
This Ends Now	Ed Gein	2005	28, 35, 38**, 82, 93**
Thorns in the Planet's Side	Craft	2005	5, 13, 20, 25, 28, 58, 74, 98, 113
Tide of Blood	Dismember	2008	12, 16, 20, 23, 25, 34, 42, 48, 57, 65, 84, 86, 93, 98, 100, 113
Time Waits for no Slave	Napalm Death	2009	3, 4*, 16, 20, 82
Tin Heart	Dead Swans	2009	28, 52, 72**, 99, 102
To Cross the Bridge	High on Fire	2005	20, 23*, 32, 48, 60, 94
To Die For	Integrity	2003	3, 16, 17, 62, 66, 84, 93
Too True	Trapped Under Ice	2009	14, 17, 31, 32, 51, 64, 66, 99
Toxicity	System of a Down	2001	10, 20, 82, 112, 113
Twilight of the Thunder God	Amon Amarth	2008	12, 41, 44, 45, 48, 57, 98, 100, 106
Unpardonable Sin	Immolation	2000	5, 9, 16, 25, 31, 37, 51, 67, 99, 105
VI - Covenant of Souls	Edge of Sanity	2003	10, 16, 31, 34, 41, 42*, 50, 84, 58, 93
Vide Infra	Killswitch Engage	2000	17, 32, 35, 51, 66, 82, 103
Vinum Sabbathi	Electric Wizard	2000	16, 20, 49, 63, 64, 84, 86
Virtues of the Beast	Septic Flesh	2003	32, 41, 72, 74, 99, 107
Walk on Water	Jesu	2005	16, 45
War Inside My Head	Dream Theater	2002	12, 42, 63, 90*, 92, 93**, 94**

<u>Song</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Release</u>	<u>Themes</u>
We Are The Storm	The Dillinger Escape Plan	2004	20, 22, 24, 40, 52, 113*
Wholly Night	Arsis	2004	15, 23, 28, 37, 41, 47, 63, 84, 100, 105, 107
Winds of Destination	Angra	2004	5, 18, 37, 45, 64, 98, 100, 101, 114
With Oden On Our Side	Amon Amarth	2006	12, 16, 20, 44, 45, 60, 84, 92, 93, 94, 96, 100
Wolves	Jesu	2006	12*, 82*, 93*
Wolves	Machine Head	2007	20, 25, 41, 42, 47, 48, 52, 78, 92, 93, 94, 113
Words to Die For	Nasum	2000	12, 82*, 93**, 94**, 100, 103
World Ablaze	Killswitch Engage	2004	25, 52, 67, 72*, 106, 111, 112, 113
Worship Depraved	Arsis	2004	5, 9, 15, 37, 49, 78, 86, 87, 107, 109
You Must Fall	Mayhem	2004	16, 25, 38, 41, 49, 50, 74, 102
You Suffer	Witchcraft	2005	28*, 32, 48, 102
Zealots and Whores	Taint	2005	17, 28*, 31*, 78**, 98, 99*, 102, 114

\* Denotes implicit themes and those interpreted metaphorically.

\*\* Denotes themes observed as denounced or condemned.

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