

INTENSIFYING THE MONSTROUS

EXTENDED VOCAL TECHNIQUES IN EXTREME METAL MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Extended vocal techniques, such as *scream* and *growl*, are an essential puzzle piece in the sonic transgression picture of extreme metal music and other subgenres. In this presentation, I intend to examine the notion of *the monstrous voice* (as explained by Jelena Novak) in extreme metal genres, which is created not by technology, but primarily by extended vocal techniques, and afterward enhanced through the technological means – microphones, speakers, headphones.



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1. Defining the Monstrous

- **Monstrous voice** a voice that deviates from “the natural,” and that has the sound appearance of a monster. It could be the actual voice that is heard as the result of the human voice joining forces with the technological interventions performed up (Novak, 2015, 58)
- This notion can also be applied to usage of **extended vocal techniques**.
- Extended vocal techniques deviate the voice from its “natural” state/usage.

2. Debate: Human vs. Monstrous

- Whether the voice is considered „normal“ or „monstrous“ is a rather political question. Throughout the history of Western civilization, this question was revisited and reconsidered many times, in many different contexts.
- The question ‘Who decides what is normal/monstrous?’ leads us to Giorgio Agamben’s theorization of “the werewolf” and its historical background:

What had to remain in the collective unconscious as a monstrous hybrid of human and animal, divided between the forest and the city -- the werewolf -- is, therefore, in its origin the figure of the man who has been banned from the city. (...)

The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city. It is, rather, a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, physis and nomos, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the loup garou, the werewolf, who is precisely neither man nor beast, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither. (Agamben, 2013, 156)

- Agamben’s *monstrous werewolf* serves the purpose of confirming the “normal” in his society.
- His body, **the monstrous body**, which Bojana Kunst writes about, is a body with an anomaly or difference (for example, hermaphrodite bodies).
- **The monstrous voice has the same features (anomaly, difference) and serves the same, inherently political, purpose.**



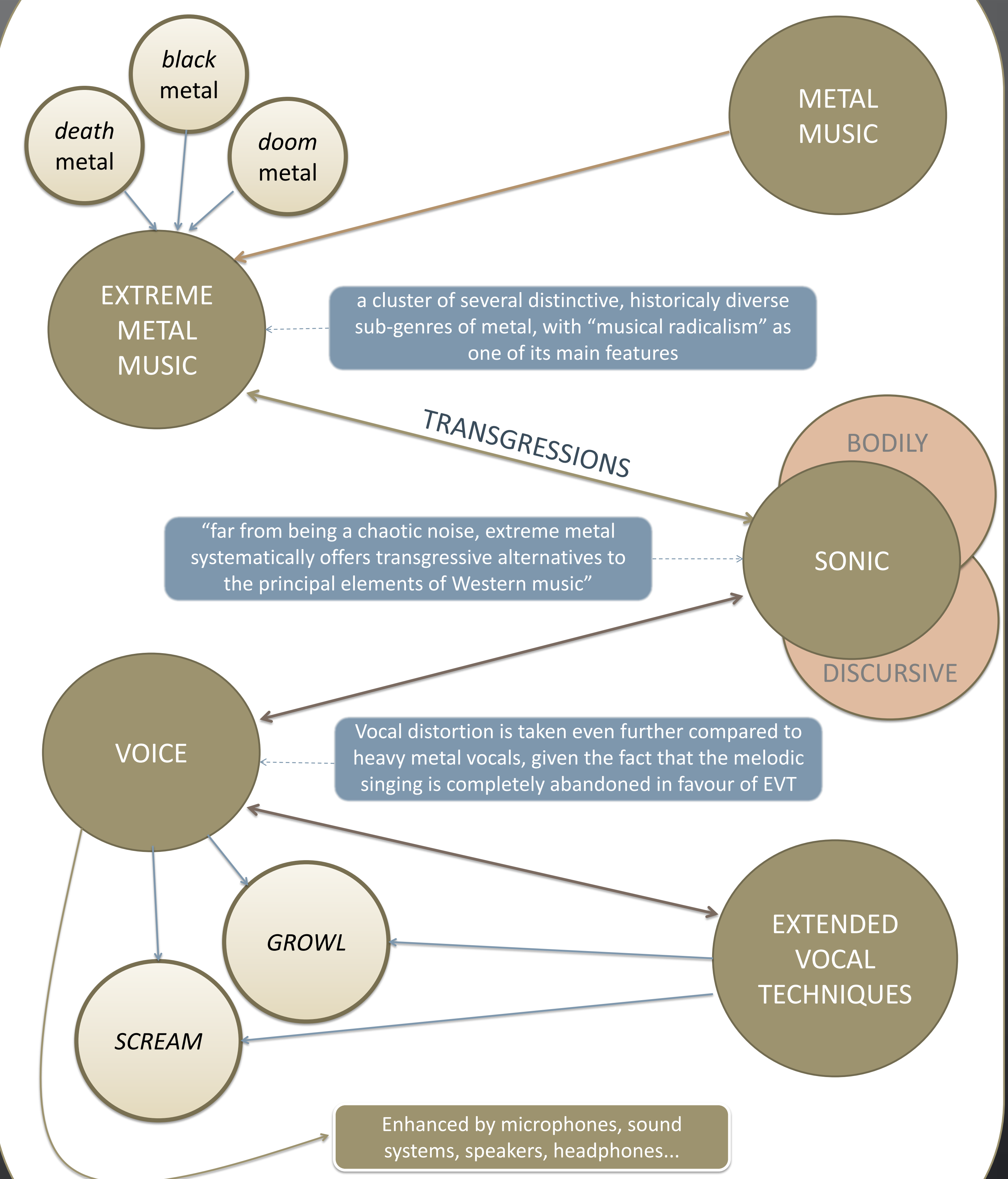
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3. Extreme Metal Music and ‘Monstrous’

- Heavy metal was from its beginnings often inspired by horror movies and literature.
- Extreme metal genres especially play ‘the horror card’ in their imagery (*corpse paint* make-up, album covers, logo designs), song themes (vivid and unambiguous themes of death, torture, suffering...), and sound.
- The extreme vocals / extended vocal techniques guarantee the monstrosity.

4. Extreme Metal & Extended Vocal Techniques



5. For further research...

Having, in short, presented the main ideas of my research, in the future I plan to do the following:

- Expanding examinations of the political implications of monstrous voice in extreme metal music;
- Exploring the relation between monstrous voice and “monstrous” lyrics;
- Follow up on the virtuosity and extended vocal techniques.