

NATIONAL IMAGERY IN FINNISH FOLK METAL:

Lyrics, Facebook and Beyond

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Folk metal is a music genre originated from heavy metal music. For many artists and fans, folk metal is more than just music: it is a way of revitalising tradition. Folk metal is then a genre which is closely related to individual's cultural identities. As part of popular culture, heavy metal has been investigated for instance in the fields of cultural studies and psychology. Andrew Brown investigates how heavy metal emerged as subject for academic research. Deena Weinstein approaches heavy metal as culture and behaviour that is shared by individuals from different cultural backgrounds. However, subgenres like folk metal have not yet been explored in depth by academics. Analysing folk metal's nuances in specific national contexts would provide further knowledge on national cultures and identities. One example of folk metal reflecting elements of national culture is Finnish folk metal. The bands whose works belong to this genre usually draw from Finnish culture to compose their works, which usually feature stories from a variety of traditional sources such as the epic book Kalevala. Such stories are then transposed into new media, disseminating the artists' concept of Finnishness. By applying Henry Jenkins' transmedia theory and Matthew Jockers' macroanalysis, this study will focus on how bands make use of traditional narratives to build Finnish culture to their fans via lyrics and Facebook pages. It has been concluded that Finnish artists not only base their works on traditional sources, but also collectively reshape their tradition through and for their fans.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Folk metal on musiikkigenre, joka perustuu heavy metal -musiikille. Folk metal on enemmän kuin musiikkia useille artisteille ja faneille: se on tapa elvyttää perinnettä. Näin ollen, folk metal liittyy läheisesti kansallisidentiteettiin. Heavy metal -musiikkia on tutkittu populaarikulttuurina muun muassa osana kulttuurien tutkimusta ja psykologiaa. Andrew Brown on tutkinut sitä, kuinka heavy metalista on tullut akateemisen tutkimuksen kohde. Deena Weinstein lähestyy heavy metalia kulttuurina ja käyttäytymisenä, jonka eri kulttuuritaustoista peräisin olevat ihmiset jakavat. Silti, folk metalin kaltaisia alagenrejä ei ole tutkittu syvällisesti akateemisesti. Folk metalin eri piirteiden analysointi voi auttaa muun muassa kansallisidentiteettien ymmärtämisessä. Yksi esimerkki tästä on suomalainen folk metal. Tähän genreen luokiteltavat suomalaiset yhtyeet käyttävät suomalaista perinnekulttuuria muun muassa sanoituksissaan, musiikkivideoissaan ja Facebook-sivuillaan. Soveltaen Henry Jenkinsin transmedia-teoriaa ja Matthew Jockersin makroanalyysiä, tutkin kuinka yhtyeet välittävät suomalaista perinnettä faneilleen. Nämä yhtyeet eivät vain perusta musiikkiaan perinteelle vaan muokkaavat sitä, kukin omalla tavallaan.</p>	
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1. Introduction

Heavy metal has captivated millions worldwide with its varied range of features and subgenres. For these people, the beauty of the genre lies in its sound and the message it conveys through its lyrics. For outsiders, such elements may create a negative impression regarding the genre and its fans. Whatever position one assumes, heavy metal is an important part of modern day popular culture. Just like with any other cultural phenomenon, heavy metal comprises norms and values which its advocates have inherited from their families, cultures and societies.

The idea of using elements of folk or national culture – be that a melodic or a lyrical approach – has been part of metal music for a long time. Folk metal is subgenre of heavy metal music that gained popularity through their renditions of local culture and heavy metal. The term “folk”, which literally means “from the people”, can be used to address cultural manifestations that draw from traditional elements, for instance some genres of dance and folklore. In folk metal music, that idea of “folk” reflects a symbolic association between daily life of an imagined past and life as it is now. In doing so, folk metal’s main practice is to create different layers of meaning through combining traditional culture with the modern sound of distorted electric guitars.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in Nordic folk culture. That is echoed in the popularization of computer games such as Bethesda’s *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, and TV series such as History Channel’s *Vikings*. Accordingly, some Nordic musicians have contributed to the increasing of interest towards their culture, especially through the international projection of their folk metal bands. Finnish folk metal, in particular, has become internationally popular through the

works of bands such as Ensiferum, Korpiklaani, Turisas, among other successful examples.

In this thesis, I focus on folk metal music as a means through which Finnish folk metal (FFM from now on) bands express and consolidate their identity to international audiences. In order to understand that, I will address two main research questions: (1) how is Finnish culture and identity conveyed through FFM lyrics (2) and how is meaning transferred from bands' lyrics to their Facebook pages? Based on these questions, I will test two main hypotheses. A first hypothesis is that the imagery of Finnish national identity expressed in their lyrics and Facebook pages is solidly based on narratives from the country's national epic, the Kalevala, compiled by Elias Lönnrot in 1828. Another hypothesis is that FFM, as a sub-product of larger cultural phenomena such as social media and heavy metal music, reflects an international and global culture rather than its culture of origin.

My main focus is on the constitutional aspects of Finnish culture and identity behind FFM lyrics and Facebook pages. In particular, I examine the role of tradition in the formation of Finnish identity, as it is narrated by FFM cultural practices to international audiences. Rather than examining the historical accuracy of the cultural elements used in FFM works, I will explore how Finnish bands repurpose and recombine Finnish culture in their own narratives. To accomplish this, I will draw on Matthew Jockers (2013) macroanalysis to find a broader perspective on what are the most recurring themes within FFM lyrics. I will then observe how such elements encountered in lyrics migrate to artists' Facebook pages and what they signify in terms of Finnish cultural identity. Instead of concentrating on specific works, my goal is to explore the joint effort of FFM bands in the creation of a Finnish cultural identity to international audiences.

In the following chapter two, I will carry out an introduction to Finnish tradition and music-making, as well as address some of the characteristics that define folk metal as a subgenre of heavy metal. The third chapter presents the methods and data I have used in this study. Chapter four will feature the theoretical frameworks applied in the analysis, underlining relationships between social media and two major approaches: semiotics and narratives. In the fifth chapter I will use categories to assess the narrative elements used by the FFM bands in their lyrics and on their Facebook pages.

2. Metal Music, Finnish Folk Culture and Language

The relationship between folklore and cultural identity is complex. One possibility for understanding how the two interrelate may be found in music. In this chapter I will explore the background upon which FFM is built. The chapter is divided into two sub-sections. In the first, I will explore the notion of music-culture, investigating the role of music in the formation of affinity groups such as the heavy metal community. In this sub-section I will continue my discussion by exploring elements of Finnish culture and folklore, especially by observing the role of oral tradition, as well as mysticism and language in former and contemporary Finnish cultures. The second part of this chapter will be dedicated to the folk metal sub-genre, exploring its Nordic influences and significance in Finland.

As a form of creative expression, music can be a highly tangible representation of how individuals observe and experience their environment, relationships and interactions. Regarding the heavy metal genre, music is often considered a social element that binds different groups and communities together worldwide. “Metalheads”, as fans of heavy metal are commonly referred to, are often absorbed in whatever activities that relate to their favourite music genre, such as attending to live performances of their favourite bands, writing music reviews, playing in cover bands, to cite a few examples. Such involvement with heavy metal music has an important role in how fans make sense of certain symbols and practices that define them as members of the heavy metal community. In folk metal, music is a stimulus for those who appreciate the traditions behind themes that appear in song lyrics, some of which are even reproduced visually in live performances and music videos of many folk metal bands.

Overall, music has a culture of its own. The notion of music-culture is well presented by Jeff Titon (2008) in his chapter *The music-culture as a world of music*:

Because music and all the beliefs and activities associated with it are part of culture, we use the term **music-culture** [original emphasis] to mean a group's total involvement with music (p. 3).

A common notion in history and anthropology is that culture a learning process. By being so, culture may function passively or actively, depending on the way it is approached. When considering music as a form of culture, we can experience it in a variety of ways, each of them representing a connecting us with something beyond music itself. Right from its inception, music can be seen as a two-fold process: it begins from the inspiration of its composer and ends in the perception of its listener. Thus, music is an affective experience of a range of layers.

Heavy metal music, in particular, embodies a symbology of its own. This embodiment serves as a connecting element for individuals who belong in the same frame of cultural references. Drawing from Titon's notion, I see heavy metal music as a cultural practice that is equally dependant on two basic elements: the performer, or bands, and the audience, or fans. Artists and their performance are personifications of music, whereas the audience, or fans, are the community which supports the music and their participatory role in the music is just as essential as the music-making itself. As spectators, the role of folk metal fans is often active, not only during bands' performances, but also as they engage in various music-oriented or music-influenced activities, as mentioned earlier. Within the realm of interaction between bands and fans, time and space act as components of memory and history, constituting the essence of the interactional side of music, as Titon (2008) explains:

At the center of the music (as you experience it) is its radiating power, its emotional impact – whatever makes you give assent, smile, nod your head, sway your shoulders, dance. We call that music's affect, its power to move and place affective experience at the center of the model. Performance brings music's power into being [...]. (p. 15)

Heavy metal music holds a variety of such centric characteristics reflected into fans and artists behaviours. One of them is known as “moshing”, which consists of forcefully moving the head up and down according to the rhythm of a (metal) song. Moshing sometimes is done in conjunction with the iconic “horns-up” symbol, a typical gesture to metalheads, which consists of raising one or both hands with index and little finger, also known in other cultures as “the evil eye”. Another effect of heavy metal music in fans and artists is of aesthetic nature: black or dark outfits and shirts, featuring metal bands logos, are some of the visual clues characteristic of individuals involved in metal music. Characteristics such as these create the very sense of community typical among fans of heavy metal music.

The role of music in forming community groups is present in practically all music genres, but especially apparent in heavy metal music. Titon explains that live performance functions as the ultimate place for interaction and sharing between affinity groups:

[...] a community in a music-culture forms when they participate in a performance in some way – as performer, audience, composer, and so forth. We call these communities where people come together over common interests affinity groups (2008, p. 17).

When observed through the scope of online media and social networking, the place of live performance changes. While people in the past favoured physical gatherings, in the present days they conveniently may choose to interact and share experiences via virtual spaces online platforms such as Facebook. In such spaces, the interaction and meaning creation work under the same premises as in face-to-face meetings.

However, they may become entangled with a much broader context. Titon has noted that today music is “an almost constant background to many people’s lives, with the musicians largely absent” (Titon, 2008, p. 17). As Titon explains, while today music is a constant background of people’s lives, in former times music represented only special occasions.

Whatever the way it is approached, the role of music within culture is still essentially influenced by its contextual social practices. Titon articulates music should be understood as a “fluid, dynamic element of culture” (p. 31). He uses music as an example of how our culture is being redesigned in order to fulfil people’s expressive and emotional needs:

Like any form of culture, music is a peculiarly human adaptation to life on this earth. Seen globally, music operates as an ecological system, therefore each music-culture is a particular adaptation to particular circumstances. Ideas about music, social organization, repertoires, and material culture vary from one music-culture to the next. (2008, p. 31).

In modern Finland, some of the belief systems and music can still correspond to the ones experienced in the agrarian era. The difference between the two periods lies in that today music is a self-sufficient product: once the artist is done composing, he is no longer responsible for the role his work will have in his listener’s life. As Titon mentioned, in the past, music was made to fit certain happenings or social events, whereas now it serves different needs.

2.1. Notes on Finnish Folklore and Music

One of the most respected records of Finnish ancient culture is Elias Lönnrot’s Kalevala (1835). This national epic is a compilation of oral poetry, collected in the Karelia region in the beginning of the 19th century. While it may be mostly a fictional work, Kalevala contains a series of motifs and stories that reflects old daily practices,

which have inspired many contemporary works, especially in folk metal music. Aside from FFM, Kalevala has also inspired a variety of artist from 19th and 20th centuries, such as classical composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), painter of Gallen-Kallela (1865-1931), and poet of Eino Leino (1878-1926), among others.

One central figure in both Kalevala and its derived works is the hero Väinämöinen. In social media, the hero has gained popularity in the recent days. Combined with what foreigners consider peculiarities of Finnish culture, Väinämöinen's figure has gained its own meme versions. Thanks to *Tumblr* pages like "Depressing Finland" and "Kalevala Memes", Finnish culture and society are reflected and crystalized in the figure of Väinämöinen (Figure 1): "It's way too dangerous to go by sea'-'Goes by sea'" (Kalevalamemes.tumblr.com, 2014).



Figure 1. Väinämöinen goes by sea.

According to Finnish folklorists, the Kalevala exists in a context of other folk poetries that coincided with 19th century's Romanticism. In Finland, the movement was coined as Karelianism, a form of National Romanticism in which works as the Kalevala were created. To some scholars, Finnish national identity seems to follow to a formula that involves local practices and connection to nature landscapes:

For the *Karelianists*, the landscape and people of Karelia were the present-day representatives of the world depicted in the Kalevala. As in broader trends of European thought, groups living in isolation from social and cultural centers were often seen to directly reflect the life of earlier eras (Finnish Literature Society, n.d).

Regardless of the social context and time period, the survival of cultural practices relies on how individuals preserve and share such practices amongst themselves. Provided they are accepted as members of a specific group, individuals generally share their beliefs and values openly.

One way for those individuals to define themselves as similar to each other is by distinguishing those who are different from them. In Finland, for instance, the long era of Swedish governance caused society to be divided into two major cultural groups. In his book *Visions of the past glory: Nationalism and the construction of early Finnish history*, Derek Fewster (2006) draws attention to the cultural construction of 'the people' in ancient Finnish society. Fewster notes that ancient Finns who lived in the pagan period have shaped the first stage of Finnish culture as an object of its own. However, that shaping was based on differentiation and conflict between Finnish and Swedish societies. According to Fewster, "the common people' had likewise received connotations of a 'dangerous mob', which needed to be enlightened" (2006, p. 156), which reflects the cultural norms imposed by the ruling class in power at that time. Then, the presence of the state was crucial to the development and implementation of a national culture that could enlighten that 'dangerous mob'. Fewster considers Sweden-born philosopher Johan Vilhelm Snellman as one of the first outliners of those premisses:

Snellman's lines of thought emphasized the Finnish state as a manifestation of the national spirit, which further depreciated or reduced the 'Swedish period' to a mere parenthesis. Finnish language, traditions and institutions were to be the future of the grand duchy. (pp. 116-117)

Snellman was one of the first literates to favour Finnish language and literature. His works marked the passage of Finnish language from a purely oral to a literary one. In many ways, his ideas have affected how early traces of Finnish identity were created and perceived by people. Based on Snellman's contributions, the definition of correct finnishness changed into a more religious and moral one:

The manufacture of a public 'distant past' provided countless examples of national peculiarities, which could be, and were utilized for nationalist purposes from the moment of their conception. (p. 394)

One way of crystalizing such notions of a distant past into popular culture was through recreating traditional music. According to many scholars (Kuusi, 1994; Siikala, 2002; Virtanen & DuBois, 2000), ancient Finnish music is a lost tradition. Reconstituting the sound of that music has been a recurring target of interest and speculation by a variety of artists and researchers for many decades. The Kalevala metre, as it is one of the few well preserved poetic structures of that time, is of high importance for Finnish artists to reconstruct that lost tradition. Provided by an accurate poetic style, artists can then convert the poem into music. Moreover, the structure the Kalevala poems contains traces of other epics of that time, which may reinforce its accuracy as an historical register. In her work on Kalevala poetry, folklorist Anna-Leena Siikala (1994) writes :

The strong alliteration of Kalevala metre is, for example, reminiscent of the secret magic *galdr* poetry of the Ancient Germanic peoples, of which little is known concerning the metre" (p. 20).

Although music appears to be a peripheral aspect of tradition in most works in contemporary Finland, some ancient practices were still preserved. In Finland, as well as in other of Nordic countries, rune-singing has remained as a strong part of music culture which has been featured in several musical and literary works. Siikala (1994) defines rune-singing as a type of singing based on runo poems from cultural

devices like Kalevala, as well as from oral traditions (p. 23). Siikala agrees with several scholars on what possible functions this type of singing had in the former days: entertainment (at feasts) and ritualistic (in sauna, or village festivals called *praazniekkas*). Especially in agrarian Finland, folk and music traditions were closely related to family life and working in the fields. Generally, songs were sung by women (Virtanen & DuBois, 2000). In later festivities, more men would start to take part in those musical practices, especially by playing instruments, such as the *kantele*. The *kantele* is unanimously praised as the national instrument and is a solid component of Finnish national imagery. Folklorist Elina Rahimova (2002) has also analysed runo-poems, especially in works from Archangel Karelia (*Vienan Karjala*). Rahimova considers the Karelian practice as being the register one of the most traditional music performances in the past. Rahimova notes that:

It is necessary to take into account that the texture of the narrative has been transmitted traditionally by runo singers in the course of oral performances by means of stable constitutive models and poetic figures” (p. 388).

FFM lyrics can feature similar approaches, although stylistically they may differ from such traditional poetic forms contained in runo-poems. While the semantic level of FFM lyrics is usually stable and universal (meaning they are contemporary to most periods of human history), the structural level may follow different practices. For instance, FFM lyrics may be more inclined to use contemporary rhymes and vocabulary instead of adopting traditional poetic structures.

In today's globalized Finland, this approach has become prominent in the works of some artists. This is especially true in music culture, where this practice is better observed through the works of FFM bands. For the artists and their fans, along with connecting with an imagined 'distant past' may represent a connection with their own individuality. As Fewster explains:

Distributing illustrations of original Finnishness, revitalizing ancient attires, and staging proto-historical dramas were at times among the principal methods of furthering the cause of Finnish nationalism” (p. 394).

By projecting itself into a distant past, FFM has become a way through which bands express their individuality and distinguish themselves culturally from one another.

2.1.1. The Role of Oral Tradition

In the pre-digital era, oral tradition played an important role in shaping and passing on local cultures and traditions. Each cultural practice is rooted in the language and sociocultural circumstances of a given point in time. For instance, epic poetry and myths were a common part of daily practices for many centuries ago. Although less widespread, such practices are still noticeable in the present days.

Various scholars agree that the integrity of oral tradition relies on it being relayed from generation to generation without alteration, but few can precise the point of origin of such tradition. According to Siikala (1994), oral tradition derives from a collection of basic conventions that may come from both the individual and from a broader cultural framework, meaning that it may be challenging to prove where such traditions are originally from (p. 17).

Siikala explains that a significant feature of oral tradition, especially when it is rendered into poetry, is the use of metric patterns and formulas. They serve as guides for collective memory as they function as means of thinking and expressing ideas that are shared and understood by those who experience such ideas in their daily lives. Such patterns then form a common ground on which individuals sharing the same culture can meaningfully relate to one another (Siikala, 1994, p. 21). As a result, individuals form a collective consciousness through which they relate to their

environment and their origins. That is the present in relationship between music and oral tradition, as Siikala notes:

Knowledge of the world is organised, stored and transmitted by means of narratives and songs describing human interests and actions. Although the oral tradition does consist of cross-culturally shared, even universal elements, it nevertheless constitutes an entity made up of the way of thinking and experiencing characteristic of the culture in question” (p. 22).

So is the role of Finnish language, especially when considering contemporary culture. Aside from being a unique mix of culture, place and experience, Finnish has well defined syllabic structures: every word contains precise unities of sound that can be used with precision, which is especially convenient to lyrics writing.

Lyrics, just as poems, function within both semantic and structural layers. Applying that notion to FFM lyrics, both layers appear in constant negotiation between Finnish and English languages. When meaning is dissociated from Finnish language and placed into English language, some qualities are lost and new ones are created. In that regard, the relationship between contemporary FFM lyrics and old poetry lies in how their writers share a language. Siikala (1994) points out that:

[...] language and mechanism of poetry constitute the cultural memory mechanism on which the poetic tradition relies [...] [Therefore] the "life of a poetic tradition also depends on the vitality of the messages it transmits. (p. 19)

Then in FFM, Finnish and English languages are different mechanisms through which the same message can be transmitted.

As the practices of oral tradition may have changed, they still are a direct result of a long process of adaptation and renovation of global culture. As it was shown, the use of English language in today's folk-related works is one more device used by contemporary culture to both restore and reinvent itself.

2.1.2. Music and Mysticism

In many world traditions, music has been used by individuals as a way of connecting with divine entities. For them, music seemed to function as an access to something beyond itself; a process upon which individuals bind themselves to each other and external contexts. In the past, music was commonly viewed as a mythical experience, and was broadly practised in conjunction with substances that induced trance. As mysticism is translated into music and then migrates to poetry and literature, some elements may emerge as features of magic formulas. Siikala elaborates:

The description of a mythical event in an epic song is not the performance of a charm (if we define charm in the European way as 'a formula of magic influence repeated word-for-word'); it is a way of introducing the authoritative influence of the sacred past into the present moment. There are, however, numerous examples in Finnish folklore of epic motifs which, through repeated use, have become recognised as charms (such as *The Väinämöinen's Wound*.)" (1994, p. 35).

Especially in ancient Norse culture, music (in conjunction with carefully written poetry) has been used by individuals, for instance, to evoke or banish spirits (Virtanen & DuBois, 2000). Some well-preserved accounts of Nordic culture are found in the *Poetic Edda*. The book, which is a compilation of Icelandic epic poems which is an equivalent to Finnish Kalevala, carries a poetic metre known as *galdralag*, which was used to compose incantations and believed to carry magic power. Some of such practices were also present in agrarian Finland, where word magic was also a central part of folk life (Virtanen & DuBois, 2000, p. 93).

When considering folk metal music in general, this relationship is not easily applicable. Despite its origin in folk tradition, most of what is labelled as folk metal is still a commercial product that serves a different function from that of its musical ancestors. Noticeably, music in the past served as both entertainment and

transmission of tradition. Nevertheless, a great variety of the contemporary folk-based heavy metal works remain as a sort of “imagined” re-enactment rather than evidence to support the continuation of a particular music tradition. Especially when seen in a globalized context, such mystic aspects of music seem to vanish. Although some characteristics have been preserved, they serve in an ornamental function rather than as a storage or continuation of tradition.

2.1.3. Language in Folk Metal

As discussed previously, English language is a contemporary mechanism of culture, used to restore and reinvent cultural practices in a global perspective. Considering folk metal music, in general, English language represents a lack of boundaries when it comes to the message bands’ are trying to convey. One of the first metal researchers to notice this was French scholar Nicolas Bénard (2004):

In addition to the use of recurring themes and traditional instrument, the groups emphasize their claim to be traditional and sing in their own language. These artists thus favour the commercial risk of not being understood by many, while metal is already not such a commercial style. This should however, be nuanced. First, these artists expect to be more important to the audience in their home countries. On the other hand, the language barrier is usually not a problem for metal fans that prefer music over lyrics. Thus, the groups which avoid the universal English language are numerous.¹ (translation mine, p. 59).

Narrating aspects of native culture in a non-native language creates a variety of new layers of signification through which meaning is negotiated. Every language is connected to its native cultural practices and has its own ways of constructing and delivering meanings. In FFM, it may be challenging to express elements of Finnish

¹ “À côté de l’utilisation récurrente de thèmes et d’instruments traditionnels, les groupes accentuent la revendication de leur traditionnalisme (voire leur nationalisme) en chantant dans leur propre langue. Ces artistes privilégient ainsi le risque commercial à la possibilité de se faire comprendre du plus grand nombre, alors que le Métal n’est déjà pas un style très commercial. Il convient néanmoins de nuancer. D’abord, ces artistes espèrent avoir une aura plus impor n’est pas, d’une façon générale, un obstacle pour les fans de Métal qui privilégient souvent la musique aux textes. Ainsi, nombreux sont les groupes qui évitent l’anglais, langue quasi universelle” (Bénard 2004, 59).

language in English, as certain themes may become completely misplaced when translated to the foreign language. One example of that is Ensiferum's song *Lai Lai Hei*, written by the band's former member Jari Mäenpää. The song contains stanzas written in both English and Finnish languages. In the Finnish stanza, the word "maa" is one of the most challenging to translate, for it can be understood in many ways if translated into English: "maa" can mean "ground", "land" or "country". Each variation would render completely different meaning to the event being narrated. This song's lyrics will be analysed with more detail in chapter 5.

As discussed in this sub-section, English language represents a common territory shared by people worldwide. While folk metal lyrics originally written in English may convey a less ambiguous message to a much larger audience, the use of native language offers to a few individuals a more genuine look into aspects of the composer's native culture.

2.2. Folk Metal Sub-Genre

In order to understand FFM, it is essential to first observe the cultural aspects and implications of its mother-genre, heavy metal. Heavy metal culture has spread greatly in the recent days, especially in 2005 after the release of the documentary *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*, by anthropologist and heavy metal fan Samuel Dunn. Dunn was then considered a pioneer of ethnographic studies on heavy metal culture, having published further works on the music and its culture. He was the first researcher to propose a draft of the genealogy of heavy metal, placing different heavy metal genres into a "metal family tree" (Dunn, Wise & McFayden, 2005, 34:10).

Heavy metal fans are often a target of stereotypes, mainly by people who are outsiders to the genre. As a community, the genre is relatively closed to its outside; unsurprising, considering the genre has been associated with negativity, aggression, suicide and deviant behaviour. From the view point of music-making, such themes, although common in many of the lyrics, do not function as an encouragement for such acts.

Some scholars have proposed that certain music preferences are *suggestive* of vulnerability to mental health problems in young people (McFerran, O'Grady, Sawyer, & Grocke). For instance, mood management research showed that the teenagers at high-risk of psychological distress reported worse moods after listening to music (McFerran et al.). Other scholars explore possible positive attributes of heavy metal. Psychologist and heavy metal scholar Deena Weinstein (2009), claims that heavy metal music is built upon a strong sense of community. According to Weinstein, the dominant discourse in mainstream media typically defines metal music as detrimental and dangerous to youth. To a large extent, this explains the overall negative stereotypes about heavy metal artists and their fans, as well as it bears a connection to issues related to national stereotypes. A widely known instance happened in Norway. In 1994, 21 years old Vikernes was arrested and condemned for murdering a fellow musician and arson of two Christian churches. The following day, news of this spread globally.

In cultural studies, Andy Brown (2011) approaches heavy metal music as a significant part of popular culture that has lately been on the rise as a research topic. In mapping heavy metal music's coverage in academic circles, Brown noticed that the number of academic inquiries on the genre doubled between 1978 and 2000.

One possible explanation for this boom in metal studies is what Spracklen, Brown and Kahn-Harris (2011) write on how media is portraying metal music nowadays:

The increased scholarly attention to heavy metal has developed alongside a recent dramatic shift in the journalistic representation of heavy metal music and culture [...]. Yet, there appears to have been a decisive, and largely unexplained, sympathetic and measured treatment to the news representation of heavy metal culture and fandom in recent years. It is possible that this is connected to the growth in academic interest in metal-related research. (p. 210)

Another hypothesis is that there are more fans of heavy metal music engaged in academic study of heavy metal and its culture. Such academics have carried their passion for heavy metal music into their fields of research, as academia nowadays allows the possibility for studying practically any element of popular culture.

Today, more heavy metal bands are being noticed thanks to the effort of participatory culture. Consequently, new sub-genres of heavy metal are being “created” every day. Recalling Dunn’s “heavy metal family tree”, its already vast and complex root system has likely become outdate. For instance, the emergence of sub-genres such folk metal calls for some expansion that model. However, paraphrasing Dunn, genres definition in metal music has always been challenging to understand, even for metal fans. Unsurprisingly, defining folk metal as a genre is similarly complex. In order to understand folk metal as a branch of metal music, it is necessary to first verify what characterizes it as a music subgenre. To Titon (2008):

Genres [original emphasis] are the named, standard units of the repertory, such as “song” and its various subdivisions (for example, lullaby, Christmas carol, wedding song) or the many types of instrumental music and dances (jig, reel, waltz, schottische, polka, *hambo*, and so forth). Genres come with built-in rules or expectations regarding performance style and setting, with the result that the “same” song, dance, or piece can be classified into different genres depending how, when, or by whom it is performed or played back” (p. 26).

In most countries, contemporary folk music is generally related to dance traditions, as for instance genres like polka and ring-dances. Although there are

many similarities in songs from all over the globe, folk music sounds unique in each place it develops in, for each cultures is unique to some degree.

In folk metal, the “folk” aspect appears in relation to the use of semantic and melodic elements typical of local folk songs, which are native from artists’ cultural background. Independent from its worldwide variants, folk songs generally employ simple and recurring motifs that form a main melody (see Chai & Barry, 2001). The “metal” aspect of folk metal, on its side, derives from a globalized and contemporary music style (see Green, 2013), which carries its own systems of construction and classification. Titon explains that style:

[...] includes everything related to the organization of musical sound itself: pitch elements (scale, melody, harmony, tuning systems), time elements (rhythm, meter), timbre elements (voice quality, instrumental tone color), and sound intensity (loudness/softness). All depend on a music-culture’s aesthetics” (p. 26).

Heavy metal music upholds a variety of such elements mentioned in the quote above, especially in regards of sound intensity. The higher degree of loudness, for instance, is unanimously a central element in heavy metal music. Yet, in heavy metal, notions of genre and style can be hard to grasp and categorize as its artists are in constant exchange with music influences outside of heavy metal. Artists may often change their style, but a majority of their fans will continue to label them using the original framework, simply because they once established a reputation in their former style.

Apart from its cultural and academic aftermaths, heavy metal has also economic functions in music industry. In general, not all aspects of music creation are in the hands of the artists. Big record labels commonly reshape their bands in order to make them more profitable and accessible to mainstream music industry. While such practices may homogenize most works in a cultural level, they may be

commercially effective. For instance, fans may be often more engaged to merchandise products than with the music of a band itself. However, some bands use folk metal as a representation of their national identity: not necessarily as a form of rebellion against local culture and government, but as an expression and affirmation of personal identity. For some artists, representing Finnish culture worldwide is a great responsibility that requires intense thought and loyalty to their cultural roots. Others simply choose to embrace mainstream folk aesthetics, portrayed by mainstream media and music industry. As Bénard (2004) articulates:

They [the bands] are looking at their values and common identity. Values such as courage, honesty, manhood are found in the message conveyed by pagan metal groups. If these metal groups have been influenced by this phenomenon, they did not make any [direct] reference to it. And their message should anyway not be separated from the music. The problem lies in knowing why these artists are trying to revive a history and a distant culture through their music and what are the forms used to achieve this end.² (Bénard, 2004, p. 56).

The meaning-making in folk metal is then a result of almost opposing forces, one dictated by artists' cultural backgrounds and other by music industry. While values such as courage, honesty and even manhood may be a result of local cultural construction, some others related to pagan religion, for instance, can be frequently based on the aesthetics and economics of music industry. Then, the outcome values expressed by folk metal bands are most likely to be a compromise between both forces than a pure, unbiased cultural construct.

² Original quote in French: "Ceux-ci se penchent sur leurs valeurs et leur identité communes. Ces valeurs, le courage, l'honnêteté, la virilité se retrouvent dans le message véhiculé par les groupes de pagan metal. Si ces groupes de Métal ont pu être influencés par ce phénomène, ils n'y font aucune référence. Et leur message ne doit de toute façon pas être dissocié de la musique. La problématique réside dans le fait de savoir pourquoi ces artistes essaient de faire revivre une histoire et une culture lointaine au travers de leur musique et quelles sont les formes utilisées pour parvenir à cette fin" (Bénard 2004, 56).

2.2.1. Nordic Influences

There has been an increasing interest towards Nordic culture in the recent times. This is highly reflected by media such as games, movies, and music. The Nordic region, which comprises Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, is globally known for both its history of myths and heroes as well as its astonishing nature. Scandinavian paganism has for a long been incorporated in global culture, for instance in movies like *The Seventh Warrior* (1999) and games such as *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda Softworks, 2011).

In many European cultures, stories about the “Norsemen” are commonly present. Recently, one example of such that has gained popularity is the story of Ragnar Lodbrok, a Norse hero that during the Viking Age ruled where Norway is today. Ragnar’s story is narrated in Old Norse poetry, as well as in sagas from different countries all over Scandinavia. Recently, some of his deeds were represented in a TV series (History Channel’s *Vikings*, 2013).

The Nordic region is also known for its vibrant heavy metal scene, especially in relation to black metal. According to Dunn, black metal is sub-genre that derives from punk and has a raw and atmospheric sound filled with satanic messages (Dunn et. Al, 2005, 1:09:51). Fuelled also by nationalist ideas, the so called “second wave” of Norwegian black metal that took place in the beginning of 1990, was one of the most controversial heavy metal scenes at that time. Amongst the events that took place in Norway and attributed to black metal musicians at that time, featured church arsons and homicide of a black metal musician.

Some scholars consider the black metal movement was a response to mainstream media (Silk, 2013, p. 13). Especially in Norway, as Taylor (2010) writes:

Norway's mainstream nationalism and xenophobia may be understood as directly related to black metal's ultranationalism: extreme and everyday racisms intersect, the latter informing and enabling the former (p. 166).

Aside from its political inspirations and scandals, some black metal works, similarly to folk metal, draw extensively from a rich variety of ancient poetry. Both genres share the same interest towards registers such as the well-famed Sagas, which are collections of epic poems similar to the Finnish Kalevala. One of the most prominent examples of this is the *Poetic Edda*, an Icelandic compilation of poems of Old Norse culture. The precise origins and authorship of the *Poetic Edda* is a topic of continuing debate, for it is derived straight from a minstrel form of oral tradition, meaning it has been passed on from singer to singer and has likely been altered by each of them. The narrated rendition of the *Poetic Edda* is known as *Prose Edda* and it is estimated that the document has been written during the 13th century by Icelandic scholar and historian Snorri Sturluson. Generally, the Sagas narrate early Viking adventures toward new lands, illustrating themes such as sailing, battles and heroic deeds related to conquering new territories. Those themes are usually common in heavy metal music, especially in the works by Nordic bands.

In Nordic countries, metal music embodies influences from the local culture, culminating into a part of what is known as folk metal; a combination of metal music and folk elements, such as traditional instruments, vocal techniques, as well as folkloric stories and traditions. Folk metal is not present only in Nordic countries, but other parts of the world as well, each utilizing the same formula of combining local tradition with metal music. Frequently some heavy metal music originated from those countries is labelled as "viking metal", for many artists make use of the viking thematic. While viking metal refers to a specific set of artists who apply this specific thematic in their lyrics and live performances, it does not constitute a heavy metal

subgenre in itself. For instance, Swedish band *Amon Amarth* promotes itself as a viking metal band. In an interview published on YouTube, Amon Amarth's vocalist, Johan Hegg, explains his process of lyric-writing is not necessarily related to a continuation of a study or tradition. In Hegg's words:

I don't know... it's hard to explain... because when we... when we work in the rehearsal we're trying to be very spontaneous and that kinda [sic] goes into the lyrics-writing as well. Because often it's when I hear the music... that's when I get an idea of what the song should be about, like, the lyrics. [...] Sometimes it's better to have a story that moves in a certain direction to fit the music than to be completely accurate in the historical and mythological point of view. (FaceCulture, 2011, 0:42)

Amon Amarth's music has been often connected to gender studies, for their music represents a sense of masculinity. Metal music researcher Florian Heesch (2010) notes that Amon Amarth themselves identify with this:

In interviews they state that they will always keep absent from two things: keyboards and female vocals implying that female vocals are clear vocals and surely no growls as practiced by Johan Hegg. As a conclusion we see that Hegg's growls are an important stylistic means to confirm the Vikings' masculinity and they are intended to function in this way. Amon Amarth's death metal style confirms the represented Viking image as male aggressive warriors (p. 76).

However, in their latest album *Deceiver of the Gods* (2013) clean vocals make an appearance along with synthesizers, which represent a shift in their style, as highlighted by Heesch. While masculinity is still characteristic of folk metal works, it is not as emphasized as it is for the viking metal theme.

Drawing from examples such as the one above, it is possible to see how elements Nordic culture is being recycled and reinvented through the work of folk metal bands. Although its historical and mythological perspectives may be inaccurate, some of those elements are today woven together by a variety of artists, creating new creative products that are of similar importance to their original inspirations.

2.2.2. Sonic and Lyrical Characteristics of Folk Metal

As introduced earlier in this sub-section, one of the most evident characteristics of folk metal is the use of elements of traditional music and culture. The use of traditional instruments, as well as lyrics in native language, is some examples of those characteristics. Franco Moretti (2005) claims that the use of native language is essential, for it creates a layer which foreign audiences can identify as “native” (p. 80). However, as folk metal is a music genre with international projection, most artists choose to write their lyrics in English. A language filled with “other people’s words”, to paraphrase Moretti (p. 81) when referring the blending between different languages in one same text, may support the imaginings of a mysterious and distant foreign land and people. In general, folk metal combines such imaginings with what Weinstein (2009) calls “a general medieval theme” present in most heavy metal works:

Many of the symbols, especially the visual ones, of heavy metal are derived from medieval northern Europe, ancient Anglo-Saxon and Nordic mythologies. (p. 113)

Another main attribute of folk metal is use of traditional instruments. Combined with distorted electric guitars, folk metal music features sounds such as the one of mouth-harp, accordion, violin and shamanic-sounding drums. Similarly, the throat singing technique known as *growling*, typical in several heavy metal genres, is present in many folk metal works.

Some scholars claim folk metal has its origins in Europe (Dunn & McFayden, 2005), though today it can be perceived as a global phenomenon. In particular, folk metal has become popular especially through the works of Nordic bands, some of which adopt viking or pagan themes. As Bénard (2004) writes:

[...] the expressions pagan metal or viking metal (literally "viking metal", that is to say, influenced by viking culture) become the norm to define a new musical genre from the North³. (translation mine, p. 57)

Besides those two influences, Nordic folk metal bands utilize several themes from Norse mythology in their lyrics, sonic elements, video clips and live performances. In such themes, the agrarian or even glorious past meets a romanticized re-presentation of itself, forging a new perspective of the culture of that time. Recalling Johan Hegg's words, rather than being an attempt of referring accurately to historical events, the use of such themes comes from rather spontaneous creative process. Although some artists may seem unaware of that, the result of such process casts a completely new perspective on the role of tradition, which can be understood as a mean through which folk metal artists promote their own culture and identity. Accordingly, a sub-genre termed as "viking metal" turns out to be questionable: some artists embrace it as their identity, while others reject it. As Bernard (2004) writes, "viking metal is rather a lyrical concept than a whole musical style, contrary to folk metal"⁴. (translation mine, p. 60). In addition, Bénard explains that artists adopting a viking theme cannot base their music on tradition, for there is little or no information about how music was composed and performed during the Viking Age in Scandinavia (p. 58).

Another way to understanding the main inspirations for folk metal works is through examining the main categories that the genre is commonly divided into. An example of this is Fabrizio Giosuè's (2013) subdivision of the genre:

³ Original quote in French: "[...] les expressions pagan metal ou viking metal (littéralement « Métal viking », c'est-à-dire influencé par la culture viking) deviennent la norme pour définir un nouveau genre musical venu du Nord". (Bénard 2004, p. 57)

⁴ Original quote in French: "Le viking metal est donc plus un concept lyrique qu'un style musical à part entière, contrairement au folk metal." (Bénard 2004, p. 60)

I usually divide this musical area into three simple classes: folk metal, pagan metal, viking metal. *Folk* when melodies and themes related to the folklore of a certain country are added to their metal base; *pagan* when the music and lyrics are inspired by ancient cults; *viking* when there are viking elements present in the texts and music, usually aggressive⁵ (translation mine, p. 12).

In Giosuè's classification, folk, pagan and viking are all valid categories, depending on the lyrical themes of the band. However, it is arguable whether folk is a main genre that encompasses pagan and viking are themes. For some artists, the viking and folk themes uphold no relevant meaning. Others seek a continuation of oral tradition. For instance, the Norwegian group *Wardruna* is seen to be serious about the message they convey through their music. In a Skype conversation with Einar Kvitrafn, former Gorgoroth member, I was told the following:

I wouldn't say theatrical because it's real. I am not pretending to be something I am not. It's about losing yourself in the music, to the music, to the words, being the words... putting your heart on a plate basically, and serving it to everybody who is there. That's a very vulnerable state to be in. The same when you are performing a ritual where you go into trance. There you're also very vulnerable: you become a higher state of yourself. It's close to trance. At least, when it is a concert and you have all those technical things that you have to be aware of, and sometimes there are problems on stage and the sound, which can be very challenging in terms of being able to just be at one's with the...but that's what we aim for: being one with the music. It's not an act. I think people who are not Christian want to feel that solemn feeling in another place than the church. And there are not many alternatives and that's one of the reasons why I think people really connect with our music when we play. So we get this strong feeling. I see a lot of people at all the concerts who are crying from start to end and see really strong emotions in people... it's about creating a moment. (E. Kvitrafn, personal communication, March 2014)

As seen from that example, live performances are as important as the message or intentions behind folk lyrics. The use of elements of local traditions in folk metal music does not only recall or recreate an imagined distant past, but it also gives such elements a new purpose that is still based on its original premises: using the power

⁵ Original quote in Italian: "Sono solito dividere questo settore musicale in tre semplici classi: folk metal, pagan metal, viking metal. Folk quando alla base metal si aggiungono melodie e tematiche legate al folklore di una certa terra; pagan quando la musica e i testi si rifanno agli antichi culti; viking quando sono presenti elementi vichinghi nei testi e nella musica, solitamente aggressive" (Giosuè 2013).

of words to create meaningful experiences. Such texts are then combined to a variety of traditional and contemporary music instruments, uniting them into one soundscape responsible for delivering artists' message to their public.

2.2.3. The Significance of Folk Metal in Finland

In the previous sub-sections, I have explored the roles of tradition, culture and language in the making of folk metal. After presenting the overall scenario of folk metal in the Nordic countries, this sub-section will be dedicated to shedding some light into the significance of folk metal in Finland.

Heavy metal is a particularly popular genre in Finland. The country has an exceptionally active scene when it comes to the number of artists and bands it hosts. Based on band entries included on Metal Archives' (2013a) database, as well as countries' population counts (Geoba.se, 2013) for the year 2013 it is possible to gain a comparative perspective between Finland and some of its neighbouring Nordic countries. In 2013, Finland had an average of 59.6 bands per 100.000 inhabitants, whereas its neighbours Sweden and Norway ratios of 41.3 and 29.5 bands. As illustrated in *Figure 2*:

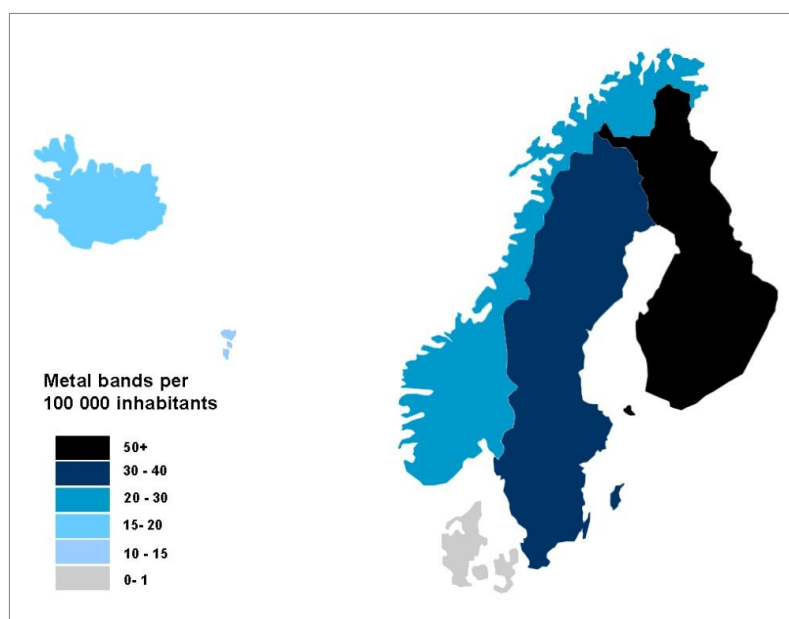


Figure 2. Metal bands per 100 000 inhabitants.

Although the map above casts results based on all heavy metal genres included in MA's database, it serves to illustrate the constituting nature of heavy metal music in Finland. With such large scene, the emergence of new heavy metal genres such as folk metal is to be expected.

As I noted earlier, many FFM bands are inspired by the Finnish national epic known as Kalevala. In the article *The Kalevala, Popular Music, and National Culture*, Finnish scholars Kallioniemi and Kärki (2009) examine how the Kalevala is expressed in popular music genres such as rock and heavy metal. In that article, the authors cite Amorphis as one of Finnish bands that are openly inspired by Kalevala. Contrarily to other well-established Finnish metal bands, such as *Children of Bodom* and *Nightwish*, which have their fan bases commonly in countries like United States, Mexico and Brazil, Amorphis' main fan base is in Finland. This can be partially explained by the band's open use of some elements of Finnish culture that are better recognized by local audiences.

In Finland, thanks to the works of popular artists such as Värttinä, Maria Kalaniemi, Kimmo Pohjola, and metal bands like Amorphis, some Finnish traditional songs have been revived. Amongst some revisions, the appropriation of old ballads is a common practice of folk metal bands. One example of this is the ballad *Velisurmaaja (The Brother Slayer)*, which rendered a variety of works in Finland. Virtanen and DuBois (2000, p. 162) transcribed the opening stanzas of the ballad as:

Velisurmaaja

*"Mistäs tulet, mistäs tulet
poikani iloiseni?"*

The Brother Slayer

*"Where are you coming from,
Where are you coming from, my joyful son?"*

*“Meren rannalta, meren rannalta
äitini kultaiseni.”*

*“From the seaside, from the seaside,
my dear mother.”*

*“Mitäkö sieltä tekemästä, mitäkö
sieltä tekemästä poikani iloiseni?”*

*“What were you doing there, what were you
doing there, my joyful son?”*

*“Hevostani juottelemasta,
Hevostani juottelemasta”*

*“Watering the horses, watering the horses, my
dear mother.”*

Velisurmaaja has been translated and adapted by several Finnish artists. To cite a few of the most famous, the ballad has been transformed into painting, by Akseli Gallen-Kallela 1897, and acting performance, in the TV-series *Vesku Show* (1988-1991). Later, the song has been adapted into heavy metal music by Amorphis. In their album *Chapters*, released by Relapse Records in 2003, Amorphis' version of *Velisurmaaja* features the original narrative structure as well as many of its original elements. Entitled “The Brother Slayer” and featured in the EP *Chapters* (Relapse Records, 2003), Amorphis' version of the ballad goes along these lines:

“Where have you been, where have you been
my son, my merry son?
On the seashore, on the seashore
mother, my darling one.

And what have you been doing there
my son, my merry son?
I have been watering my horse
mother, my darling one.”

As the band's strongest fan base is Finnish, the use of national culture, as in the example above, is a means of strengthening the relationship between artists and their country. In the fifth chapter of this thesis I will conduct a more detailed analysis of such relationships by focusing on FFM use of such cultural elements in their lyrics.

2.2.4 Finnish Folk Metal and the Kalevala Heritage

As discussed introduced in the earlier sub-sections of this chapter, one of most prominent literary works rendered from oral tradition to written language is the Finnish Kalevala, compiled by Elias Lönnrot in 1835. The book has served as inspiration for a variety of other Finnish and foreign artists and writers, and has been rendered globally in media such as games and literature. The Kalevala narrates myths and generic folklore from the Karelian region, located in what nowadays corresponds to the westernmost part of Russia. At the time Lönnrot collected the stories, the region was part of Finland's territory, therefore many studies consider the Kalevala as rather Finnish than Russian product. Moreover, the *Kalevala* was the first printed publication in Finnish language, marking an important step for a Finland-born literary culture. Some scholars speculate that the epic is one of the few preserved works that may contain genuine accounts of ancient culture. One of such scholars is Finnish folklorist Matti Kuusi, who considers the preserved Kalevala poetry as a means of recording ancient culture:

The Kalevala metre was a code for committing texts to memory... Written language is a giant store of texts that are worth remembering. "Unwritten literature" as a paraphrase for the Kalevala tradition is no mere metaphor. Our ancestors did not have any means of lasting linguistic communication apart from Kalevala language" (Kuusi, 1994, p. 41).

Kuusi explains that, in former times, the Kalevala has also served as a communication skill, which was expected to be understood by most members of society. To the scholar, the role of the national epic was to preserve Finnish culture as the lore, which:

[...] served our forefathers in the same way as the Bible, the hymn book, the law book, the medical book, the guides to etiquette and the art of living serve people of the modern era. It was knowledge, skill and belief in crystallised, formulaic form" (Kuusi, 1994, p. 41).

In that regard, the Kalevala is seen to comprise the guidelines for a set of sociocultural skills, which serve as the core for many aspects of the cultural system in contemporary Finland. As Kuusi (1994) notes:

Just as the modern Finn is expected to have at least a fair command of the written language, so every respectable ancestor would have had at least some command of the Kalevala code...The art of Kalevala poetry was a form of high culture arising out of folk culture, just as the written language is a form of high culture arising out of spoken language" (p. 42).

The trespassing of folk to high culture mentioned by Kuusi was one of the principal bases for the rise of national culture in Finland.

Another contribution of the Kalevala was related to poetry performance and runo-singing. To some scholars, such practices functioned as cognitive systems in which individuals could conceptualize their sociocultural experiences. According to folklorist Elina Rahimova (2002), a common means of practicing runo-poetry was through visualisation:

Crystallized images could be stored, "visualized" in the minds of runo singers until the very moment of performance, when the visualization became realized also for the listening audience, as if watching cinema." (p. 404).

In particular, the Kalevala is one of the main sources of inspiration for some Finnish folk bands. This element is also present in folk metal bands' live performances, in which the visual elements complement the messages behind their lyrics. When it comes to the Internet and its social media, the use of such imagery has become even more widespread, as the Internet is one of the main means through which the work of Finnish bands is spread worldwide.

3. Methods

In this chapter, I will outline the data gathered for this study. First, I will present the data material and explain their systematic classification into four major data sets. In conclusion, I will introduce the procedures used in the analysis of the data.

The methodology applied in this study is more qualitative than quantitative in its nature. As my main focus is on achieving a general perspective on the meaning conveyed by FFM lyrics, I will draw from Matthew Jockers' macroanalysis (Jockers, 2013). Originated in literary studies, macroanalysis is a suitable method especially in analysing big textual data, which is possible with the aid of graphic computer tools such as *Gephi* and *Wordle.net*. The basic idea of this approach is to extract the main topics or themes of texts via graphic visualizations, such as tag clouds and theme network charts. Aside from the rendering of visual data, this method requires a certain amount of interpretation by the researcher. One of the key uses of macroanalysis to examining music lyrics, for this method offers different perspectives on various contexts in which an artistic work is created. In many ways, macroanalysis resembles some of the traditional methods applied in social sciences research, such as content analysis.

Another similar approach to macroanalysis was introduced by Franco Moretti (2005) in his book *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*. Moretti uses the term "distant reading" instead macroanalysis. Regarding the combination of human and machine work to analyse data, Moretti explains that:

A field this large cannot be understood by stitching together separate bits of knowledge about individual cases, because it isn't a sum of individual cases: it's a collective system that should be grasped as such, as a whole (p. 4).

However, I will use macroanalysis only moderately. Interpretation of data gathered will be the principal approach to evaluating themes that emerge. One of the

main challenges when applying such method is adapting it to smaller data sets. While some level interpretation can be achieved through close-reading lyrics, observing such texts in a macro-perspective enables a view on a broader context in which the work has been produced.

In cultural studies, data interpretation is invariably affected by the researcher's subjective perspective. As music is a form of art, the processes of meaning-making are complex and can hardly be simplified. One way of overcoming such challenge is through using for both interpretative and measurable approaches.

The material gathered for analysis was allocated into four data sets. The first data set (Data set 1) comprises information on 257 albums by 65 folk metal bands from the five Nordic countries and Faroe Islands. Some data is missing from the sample, for some bands have not made their lyrics available online. I attempted to contact some of these bands and requested for their lyrics, but only a few replied. My second data set (Data set 2) contains 403 lyrics from 71 albums (see Appendix A) by 23 FFM bands. The data encompasses full-length albums of active Finnish bands classified under the genre "Viking/Folk Metal" on *MetalArchives.com* (MA from now on). Information regarding artists, albums, as well as the lyrics used in the research was available on MA between 2013 and 2014 and is free for non-commercial use.

Lyrics which are solely in languages native to Finland (Finnish and Swedish) were not included, for only English material would enable the analysis of the semantic structures this study is focused on. In some cases, works featuring both English and native languages were included, granting that passages written in native language were consistently removed from the data. My choice for assuming English as the main language is based on both methodological and analytical reasons. Analysing lyrics in Finnish would minimally entail a native level of expertise language.

Moreover, the material would need to be translated into English, and thus it would require a much profounder interpretation of the data, bypassing the scope of this thesis. Without the proper skills, it is feasible to establish the connections necessary to understand how the lyrics relate to each other, the genre (folk metal) and their artists' countries of origin.

Additionally to the previously mentioned data sets, five of most popular FFM bands were selected. From those band Facebook pages, photos and other data which were publicly available were gathered to compose a third group of data (Data set 3). This set is based on extracts published between July 2013 and January 2014 on the bands' Facebook pages and contains the following bands: Korpiklaani, Ensiferum, Amorphis, Turisas, and Wintersun. This third set includes images, status updates and comments, focusing mostly on activities initiated by the artists themselves. A supplementary data on those five bands was gathered on 24th April 2014 using the online tool *Socialbakers.com*. This web service offers free statistics through which detailed information on both bands' number Facebook likes and fan-base can be accessed. Finally, I will close read one song by each of the five bands (Data set 4) and observe how Finnish culture is signified in their lyrics. The selected songs, collected on 12th of August 2014, form a random sample extracted from the bands' ten most popular tracks on *LastFm.com* in the past six months.

These four data sets offer an in-depth understanding of the overall themes and imagery of FFM and highlight elements that relate them to Finnish national identity. In analysing this data on a macroanalytical scale, I will use narrative frameworks proposed by Finnish folklore studies (see Virtanen and DuBois). Especially, I will observe how both Finnish folklore and metal studies intersect when it comes to practices of music culture and tradition.

The following chapter will carry an analysis of FFM, trying to identify the possible cultural models that serve as references for artists. The significance of recognizing such references relies on that they can be later on be identified if they appear in FFM works. Then I can utilize some of Jenkins' notion of transmedia storytelling as a way of understanding the instances of how certain elements of Finnish folk traditions are adapted across different media. Lastly, I will describe some of the narrative models that migrate from Finnish folklore to folk metal through lyrics and Facebook imagery, sorting them into six categories derived from Derek Fewster's list of national features: *magic*, *heroic deeds*, *adventure*, *homeland*, *spirituality*, and *war*.

4. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical framework to be applied in the analysis of FFM lyrics and Facebook imagery. First, I will present some notions of semiotic theory, as introduced by the theorist Umberto Eco (1984, 1994) and Herbert Blumer (1969). Borrowed from literary studies, this approach can be applied to studies of symbols and language in other media, such as the Internet. In conjunction with semiotic theory, I will review Porter Abbott's (2008) notion of narratives. Next, the role of Internet and social media will be discussed. The end of this chapter discusses Henry Jenkins's (2006) transmedia storytelling.

4.1. Semiotics of Music and Narratives

As this study explores the principal symbols that emerge from the projected notion of Finnish culture in FFM music, understanding the concepts of language and meaning is essential. One way of approaching them is through borrowing some elements of theories such as semiotics and symbolic interactionism. Umberto Eco (1984) is one of the most prominent scholars in the field of semiotics. According to Eco, language can build signification by syntactic, semantic and even behavioural rules. By articulating these three areas in a given text, signs can compose codes that may be decoded in order to obtain meanings. Similar to semiotics, as presented by theorist Herbert Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism deals with the processes of interaction in which individuals generate and share meanings. Blumer outlines this theory as one of the studies that seeks an understanding of human conduct and group life, posing three basic premises: first, we humans are attracted by what something means to us, second, such meanings arise from social interaction, and

third, such meanings are constantly shaped through our interpretative processes (Blumer, 1969).

In the book *Structuralism and Semiotics*, Terence Hawkes (1977) points out that the notions of “structure” were first connected to “natural science” in 1725 (p. 11), introduced up by the Italian jurist Giambattista Vico. Paraphrasing Vico, Hawkes studies mankind's processes of “poeticizing” the world. Hawkes also references the concept of poetic wisdom (*sapientia poetica*). According to the scholar, such wisdom is the only one genuine and permanent “human characteristic” owned by mankind. While it is true that we have different habits and differ from each other in many regards, we all use our minds as the main mechanism of interaction and connection with the world we inhabit. As for its meaning, the poetic wisdom stands for the cognitive responses that individuals give when in a relationship with their environment. The given responses, as Hawkes remarks, are often cast in the form of symbols and myths (p. 14). Myths, as they are observed and interpreted, are capable of introducing a holistic idea of certain individual's experience. In that regard, they take place within the relationship between mankind and its environment. The outputs of that relationship are reflected on how individuals interpret and attempt to describe their reality in an experiential level.

A fruitful source of meaning in semiotic analysis is language. In all its complexity, language comprises numerous intermediary aspects of human communication, especially regarding aspects of both verbal and non-verbal behaviours. In Hawkes terms, the stretching between verbal and non-verbal communication is central in understanding semiology. In analysing such “stretching”, semiology takes into consideration feelings, gestures, clothing and aspects of body

language, making it possible to uncover “cross-purposes with what words actually say” (Hawkes, 2003, p. 125).

A key idea of semiology is the concept of “sign”. In basic terms, the notion of “sign” assumes that a message can be successfully transmitted from an *encoder* to a *decoder*. A sign carries important functions, for example relating the parts involved in the communication process. Hawkes, paraphrasing the philosopher C. S. Peirce, explains that the relationships between sign, encoder and decoder form triangular structures called “triadic” structures or “trichotomies”. Peirce’s model outlines nine main signs that are combined into ten classes of signs that form 66 fuller sign classes. By arranging different signs into such structures, it is possible to systematize and analyse some of the most complex layers of logics (Hawkes, 1977, p. 128). The systematic approach offered by structuralism is crucial when studying aspects of socio-environmental relationships. By recognizing the significance of every individual in the context of his relationship with society, it is possible to understand how certain clues present in the environment may affect an individual’s social function and vice versa.

Semiotics can be used to explain how music can function as a framework for meaning. A variety of symbols can form a system which music community members identify with. In the communication model of semiotics, meaning is a message transferred from a source to a receiver. Whether the message is received successfully or not is highly context and community dependent. In analysing folk metal community, the use of certain expressions, tattoos, jewellery can represent their conformity to a particular “code” of conduct and need to be recognized as part of the community rather than that of a cult or religion. An outsider is not likely to understand this. Such symbols function as uniting elements within the community.

However, others may make use of the same symbols and not belong to any community. In their case, meaning is dispersed and ambiguous. In FFM symbols such as the Finnish flag or traditional national costumes are examples of the symbolic apparatus that may appear in lyrics and band performances.

When studying music lyrics, semiotics may help understanding some of feelings and non-verbal messages involved in their creative process. Lyrics can be seen to inherit a poetic structure. In the case of FFM, it is possible to identify how meanings emerge from such inherited structures, among artists and fans are guided towards a general understanding of what the genre depicts symbolically and aesthetically. However, some of the “codes” present in lyrics can often be of abstract or non-specific nature, which then require a certain type to listener to understand them.

Music has meaning beyond lyrics. It serves as stage for interaction between people who share interest towards it. Not only music creates meaning, but it possibly will also bring its listeners together. Thus, the analysis of meaning in music may benefit from symbolic interactionism, as this framework facilitates a classification of common meaningful elements that appear in lyrics. Regarding FFM music in particular, research has shown that many elements of the national epic Kalevala have been used by several Finnish heavy metal music bands (Jaakkola & Toivonen, 2004). In their lyrics and live performances, such bands explore themes that relate to daily life of past times in Finland.

In order to understand the symbology behind FFM lyrics, it is necessary to first observe how narratives are formed. In his book *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, Porter Abbott explains that “narratives are a succession of events that appear as links in chain” (2008, p. 3). Narratives can be approached as a representations of events (Abbott, 2008, p. 13). According to Abbott, from an

Aristotelian perspective, the word representation (re-presentation) stands for stories that are told or written, whereas presentation would stand for acted pieces (p. 15). Then, narratives are then a collection of different values and meanings, forming a whole from a set of coherent ideas. This concept is closely related to how individuals make sense of place and time. Abbott clarifies that time, as defined by narratives, is dictated through distinguished events which may happen in a non-chronological order. Yet, readers are frequently capable of recognizing the beginning, middle and end of a story.

Stories are contained in books the same way as they are in speech: they exist within a space that may be accessed several times for new views and interpretations. It all depends on the reader's approach and expectations. Words introduce the reader to a set of artefacts, images and situations that make recognition of the story world somewhat easier.

In heavy metal music, the notion of narrative is an important part of lyrics-writing. In order to keep the listener motivated and attentive throughout the music experience, heavy metal music contains events that create its own a notion of time. Especially in FFM music, this idea is applied in a variety of media: album booklets, merchandizing (clothes and such apparel) and Facebook pages, to name a few. The interplay between expectation and outcome can be one of the most attractive elements of narratives. For most fans, the making process of a music album is often more stimulating than the final product per se. Although much of the information need may found explicitly in some lyrics, fans tend to look for meaning *beyond* the space of the story.

4.2. The Role of Internet and Social Media

Internet is a universal channel through which bands can express their principles and shape their public image into an intended shape. For example, bands present on Facebook and YouTube can confirm or deny assumptions that are made about them by posting statements, messages, photos, or videos. Each of these is part of the way artists choose to build their online presence and reveal some of the persona behind the creative work.

With the emergence and popularization of the World Wide Web and its social communities, individuals now have access an unprecedented range of music to discover and share. Due to services offered by websites such as Facebook and online music-sharing pages, such as *SoundCloud.com* and *GrooveShark.com*, it is possible to discover and listen to a variety of music works. Similarly, artists can spread their work more efficiently than before. Thus, combined with each genre of music and creative effort, aspects of history and culture of their countries of origin may easily move from the realm of sound and lyrics into the one of people's daily lives.

Apart from user interaction and usability in the realm of the digital world, another way of approaching online communities is to consider their offline outcomes. I argue that social media is only an extension of our already existing social practices. Many of our daily activities have only migrated to social media and take place in a way that more or less resembles face-to-face interactions.

Online spaces are often perceived as familiar environments. According to Robert Kozinets (2009), a pioneer scholar in the field of ethnographic online research, both "community and culture can inhere in many of the familiar forums and 'places' of the Internet" (p. 8). Individuals that inhabit such "places" obey a set of

norms and references that place them within Cyberculture. Kozinets defines Cyberculture as:

[...] a symbolic code of the new information society, as a set of cultural practices and lifestyles related to the rise of networked computing technology, or as term to reflect on the social changes brought about by access to the new media, respectively” (p. 12).

Some of the methods employed in online research involving elements of human culture have been largely based on the distinction between real and virtual spaces (Jockers, 2013; Kozinets, 2009; Rogers, 2013). Most works related to such dichotomy is reminiscent of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when internet and mobile technology were hardly entangled with our daily lives. However, some of the contemporary scholars agree that there is no clear distinction between both spaces.

As Kozinets (2009) explains:

If we accept as a baseline definition that culture is learned and consists of systems of meaning, symbol systems of which language is primary, then we can ask about the particular features carried in specific technological contexts, such as in online communities or through computer-mediated communications” (p. 12).

In this book *Digital methods*, Richard Rogers (2013) claims that social media today “provides us with opportunities for a redefinition of consciousness, identity, and corporality” (p. 20). Using Facebook as an illustration for the opportunities mentioned in Rogers’ work, the complementary nature of virtual and real worlds seems self-evident. Facebook is both a personal and public space, filled with different sorts of social aggregations, discussions and interpersonal relationships (Kozinets, 2009, p. 9). Not surprisingly, Facebook pages and profiles are mingled in people’s personal lives. Rogers (2013) argues that spaces like Facebook are designed to focus on user content, but it’s also clear that the website is highly focused on user interaction. First, the new user registers an account and then starts adding “friends”, most of which are suggested by the site’s engine. Then settings can be changed to filter the content

that can be viewed by other users, forming what Rogers describes as a “walled garden”. While Facebook is a “walled garden” controlled by its owners, it is also an opened collection of different cultures in interaction. The website can serve then as place for learning about cultures, as well as a tool for registering and sharing experiences that would otherwise be concealed in the time and space they occurred.

Symbolic systems in internet communities are both similar and different from those of real life. On the one hand, they are similar to one another for they are still aspects of human communication. On the other hand, the reality pictured by individuals in such communities is usually a “well selected” one: it comprises only fragments of that reality, which alone can offer little clue about the scene portrayed. In his chapter entitled *Three Paradoxes of the Information Age*, Langdon Winner (1998) presents the idea of a paradox of lifespace, meaning how our social landscape is being transformed by various technological devices we are adopting in the recent decades (p. 193). Winner claims that the more individuals rely on technology, the more they depend on each other’s social approval. By social approval, Winner means the necessity of being engaged with technology in order to be part of social interactions. The paradox of lifespace may also be reflected from the notion of public sphere, mostly regarding how certain topics gain significance than others. In that regard, such relevant topics compose what Jürgen Habermas calls publicity:

Originally a function of public opinion, it [publicity] has become an attribute of whatever attracts public opinion... The public sphere itself appears as a specific domain-the public domain versus the private (Habermas, 1991, p. 2).

On the Internet, the distinction between public and private spheres is ambiguous. As online social networking became popular, most people incorporated online practices to their daily habits, especially because it gave them a sense of

belonging to certain groups. Following Habermas' thinking, we can consider society as a form of authority: in order to obtain approval, one must submit to technology. The absence of a clear authority and the confusion between public and private domain are some of the most central characteristics of the Internet. Especially on communal spaces such as Facebook, wherein individuals are assumingly free to express themselves.

The development of Facebook as both a private and communal space is closely related to history and dynamics of blogs. The term "blog" came from the intersection between the words web and log. According to Jill Rettberg (2008), this reference comes from nautical journey logs, documents which served to chronologically register events that happened during expeditions (p. 17). Rettberg claims that the emergence of blogs marked the passage from unidirectional to participatory media, where both readers and writers are creators of media (p. 1). Unlike travel journals and personal diaries, blogs are commonly dedicated one idea or genre. As such, blogs bring together people that think alike, creating what scholar Cass Sunstein called as "the echo chamber effect": comments and other participatory actions from the part of readers are usually favourable to the blogger or the topic written. (Sunstein, 2009, p. 116).

In many ways, Facebook pages also function as echo chambers: they gather individuals who literally may "like" the content offered by the page. Additionally, Facebook pages are highly visual and comprise a variety of media types, such as links, videos, and photos in one single space. Photography, in particular, is more accessible and easier to comprehend than media such as text. Similarly, video published as links in Facebook pages introduce aspects of nonverbal communication, such those that can be found in face to face conversations, such as

gestures, eye contact and laughter. In general, such tools are often used by artists to get closer to their fans. However, such pages may easily become cluttered with contradicting generic forms which are often unrelated to the main content. Such setting discourages the merging between them. Scholars Burgess and Green (2013) cite YouTube as an example: vlogs, cat videos, tutorials, music videos are generic media formats may coexist in the same space and strike one another, but cannot possibly merge together (p. 41). In their research, Burgess and Green analysed over 4.000 videos listed as the “most popular” between August and November 2007. The analysis revealed that the focal form of participation was vlogging, comprising 40% of the sample. The scholars argue that vlogging was so prominent due to its lifelikeness and its intimate tone of communication, which can give the viewer an approachable impression of “home”.

4.3. Transmedia Storytelling

The transferring of stories between media such as music and Facebook is known as transmedia storytelling. This notion of narrative was first coined by Henry Jenkins (2006) in his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. As Jenkins describes:

Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story (p. 97).

Rather than seeing transmedia stories as a lack of creativity by story-writers, Jenkins notes that cross media elements are a compelling and enhancing feature of people’s creative processes. Moreover, transmedia storytelling can be highly intuitive, especially for younger generations who have grown up in this culture

(Jenkins, 2006, p. 134). This serves as a means of accessing a variety of works which from the past, with which such younger generations may not be well familiar with. Jenkins explains that:

A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms [such as movies, literature and games], with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. [...] Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice versa. Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole. (pp. 97-98)

If we consider folk metal and Facebook as media through which national narratives can travel, it is then possible to identify some of the signs and messages that get dispersed in them. Moreover, identifying such elements and relating contextually to how heavy metal music functions as a community is crucial to understanding the role of folk metal in the construction of Finnish cultural identity. Fans as the receivers of such cultural elements form their own notion of Finnish identity. Under the influence of the transmedia narratives, the fans become part of the context and culture they listen to. Such aspects are then relocated into new ideas of national culture that emerges both from bands and fans through interaction, which nowadays takes place mainly online. This also relates to the notion of convergence, as Jenkins (2006) explains:

Convergence as the "flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (p. 2).

That "anywhere" can also refer to the audience becoming interested in the cultural identity proposed by FFM music. As is the case with many Nordic bands (see Green, 2013), the initial contact some people have with certain countries is through their music. In FFM, fans may also recreate Finnish mythology by constructing their own personal mythologies based on the works of Finnish bands. For Jenkins (2006):

Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives (p. 3).

Transmedia story telling is then crucial in observing participatory culture. The notion offers benefits to the understanding of how such personal mythologies travels through a variety of social contexts, such as live music performance, lyrics and Facebook pages.

5. Analysing Cultural Identity in Finnish Folk Metal

Having presented the background and theoretical framework of my study, I will now examine how FFM bands express their national identities through their lyrics and Facebook pages. The analysis will be divided into two parts. First, I will review some of the categories proposed by Derek Fewster (2006) in order to assess the principal features of Finnish national culture. Based on those categories, I will then draw a new model which then can be applied to evaluating FFM lyrics and symbology. Second, I will observe the context in which FFM has emerged, especially by comparing Finnish works with those of other Nordic countries. I will then analyse some of the most popular lyrics of five FFM bands: Amorphis, Ensiferum, Korpiklaani, Turisas and Wintersun. I will observe elements of the bands' Facebook pages, identifying features that function as narrative mechanisms and represent aspects of Finnish cultural identity shaped by the artists.

5.2. Categorizing Finnish Folk Metal

Aside from lyrics, artists' Facebook pages comprise a variety of cultural symbols and values that reflect both Finnish and international cultures. One way of approaching the symbolic nature of such accounts is by placing such elements into categories that were also used for evaluating folk literature. For this, I adopt some elements of Derek Fewster's table of Finnish nationalist features (Fewster, 2006, p. 396) to assess the Facebook imagery (Data set 3). Originally, Fewster's features were designed to structure nationalist symbols and attributes in the medieval construction of Finnishness. However, some of them can be used to assess contemporary constructs of national identities. Table 1 shows the Finnish nationalist

features compiled by Fewster (2006, p. 396), which are divided into five categories featuring some the following themes:

Categories	National features portrayed
Organized state (or tribes)	Tribal identity; Lost political unity; (Military) leaders; Regional identity and autonomy; Local territorial organizations; Codified common law; Trading towns; Centres of power; Army; Navy; Chains of communications.
Pagan Credo	Heathen 'state' religion; 'Monotheistic' paganism; Slow and violent conversion; 'National Catholicism'.
Heroic National Culture	Wisdom of the Ancients; Heroic valour; Technological excellence; National peasant freedom; Superior tradesmen; (Maidenly) purity; Matronly power; Native nobility; Freedom fighters; Saami inferiority and subordination.
Military Structure	Continuous state of war; Stubborn resistance and uprisings; Germanic racial enemies; Slavic enemies; Internal ethnic discord; National state border; Line of defence; Military equality with the enemies.
Ethnic Remains	The national memory (Kalevala poetry); Antiquarian artefacts; Ornamental patterns.

Table 1. *Fewster's table of Finnish national features.*

In order to apply this model to assess FFM lyrics, it is necessary to narrow down some of the national features described by Fewster and include them into simplified categories. By observing the national features above, six of the following themes may be used to simplify their classification: *heroes, magic, adventure, spirituality, war* and *land*. These simplified categories will be used to identify and match some of the themes present in FFM lyrics. Each category will receive a number of key terms that will be scanned for and highlighted in the sample (Data set 2). As synthesized in Table 2:

Theme	Key terms
Heroes	hero, heroes, brave, courage
Magic	magic, mystic
Spirituality	spirit, faith, god, gods
War	war, wars, battle, battles, fight
Land	land, lands, nature

Table 2. *Recurring themes in Finnish Folk Metal lyrics.*

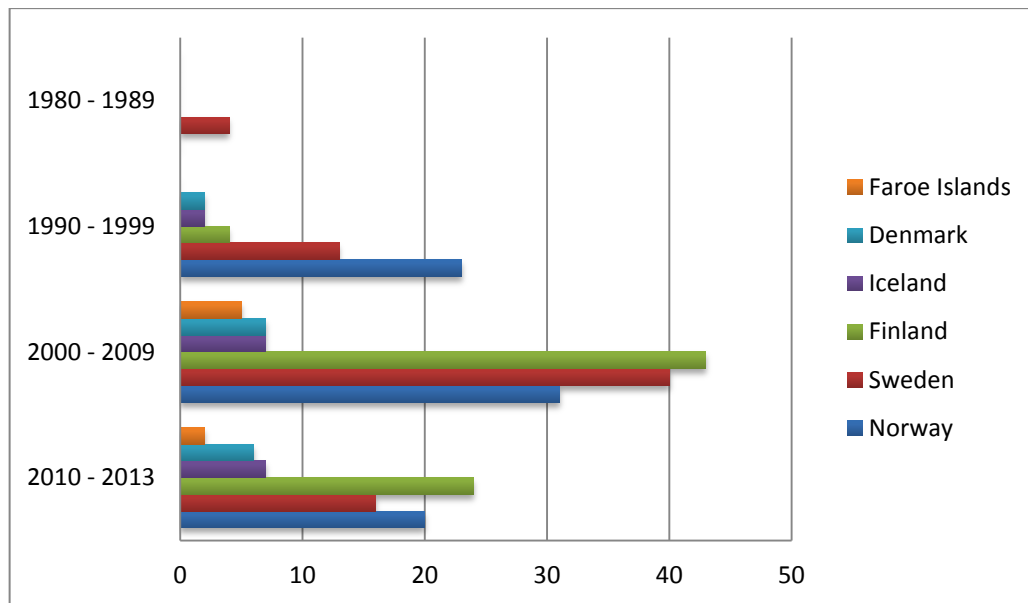
The key terms reflect the most common words related to the themes. The terms will then be counted and displayed graphically in order to observe their prominence within the sample.

5.3. Contextualizing Finnish Folk Metal

Having presented categories for assessing FFM works, I will observe the context in which FFM takes place. The samples used in this analysis are from four data sets gathered between July and December 2013 from MA and Facebook. Even though I have chosen to limit my research to the works of Finnish bands, I will also consider how the folk metal phenomenon has increased within the Nordic cluster.

I will observe how folk metal albums have been published throughout the years in the Nordic cluster (Data set 1). The sample encompasses works published in English language (some contained mixed languages) in the category of Folk/Viking Metal on MA (2013b). I have narrowed the results down by ordering the list by country and including only the active bands.

Graph 1 is based on a total of 256 albums published between 1980 and 2013 by folk metal bands from six Nordic countries: Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. The sample contains full-length albums containing lyrics written, at least partially, in English.



Graph 1. Nordic folk metal albums published per period.

The illustration in *graph 1* marked a shift in production of folk metal albums in Nordic countries, explained by a series of events of the time period. Only Sweden had four albums published in the 1980s by the first known folk metal band in the Nordic area, Bathory. During the next decade, as the folk metal genre starts to be better established, similar works appeared in Denmark (two albums), Norway (23 albums) and Finland (4 albums). In the 1990s, especially Norway showed a significant increase in the production of folk metal albums. The 2000s represent a dramatic increase in the albums published. It marks the addition of Iceland (seven albums) and Faroe Islands (five albums). The decade shows an increase in the number of folk metal albums from Finland (43 albums), Norway (31 albums) and Sweden (40 albums), and Denmark experienced (seven albums).

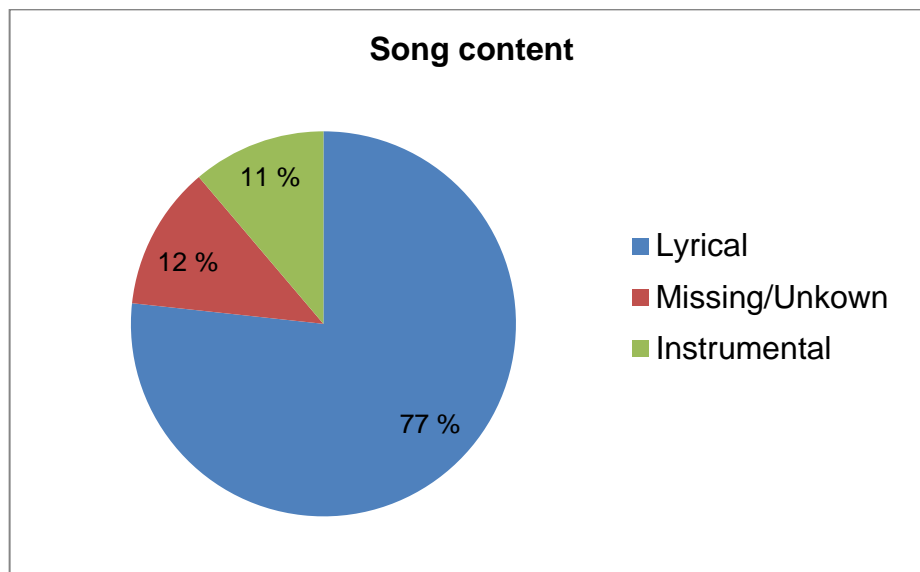
The last period analysed was the most recent time span between 2010 and 2013. In these three last years, 24 folk metal albums originated from Finland, followed by Norway (20 albums), Sweden (16 albums), Iceland (seven albums), Denmark (six albums) and Faroe Islands (two albums). From that, it is noticeable

how folk metal can be seen to be the strongest in Finland. In particular, the year of 2009 appeared as the most productive period for FFM. According to the analysed data, the spawning time of an album, from its recording to its release, is about two years. Provided with this same time period, Finnish bands published an impressive number works when compared to its Nordic neighbours. Yet, quantity of albums alone is insufficient for understanding the folk metal phenomenon in Finland.

As lyrics can be seen as a direct manifestation of the themes that make up a genre, I presuppose that they are a common device used by bands in their works. When absent, lyrics give space to instrumental songs or segments, which are just as significant when it comes to understanding how a work belongs to a certain genre. Regarding instrumental songs, however, the thematic and poetic aesthetics of the works are communicated musically.

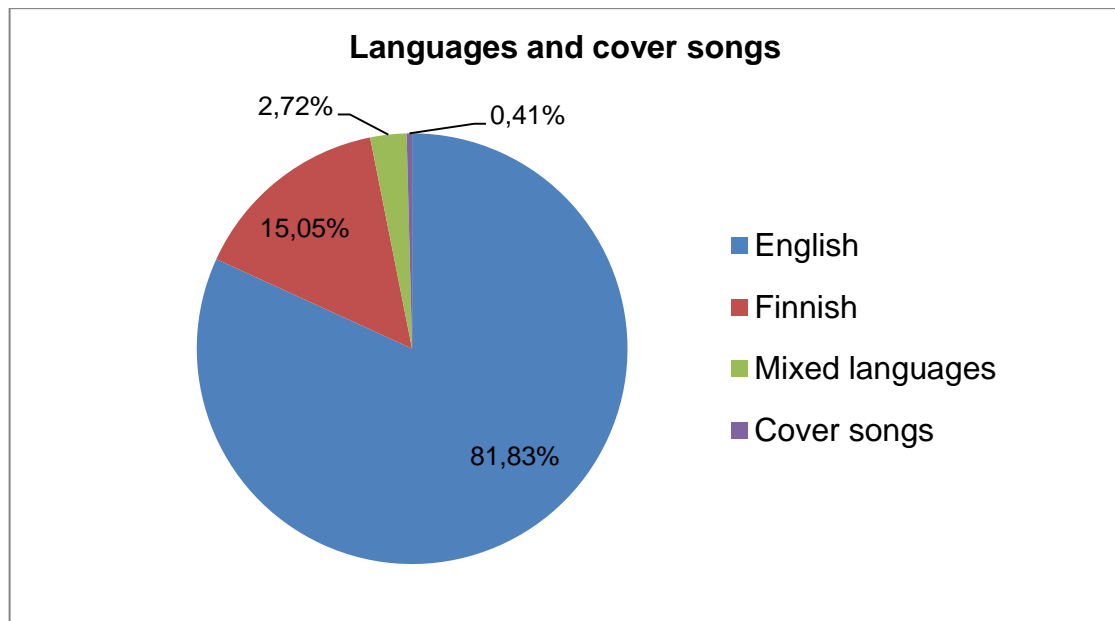
As mentioned in chapter 2, a characteristic of folk metal is the use of traditional instruments, such as harp, violin, or Kantele. By making a song fully instrumental, the bands often emphasise the use of such traditional instrument. Such songs are commonly intros or outros to albums, functioning like covers of a book. The content within is usually marked by distorted guitars and vocals, which can cover or muddle up layers containing traditional instruments. *Graph 2* shows the proportions of lyrical and instrumental songs in the sample containing all selected FFM lyrics (Data set 2). The data revealed that 77% of the songs have lyrics, whereas 11% were instrumental only. About 12% of the songs could not have their content identified due to the lack of information on MA's database. This data comprises the works of 23 Finnish bands, which makes a total of 629 songs analysed from a set of 71 albums. By observing the results in *Graph 2*, it is clear that lyrical songs are more favoured in

Finnish folk metal than those that are instrumental. For this reason, I use them as the main data for the analysis.



Graph 2. Distribution of content in songs.

Since heavy metal has been an international genre since its conception (Green, 2013), it is only natural to expect that the easiest way to deliver a message is to express it in English. The same applies to folk metal, a subgenre of heavy metal. However some bands feature lyrics or even whole songs in their native language, an approach similar to the occasional use of traditional instruments. By using their native languages, the bands can create works that mark their origins. *Graph 3* shows how bands employ different languages in their works (Data set 2).



Graph 3. Distribution of languages used in songs.

As expected, English makes the majority with 62%. The second most common language used in the data is Finnish with 11% of total lyrics, mostly due to songs by Korpiklaani, who only later in their careers started to use English lyrics. Songs containing both languages configure 2% of the lyrics.

Another approach applied in exploring general content, as well as the contextual nature of FFM, is through analysing their word frequency. That method offers a large, or in Moretti's terms, "distant" view of some themes and clues present throughout the texts. A tag cloud is a graphic tool that can be used in such methods, for it enables the visualization of word occurrences, forming a visual aid that displays the proportion of words in relation to each other. In *figure 3*, the word cloud created from all lyrics of the 23 bands reveals the character of the self-referential and temporal words such as "one", "time", "night", "sun", "light" and "man". The figure was created with the online tool *Wordle.net* (2014). This open source application uses word frequency to determine the relative size of each word.

both perpetual and non-existent. Therefore, identifying whether the narrator speaks of the past, present or future is problematic.

5.4. Finnish Cultural Imagery Projected onto Facebook

In this sub-section will focus on exploring how FFM bands signify Finnish national imagery lyrics and public online self-presentation. I will observe how bands build their presences on spaces such as their official Facebook pages (Data set 3).

In data collected on 24th of April 2014 from *Socialbakers.com* (2014), almost all of the bands with the exception of Amorphis have their largest fan bases in United States and Mexico. Amorphis is an exception, for their largest fan base is in Finland (14.8% of fan base), but still have United States and Mexico as the next strongest bases. *Figure 5* shows an extract from Amorphis' Facebook page in which the band declares that "After show we're going to do some skål. We think we deserve it!". The statement is a clear depiction of one element of worldwide culture not only present in Finland; that of drinking alcohol.



Figure 5. Drinking culture.

Vikings and their culture in general receive a new reading through the vinyl album art of Ensiferum, whose work has shown great influence and interest toward

the kalevalaic hero Väinämöinen. Combining viking with Finnish culture can be seen as controversial. But while Ensiferum's work is historically inaccurate, it is worth it to observe the intertextuality between the themes they use. Visually, Ensiferum is known for being one of the most "Finnish" bands, for they wear Finnish flags as kilts and apply blue and white to almost every piece of cover art, as illustrated in *figure 6*:

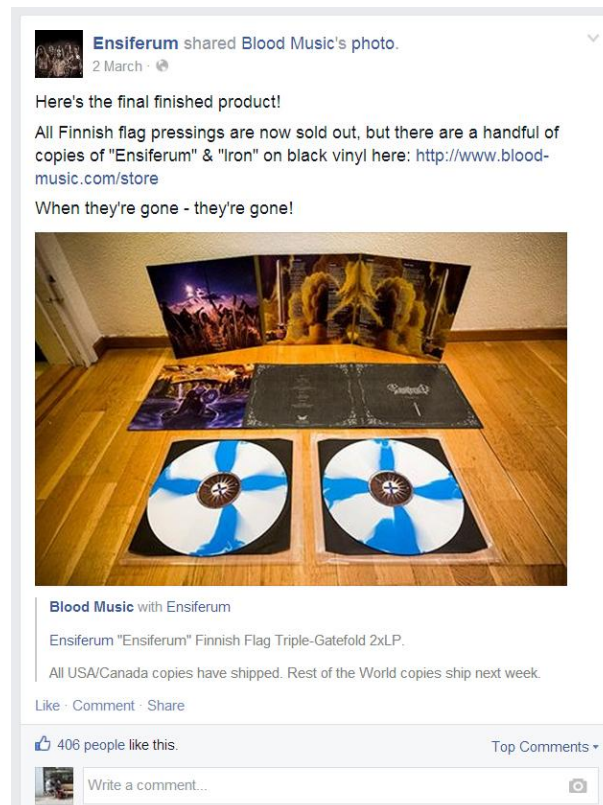


Figure 6. Finnish vikings.

Aside from studio art, Ensiferum has also combined Finnish culture with other elements in different participatory contexts, especially in their live performances. Usage of intercultural elements is illustrated in *figure 7*, in which Ensiferum's bassist Sami Hinkka wears a sombrero, a hat archetypical of Mexican culture. Unsurprisingly, Ensiferum's largest fan base is in Mexico. In a concert at the 2013 edition of the European viking metal festival Heidenfest, the band members wear sombreros (see William Garrey, 2013, 2:07). The big Mexican hats, atypical of heavy

metal's generic outfits, are an effort to align the band's visual image to their cover of the internationally famous Spanish song *Bamboleo*:



Figure 7. Sami Hinkka wearing a sombrero.

Similar imagery could be seen on the other FFM bands' Facebook pages. Most of those artists seem to attempt to have a personal relationship with their fans, which is apparent when noting their interactions are managed and negotiated online. The only exception seems to be the band Turisas, whose page mostly features concerts and studio updates and is overall impersonal. The lack of interactions is suggestive of the band's efforts to promote their latest album, *Turisas 2013*, in which the band

explored themes and styles that verse beyond their initial folk metal influences. This change in style caused mixed reactions amongst Turisas fans. As vocalist Mathias Nygård explains in a recent interview for the YouTube channel KaaosTV:

The reception has been pretty mixed, but we knew... we knew to expect that. Because of course the album isn't exactly what we've done in the previous albums either. So we knew that we always stir up a bit of a mess when we release an album and it's not exactly what maybe the fans expected it to be. (KaaosTV, 2014, 3:42)

Seen as a group of statements, the analysed data from Data set 3 suggests that the relationship between bands and fans constitute a fragile agreement on what FFM presents as Finnish culture.

5.5. Finnish Folk Metal Lyrics

While online presentation and live performance aesthetics are elements that contribute the atmospheric and sonic experience of FFM, lyrics offer semantic clues on what symbolic messages FFM bands convey. Whether the message conveyed by text and sound together is received by the listener as one or not, such cases form an example of Jenkins' transmedia narratives.

For the following sample (Data set 4) I have gathered lyrics of some of the most popular songs by the five FFM bands. The set is composed by: (1) *Silver Bride*, by Amorphis; (2) *Lai Lai Hei*, by Ensiferum; (3) *Rasputin*, by Turisas; (4) *Vodka*, by Korpiklaani; and *Winter Madness*, by Wintersun. The full lyrics can be found in Appendix B.

The first text analysed comes from Amorphis' *Skyforger* album, published in 2009 (see Appendix B, p.98). Although Amorphis is not generally classified as folk metal, thematically it is arguable that the band may as well be classified as FFM. The album mainly recounts narratives about the blacksmith Ilmarinen. The second song featured in that album is *Silver Bride*. Its lyrics narrate the following (Amorphis, 2009):

*From the mystic dream of a night time
I saw the clarity of my days
From the gates of **longing**
Looked for the familiar glow
The **death** of my **wife's** slayer
Brought no comfort to me
No shape for loneliness
For a dream*

***A queen of gold** I made
A silver bride I built
From the northern summer nights
From the winter moon
Responded not my girl
No beating heart I felt
I brought no sighs to the silver lips
No warmth to the gold*

*Within my heart a flame of desires
Provoked the power of **my will**
Forced into silvery shape
A golden queen for me
I made our bed under the stars
Covers a-plenty, bear skin hides
Stroked the arc of golden curves
Kissed the lips of silver*

[...]

Amorphis' *Silver Bride* has some characteristic passages of the Kalevala's rune XXXVII which tells how Ilmarinen forged a bride of gold after the death of his life companion. The words marked in bold indicate a correspondence with themes narrated in Kalevala's Rune XXXVII (Crawford, 1888):

[...]
*Have no **longing** for the morning,
And the evening is unwelcome;
Have no pleasure in the future,
All my pleasures gone forever,
With my faithful **life-companion**
Slaughtered by the hand of witchcraft!*

[...]
*Ilmarinen, **magic blacksmith**,
Works unceasing at his forging,
Thus to mould a golden image,
Mould a **bride from gold and silver**;*

[...]
*Choose a maiden of the metals,
Choose a bride from gold created
Cold the lips of golden maiden,
Silver breathes the breath of sorrow."*

The story originally introduced in the Kalevala is then expanded through lyrics and sound, becoming a third medium. As Jenkins notes, it may become a point of entry to the original story without presenting this original story at all (Jenkins, 2006, p. 98). The sentiment behind Amorphis' lyrical exploration of Kalevala's storylines is present in several other songs by the band. One possible purpose of referencing Kalevala in that latest example is to collapse the symbolic and temporal boundaries between the past and the present, which then "transports" listeners to the imaged past created in the lyrics. Recalling the example of the ballad "Velisurmaaja", mentioned in chapter 2, an "imagined past" is particularly evident in Amorphis' versions of Finnish traditional songs, wherein the story about a historic or mythological event is narrated in the first person. Likewise, narrating the experience of forging a "silver bride", the song by Amorphis also narrates the story in first person perspective, suggesting an analogous viewpoint to that from the narrator of Rune XXXVII: the experience of the blacksmith Ilmarinen himself. However, in Amorphis' version, the narrator does not use adjectives in describing the golden wife, whereas the corresponding description of the Rune features emotions and other adjectives to describe her. The song also omits the process of making the silver bride, moving directly to the results, whereas the rune describes the making. Both renditions share the same idea: that Ilmarinen is not satisfied with his art for it has "no life". Also, the aesthetics of a metal-made bride are central in both texts.

The first person perspective is the principal viewpoint of narrative in the analysed sample. Some Finnish artists, for instance Ensiferum, use themes that intersect both past and present. One of the most popular songs of the band is *Lai Lai Hei* from the album *Iron*, published in 2004 (see Appendix B, p.99). Except from the first stanza, which are in Finnish, the lyrics are written in English language. Including the native voice to the song conveys an eloquent message about the land described in the lyrics (Ensiferum, 2004):

*Hän katsoi maan reunalta tähteä putoavaa
Nyt kauniit kasvot **neitosen** peittää karu maa
Jokaisen täytyy katsoa silmiin totuuden
Sillä aika on voittoisa, mut' tämä maa on ikuinen*

*There's a place in the North, far far away
Home of the **wandering man**
Dreaming fells with skies so pale
Calm is the glorious land
Flames will send the sign to the sky
that we have come to feast tonight
The lakes are echoing with our song
Shadows are dancing on the forest wall
Shadows are dancing on the forest wall*

*Enchantment of the fire and moon
Lost in the whispering night
The raven's magic enthrals the woods
Crawling in the sweet starlight
We have gathered in this distant land
full of wisdom, secrets and tales
The morning will never rise again
Roaming wolves are howling for the dead*

The first stanza of the example above is opened to several ways of interpreting the event being narrated. Amongst those, I have encountered the following (Ensiferum, 2004, translation mine):

*He gazed from the edge of the land
Now the beautiful face of the maid is covered by hard soil
Everyone must look into the eyes of truth
For time is victorious, but this land is eternal*

Translation is always compromise made by the translator, who decides the term that fitting his own interpretation. This interpretation may or may not encompass the full meaning of the original word. In *Lai Lai Hei's* lyrics, the difficulty in interpreting the text lies in the personal pronoun *hän*, which in Finnish is neutral and can refer to both male and female individuals. The meaning translated here appears as reminiscent of both everyday life, and a fantastic, rather romanticized portray of a country. Thus, the meaning itself is ultimately created by the listener, not by the person who wrote the lyrics. Interpreting "maa" as "country" is supported by the English stanzas that appear later on and fits the romanticized interpretation. This can be understood as the process self-definition (for instance, "we Finland are different because we are ourselves") which appears as opposed to self-differentiation (for instance, "we Finland are different because we are neither Russia nor Sweden"). *Lai lai hei* lyrics become then a form of self-signifiers: they seek to establish a relationship with readers by departing from dominant cultural values instead of reflecting them.

This arrangement can also be observed in other FFM songs. One instance of that is Turisas' cover of Boney M.'s *Rasputin*, originally released in 1978. Republished as a single in 2007 (see Appendix B, p. 100), the folk metal version of this disco song is featured as one of the most popular in Turisas repertoire. Narrated from a third person perspective, the song tells of the deeds of Russian peasant and healer Grigori Rasputin. Rasputin was an important figure during World War I, especially regarding his controversial friendship with Alexandra Feodorovna, known

as the last Russian Tsarina. In Turisas' song, Rasputin is signified as lover, teacher, dancer and healer, as it can be observed in the following stanzas:

[...]
*There lived a certain man **in Russia long ago**
He was big and strong, in his eyes a flaming glow
Most people looked at him with terror and with fear
But to Moscow chicks he was such a lovely dear
He could preach the bible like a preacher
Full of ecstasy and fire
But he also was the kind of **teacher**
Women would desire*

*Ra Ra Rasputin
Lover of the Russian queen
There was a cat that really was gone
Ra Ra Rasputin
Russia's greatest love machine
It was a shame how he carried on
[...]*

*Oh **those** Russians.*

Already from its beginning, the lyrics show place and time markers, respectively “in Russia” and “long ago”, providing codes that can be understood to most individuals in the present days. Such codes suggest that the narrator is speaking from a different time than that of the described events, also referring to a place that still exists and can be revisited. In the chorus, Rasputin is signified as the “lover of the Russian queen”, without offering deeper details, yet expressing an opinion of the narrator. In the last line of the song, the term “those” reveals the narrator as being from some other nationality than Russian. Although the original composition is by a German-based pop group, Turisas has embraced and repurposed its message as a way of reflecting some of their cultural values which are reflected in their relationship with Russian culture.

While some references to Finnish culture and landscaped may be omitted from some FFM works, others describe those aspects in subjective structures that resemble the kalevalaic “lyric I”. One of such examples is Wintersun’s *Winter Madness*, a song that portrays a typical Finnish winter atmosphere. The song, with words and music by Jari Mäenpää, reveals different degrees of tension that are progressively increased through the struggling against nature. As it can be observed from the lyrics:

*Divine creations now destroyed to uncover the haunted atmosphere
Strange visions of the ancient spirits, travesty of man appears
Coldness and the storming winds lurking for prey
The forces of the Winter reign in dreadful way, there's no escape*

*I'm following the mistress of night
Through the gates of snow we'll fly
We'll fly*

*Winter, the realm of eternal ice
Snowfall and darkness descends upon the vales of time
Distant caress of the sun's fading light
The lands were painted white with the Winter's might*

*My hands are frozen
My mind is at the edge of madness
Oh how many nights and days
I've been lost in this land of sadness*

*From the primitive thoughts, under the glimmering snow
And burning stones, they'll rise the artful spirit*

*"You don't have to die
You can rule in afterlife just concede your soul to me
(Your life is cheap)
No price"*

The notion of struggling against nature prevails in the first stanzas of the song and reveals an overwhelmed narrator. *Winter Madness* communicates struggle against nature. Feelings such as fear, anguish, uncertainty, and resistance against nature are most effectively illustrated in the final stanzas, in which a second voice,

arguably coming from an entity personified as “Winter”, speaks to the narrator. The overall tone applied in the lyrics suggests not just the basic story-line, but a direct sight into the narrator’s subjectivity. In that, the song title already condenses the narrative of the entire text without revealing the actual message. Interestingly, *Winter Madness* has no chorus and no clear ending, which may be an analogy to the experiential struggles indicated throughout the text. The use of first person perspective in this case conveys the notion that the story happens in the narrator’s head. As the song title suggests, the narrator in this case may be suffering from some kind of insanity caused by his experience of winter.

Another example of how Finnish culture may be expressed in FFM lyrics comes from Korpiklaani’s song entitled *Vodka*, from their album *Karkelo*, released in 2009. Unlike the other examples, this song does not follow a typical story-line. Rather, it is structured in the form of direct speech, also by adopting an informal and personal tone of conversation, as it can be interpreted from the following lines:

Vodka! Vodka! Vodka! Vodka! Hey!

*Vodka, you're feeling stronger
Vodka, no more feeling bad
Vodka, your eyes are shining
Vodka, you are the real man*

*Vodka, wipes away your tears
Vodka, removes your fears
Vodka, everyone is gorgeous
Vodka, yeah vodka*

*Drinking is good for you,
soon you are unconstrained
Drinking is good for you,
Here comes the womanizer
Drinking is good for you
Not anymore lonesome
Drinking is good for you,
and you will feel awesome
and you will feel awesome*

Hey!

*Out of respect for nature,
Our vodka and drinkers.
Promising, that the vodka
we reserve, is as pure as it was
thousands of years ago*

*Out of respect for nature,
Our vodka and drinkers.*

The title “vodka” recurs 17 times in the first half of the song, which is doubled as the same stanzas are repeated. While the exaggerated use of the word “vodka” may simply describe an inebriated state of mind of the narrator, it also expresses the direct and colloquial context of the song. The frequent use of the pronoun “you” also adds to the informal and personal character of the song, providing the listener with a more intimate and relaxed atmosphere. With the presence of such elements in the song, the listener becomes actively involved in its context: the narrator seems to personally address the listener. The narrator excessively cites the benefits of drinking vodka, trying to immediately justify it with shortcomings such as “you will feel awesome” and “you are the real man”. In some ways, the semantic behind the lyrics is similar to those of commercial advertisements, in which a quality is attributed to the consumer of a selling product.

The examples above analysed illustrated some of the symbolic mechanisms FFM artists apply in their lyrics. It has been observed that, as a whole, the characteristics of FFM are not exclusively dependant on the artists’ subjective views. Instead, they are constructs of a larger system of relationships with other heavy metal subgenres, as well as with Finnish neighbouring cultures.

5.6. Folk Genres' Interrelations and Meanings

In this sub-chapter, I will approach those relationships folk metal nourishes with several other heavy metal genres, by examining the characteristics and interconnections between them in terms of genre classification.

Each band in the contained in the lyrics data set (Data set 1) was tagged with several heavy metal subgenres and characteristics on MA. As discussed in chapter 2, a subgenre constitutes a larger group of works, whereas themes or instrumental approaches are descriptions of some bands' personal characteristics. *Table 2* shows the subgenres and characteristics drawn from the sample (Data set 1).

Heavy metal subgenre	Bands	Characteristic	Bands
black metal	8	ambient	2
dark metal	1	epic metal	1
death metal	6	melodic metal	5
doom metal	2	neofolk	1
folk metal	15	pagan metal	4
modern rock	1	psychedelic	1
power metal	1	symphonic metal	6
progressive	2	Viking metal	3

Table 3. *Heavy metal subgenres and characteristics.*

Aside from Amorphis, which is currently more viewed as progressive rock band, all of the bands are classified as “folk metal”. As illustrated in the table above, some subgenres and characteristics are more prominent than others. When rendering the data from *table 3* into word cloud, it is possible to visualize the proportion each subgenre occupies within the work of bands. As in *figure 8*, this reveals black metal as a central sub-genre in conjunction with folk metal:



Figure 8. Folk Metal related genres according to Metal Archives.

By observing the high degree of connections between the genres above, it is possible to speculate that folk metal is a direct product of black metal. The band was one of the first Nordic bands to make use of the viking theme in lyrics, which may also explain why the genre was initially called “viking metal”. The tag “folk metal” was intentionally omitted from the cloud, for it would result in a distorted proportion due its higher word occurrence within the sample.

While the connection with black metal is apparent, some other genres require further examining in order to clarify their relationship with folk metal. *Figure 10* shows all themes connected to folk metal as they appear on bands’ MA profiles. I see them as themes, although they are placed in the section entitled “genre”. This is because some of them are rather descriptive of sonic and lyric aspects rather than of some established heavy metal genre. The connected themes of *figure 9* are represented as they appear in relation to one another in MA’s database.

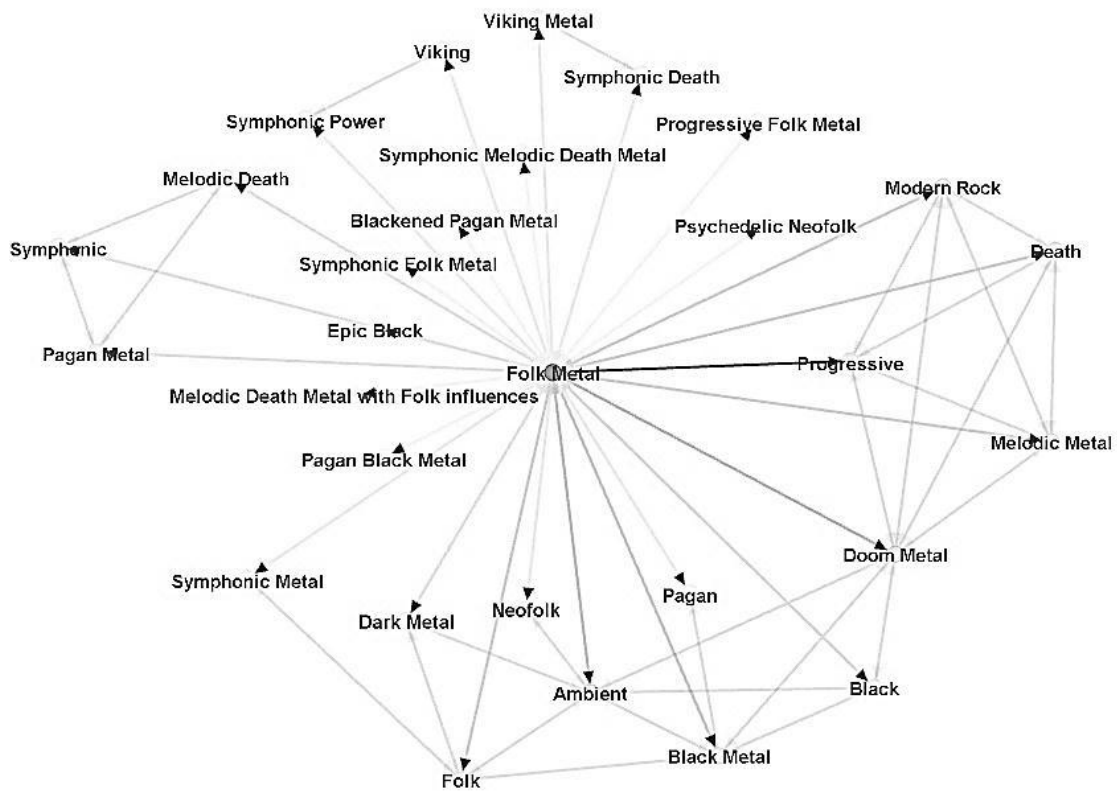


Figure 9. Genres correlations according to MA.

As a heavy metal fan, I recognize the challenges and problems in classifying bands into genres. It is understandable why some artists prefer not to have their works labelled. But for the purposes of my analysis, I have narrowed down the themes of MA into major genres. After unscrambling themes and subgenres (as represented in Table 3), it becomes clearer which clusters of themes are more likely to appear together in connection with a band. *Figure 11* is a scheme of the interrelations between heavy metal genres encountered in the sample. The red tones represent the most connected genres and the grey scale ones are the less connected.

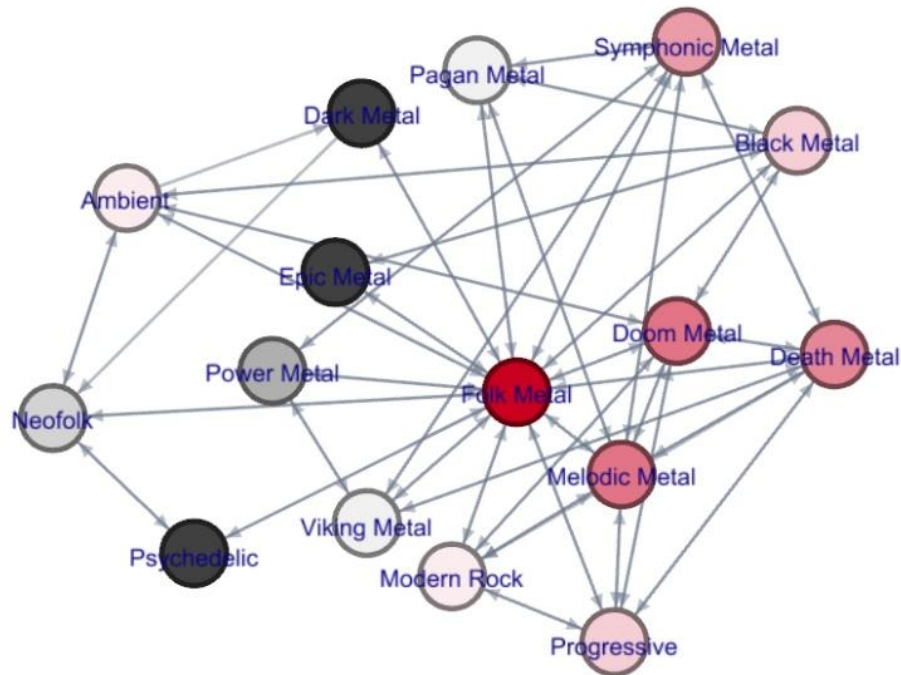


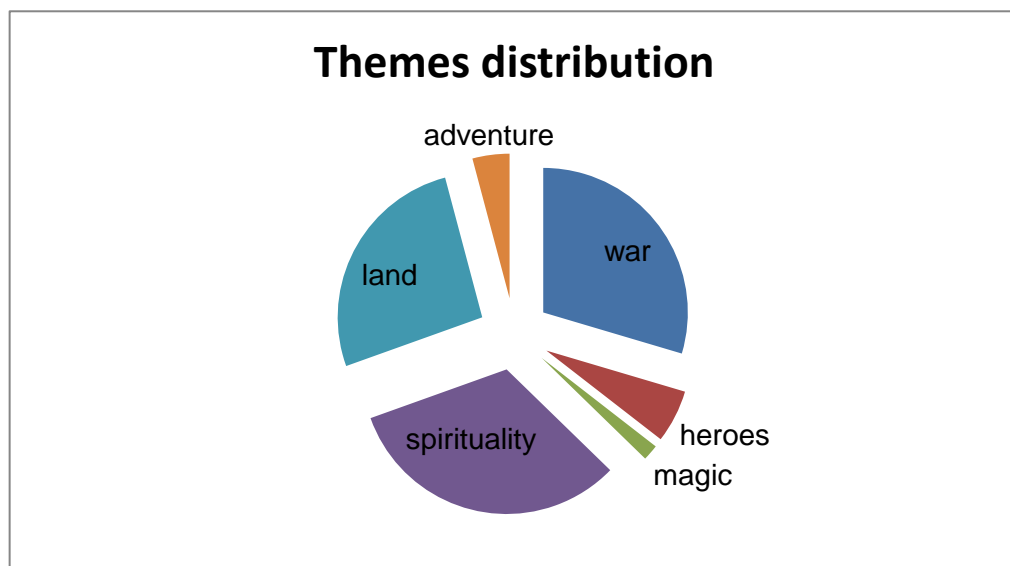
Figure 10. Refined genres correlation.

In this figure, each theme or genre represents a “node”, and the relationships between them form an “edge”. Both figures 9 and 10 were created in the program *Gephi*. Melodic metal and doom metal are the most interconnected sub-genres, each containing at least seven connections. While works of bands classified as “melodic” or “doom metal” are more likely to intertwine with other heavy metal subgenres, works classified as “ambient” or “black metal” seem to remain less likely to leave their main themes. Thus, such genre classification is suggestive of how FFM bands convey several aspects of their culture through their songs. While some artists chose, either directly or indirectly, to project their Finnish cultural background in their songs and Facebook pages, others prefer to completely avoid it. Especially on the Facebook data, it becomes visible that, unless asked directly by an interviewer, some artists prefer to focus on the experience of performing their music live rather than offering insights on their music-making or the message behind their songs.

6. General Discussion and Conclusions

The elements of cultural identity revealed in the previous chapter exposed a variety of signifying mechanisms used by FFM artists. Derived from a broader context of heavy metal music, FFM responds to both national and international cultural influences. In creating their music, artists draw from their national identities, as well as they favour an intercultural mix in their interactions with fans via live performances. Moreover, FFM often convey universal messages in their lyrics, which can be reviewed as being contemporary to many times from the past to now.

Previously, I classified some of the most recurring themes in FFM as *heroes*, *magic*, *adventure*, *spirituality*, *war* and *land*. Each of these themes contained a number of key terms that could be searched and highlighted in the sample (Data set 2). The data revealed a triad of meanings within FFM lyrics, which mostly surrounds the following themes: *spirituality*, *war*, and *land*. Graph 4 displays the correlations between the most recurring themes in FFM lyrics.



Graph 4. Distribution of themes in Finnish Folk Metal lyrics.

The occurrence of themes related to the categories of *magic* (12 words), *adventure* (28 words), and *heroes* (40 words) were less abundant in the sample.

Themes associated with the categories *land* (178 words), *war* (200 words) and *spirituality* (218) form the most recurring themes within the sample.

What emerges from the data is a romanticized notion of Finnish culture, which is analogous to the history of Finnish culture. Rather than depicting the actual impact war has had on their homeland, Finnish folk metal bands seem to prefer a fictional, idealized imagery that depicts different aspects of it.

The measures presented in this study were obtained through both automated and organic methods of analysis. Through combining both approaches, it has been demonstrated that the similarity between themes in FFM lyrics is defined by the usage and distribution of those in a linguistic context broader than the one of native and English languages: it ranges from a set of cultural norms and values that are constantly being negotiated and recycled.

The main purpose of this thesis was to study the many layers of meaning present in FFM music. My emphasis was on the synergy between the words of lyrics and bands' Facebook pages, and how this combination is achieved in order to create their view on Finnish cultural identity. I explored some of the means through which FFM bands express and consolidate their identity to international audiences. I have pursued two main research questions: (1) how is Finnish culture and identity conveyed through FFM lyrics (2) and how is meaning transferred from bands' lyrics to their Facebook pages? My initial hypothesis was that the projections of Finnish national identity expressed in their lyrics and Facebook pages were solidly based on Lönnrot's the Kalevala. Another working hypothesis was that FFM, as a sub-product of larger cultural phenomena such as social media and heavy metal music, reflected an international and global culture rather than its culture of origin.

My analysis revealed a romanticized notion of Finnish culture, confirming some of the hypotheses regarding the role of Kalevala and Finnish general folklore in FFM music. The first person perspective adopted in many of the lyrics analysed, suggests that FFM bands reflect their identities by immersing themselves in the narratives. Their use and reformulation of a “distant past” is a rather subjective construction, comprising of personal values and views that often exceed the boundaries of their nation’s cultural references.

Whether individually or collectively constructed, heavy metal music metal is commonly seen as an expression of chaos, hate and disorder, as if in a constant state of war against *something else*. But its subgenre folk metal seems to communicate a different message: that of defining oneself through self-definition instead of self-differentiation with others.

This may be reflected in Finland, where the period between 2000 and 2009 experienced an increase in production of folk metal music. An examination of Finland’s public broadcasting company Yle (Yle.fi) revealed one possible factor of the popularization of heavy metal, in general, in part explained by the Finnish band Lordi’s victory in the Eurovision song contest on May 2006. Since then, Finnish heavy metal has gained attention from international media (Bilefsky, 2006). The Washington Times, among other publications, has written on how heavy metal in Finland has become mainstream (The Washington Times, 2008, September 17). Much of this is also due to the work of highly successful Finnish metal bands such as *Nightwish* and *Sonata Arctica*, whose music is relatively easy to approach. As Spracklen comments on an article published by *The Times* in 2008, the resurgence and popularization of heavy metal both in and outside academia may be linked with

the contemporary generations, as scholars such as Spracklen, Brown and Kahn-Harris suggested (2011, p. 211).

My data revealed that the 2000s was a prosperous decade not only for folk metal, but also for many other heavy metal genres. I believe it is related to the spread of internet connectivity. It is clear that folk metal is a product of a convergence process, which encompasses large cultural phenomena, the outcomes of which can be projected onto the Finnish scene. The disappearance of this kind of folklore was not caused only by the development of mass communication and the growth of the significance of television and radio as media of entertainment. As the content and symbolism of older materials grew unfamiliar to contemporary societies, it was only natural that such items of folklore would fall into disuse. In contrast, modern narrative traditions, such as contemporary legends and jokes, have developed into a rich tradition in ways larger and more varied than those of earlier eras (Virtanen & DuBois, 2000, p. 100).

Several general findings from the experiments were of importance. The results of this study exemplify some of the numerous ways in which FFM listeners identify with the music, ranging from the romantic description of their country to the crude and down-to-earth context of this country. Some songs analysed in this study were written in everyday English, whereas others delivered their message in a more poetic form, sometimes adding lines written in their native language. In both cases, the features extracted from lyrics rendered the FFM songs an authentic characteristic that makes them seem to communicate their message independently. Similarly, the perspectives on how bands present themselves on their Facebook pages confirmed the hypothesis that a new form of Finnish identity emerges from FFM, a generic form

of music which was revealed to be greatly based on both Finnish and international cultures.

In conclusion, I would like to point out possible applications of studying FFM. Discussing FFM in schools may encourage students to learn about Finnish history and folklore. As in many genres of popular music, FFM songs are usually short lengthen, which renders them as relatively simple to access and memorize. Moreover, using such lyrics may encourage pupils to engage in discussions and reflections on Finnish prose and poetry, and contemporary society. Thus, the use of FFM in the classroom may serve a pedagogical function. Additionally, the discussion of FFM may also benefit language learning and teaching. Music, in general, is an effective medium, with which almost every individual has personal inclination towards. As some national bands mix English with Finnish languages, this may encourage and engage students of both backgrounds to share experiences. Thus, FFM constitutes tangible means of familiarizing Finnish students with the English language, as well as bringing them closer to aspects of their own culture.

As I try to understand what makes them meaningful to us folk metal fans, I only encounter further uncertainty. Indeed, it is this ambiguity that makes folk metal lyrics inspiring: there is also a sense of transcendence to them. We are the ones responsible for bringing lyrics to life. Theoretical and aesthetic approaches seem to be but attempts through which we try to escape from settling on one specific meaning.

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Appendices

A: Main discography

- Amorphis, *Am Universum*, 2001.
 Amorphis, *Circle*, 2013.
 Amorphis, *Eclipse*, 2006.
 Amorphis, *Elegy*, 1996.
 Amorphis, *Far from the Sun*, 2003.
 Amorphis, *Magic & Mayhem - Tales from the Early Years*, 2010.
 Amorphis, *Silent Waters*, 2007.
 Amorphis, *Skyforger*, 2009.
 Amorphis, *Tales from the Thousand Lakes*, 1994.
 Amorphis, *The Beginning of Times*, 2011.
 Amorphis, *The Karelian Isthmus*, 1992.
 Amorphis, *Tuonela*, 1999.
 Ancestors Blood, *A Moment of Clarity*, 2013.
 Ancestors Blood, *Return of the Ancient Ones*, 2008.
 Avathar, *Shadows*, 2004.
 Avathar, *Where Light and Shadow Collide*, 2004.
 Azarok, *Azarok*, 2011.
 Azarok, *III: A Dream of an Endless Dawn*, 2013.
 Azarok, *X*, 2012.
 Brymir, *Breathe Fire to the Sun*, 2006.
 Crimfall, *As the Path Unfolds...*, 2009.
 Crimfall, *The Writ of Sword*, 2011.
 Draugnim, *Horizons Low*, 2010.
 Draugnim, *Northwind's Ire*, 2008.
 Ensiferum, *Ensiferum*, 2001.
 Ensiferum, *From Afar*, 2009.
 Ensiferum, *Iron*, 2004.
 Ensiferum, *Unsung Heroes*, 2012.
 Ensiferum, *Victory Songs*, 2007.
 Enthring, *The Grim Tales of the Elder*, 2011.
 Finnentum, *Reveries*, 2009.
 Frosttide, *Awakening*, 2013.
 Hexvessel, *Dawnbearer*, 2011.
 Hexvessel, *No Holier Temple*, 2012.
 Kivimetsän Druidi, *Betrayal, Justice, Revenge*, 2010.
 Kivimetsän Druidi, *Shadowheart*, 2008.
 Korpiklaani, *Karkelo*, 2009.
 Korpiklaani, *Korven Kuningas*, 2008.
 Korpiklaani, *Manala*, 2012.
 Korpiklaani, *Spirit of the Forest*, 2003.
 Korpiklaani, *Tales Along This Road*, 2006.
 Korpiklaani, *Tervaskanto*, 2007.
 Korpiklaani, *Ukon Wacka*, 2011.
 Korpiklaani, *Voice of Wilderness*, 2005.
 Kozaks of Metallishtan, *Kozaks of Metallishtan*, 2010.
 Nest, *Trail of the Unwary*, 2007.

- Nest, *Woodsmoke*, 2003.
October Falls, *A Collapse of Faith*, 2010.
October Falls, *Marras*, 2005.
October Falls, *The Plague of a Coming Age*, 2013.
October Falls, *The Womb of Primordial Nature*, 2008.
Order of the White Hand, *Through Woods And Fog*, 2006.
Stormheit, *Caelic Weold Finnum*, 2009.
Stormheit, *Chronicon Finlandiae*, 2011.
Stormheit, *Kvenland*, 2009.
Stormheit, *The Awakening of the Conqueror*, 2006.
Turisas, *Battle Metal*, 2004.
Turisas, *Stand Up and Fight*, 2011.
Turisas, *The Varangian Way*, 2007.
Turisas, *Turisas 2013*, 2013.
Vigrid, *Throne of Forest*, 2009.
Wintersun, *Wintersun*, 2004
Wintersun, *Time I*, 2012.
Wyrd, *Heathen*, 2001.
Wyrd, *Huldrafolk*, 2002.
Wyrd, *Kalivägi*, 2009.
Wyrd, *Kammen*, 2007.
Wyrd, *Rota*, 2005.
Wyrd, *The Ghost Album*, 2006.
Wyrd, *Vargtimmen Pt. 1: The Inmost Night*, 2003.
Wyrd, *Vargtimmen Pt. 2: Ominous Insomnia*, 2004.

B: Data set 4Amorphis. "Silver Bride". From album *Skyforger* (2009)

From the misty dreams of nighttime
I sought the clarity of my days
From the gates of longing
Looked for the familiar glow

The death of my wife's slayer
Brought no comfort to me
No shape from loneliness
For a dream

A queen of gold I made
A silver bride I built
From the northern summer night
From the winter moon

Responded not my girl
No beating heart I felt
I brought no sighs to the silver lips
No warmth from the gold

Within my heart a flame of desires
Provoked the power of my will
Forced into a silvery shape
A golden queen for me

I made our bed under the stars
Covers a plenty, bear skin hides
Stroked the arc of golden curves
Kissed the lips of silver

Queen of gold, I made her
Silver bride, I built her
Queen of gold, no heart
Silver bride, no warmth

Queen of gold, I made her
Silver Bride, I built her
Queen of gold, no heart
Silver Bride, no life

Ensiferum. "Lai lai hei". From album *Iron* (2004)

Hän katsoi maan reunalta tähteä putoavaa
 Nyt kauniit kasvot neitosen peittää karu maa
 Jokaisen tytty katsoa silmiin totuuden
 Sill aika omi voittoisa, mutt tämä maa on ikuinen

Hän katsoi maan reunalta tähteä putoavaa
 Nyt kauniit kasvot neitosen peittää karu maa
 Jokaisen tytty katsoa silmiin totuuden
 Sill aika omi voittoisa, mutt tämä maa on ikuinen

There's a place in the North, far, far away
 Home for the wandering man
 Dreaming fells with skies so pale
 Calm is the glorious land

Flames will send the sign to the sky
 That we have come to feast tonight
 The lakes are echoing with our song
 Shadows are dancing on the forest walls
 Shadows are dancing on the forest walls

Enchantment of the fire and moon
 Lost in the whispering night
 The raven's magic entralls the woods
 It's crawling in the sweet starlight

We have gathered in this distant land
 Full of wisdom, secrets and tales
 Morning will never rise again
 Roaming wolves are howling for the dead
 Roaming wolves are howling for the dead, oh yeah

La la la
 (Lai lai hei)
 La la la
 (Lai lai hei)

Hän katsoi maan reunalta tähteä putoavaa
 Nyt kauniit kasvot neitosen peittää karu maa
 Jokaisen tytty katsoa silmiin totuuden
 Sill aika omi voittoisa, mutt tämä maa on ikuinen

La la la
 (Lai lai hei)
 La la la
 (Lai lai hei)

Turisas. "Rasputin". Single published in 2007.

"Hey" [32x]

There lived a certain man in Russia long ago
 He was big and strong, in his eyes a flaming glow
 Most people looked at him with terror and with fear
 But to Moscow chicks he was such a lovely dear
 He could preach the bible like a preacher
 Full of ecstasy and fire
 But he also was the kind of teacher
 Women would desire

[chorus]:

Ra Ra Rasputin
 Lover of the Russian queen
 There was a cat that really was gone
 Ra Ra Rasputin
 Russia's greatest love machine
 It was a shame how he carried on

He ruled the Russian land and never mind the tsar
 But the kasachok he danced really wunderbar
 In all affairs of state he was the man to please
 But he was real great when he had a girl to squeeze
 For the queen he was no wheeler dealer
 Though she'd heard the things he'd done
 She believed he was a holy healer
 Who would heal her son

[repeat chorus]

But when he's drinking and musting
 And hungers of power become known to more and more people
 Their demands to do something about this outrageous man
 Grew louder and louder

"Hey hey"

"This man's just got to go!" declared his enemies
 But the ladies begged "Don't you try to do it, please"
 No doubt this Rasputin had lots of hidden charms
 Though he was a brute they just fell into his arms
 Then one night some men of higher standing
 Set a trap, they're not to blame
 "Come to visit us" they kept demanding
 And he really came

Ra Ra Rasputin
 Lover of the Russian queen

They put some poison into his wine
Ra Ra Rasputin
Russia's greatest love machine
He drank it all and he said "I feel fine"

Ra Ra Rasputin
Lover of the Russian queen
They didn't quit, they wanted his head
Ra Ra Rasputin
Russia's greatest love machine
And so they shot him till he was dead

Waaouyeah

Oh those Russians.

Wintersun. "Winter Madness". From album Wintersun (2004)

Divine creations now destroyed to uncover the haunted atmosphere
Strange visions of the ancient spirits, travesty of man appears
Coldness and the storming winds lurking for prey
The forces of the Winter reign in dreadful way, there's no escape

I'm following the mistress of night
Through the gates of snow we'll fly
We'll fly

Winter, the realm of eternal ice
Snowfall and darkness descends upon the vales of time
Distant caress of the sun's fading light
The lands were painted white with the Winter's might

My hands are frozen
My mind is at the edge of madness
Oh how many nights and days
I've been lost in this land of sadness

From the primitive thoughts, under the glimmering snow
And burning stones, they'll rise the artful spirit

"You don't have to die
You can rule in afterlife just concede your soul to me
(Your life is cheap)
No price"

Korpiklaani. "Vodka". From the album *Karkelo* (2009)

Vodka! Vodka! Vodka! Vodka! Hey!

*Vodka, you're feeling stronger
Vodka, no more feeling bad
Vodka, your eyes are shining
Vodka, you are the real man*

*Vodka, wipes away your tears
Vodka, removes your fears
Vodka, everyone is gorgeous
Vodka, yeah vodka*

*Drinking is good for you,
soon you are unconstrained
Drinking is good for you,
Here comes the womanizer
Drinking is good for you
Not anymore lonesome
Drinking is good for you,
and you will feel awesome
and you will feel awesome*

Hey!

*Out of respect for nature,
Our vodka and drinkers.
Promising, that the vodka
we reserve, is as pure as it was
thousands of years ago*

*Out of respect for nature,
Our vodka and drinkers.*

[repeat lyrics 3x]