JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN HUMANITIES
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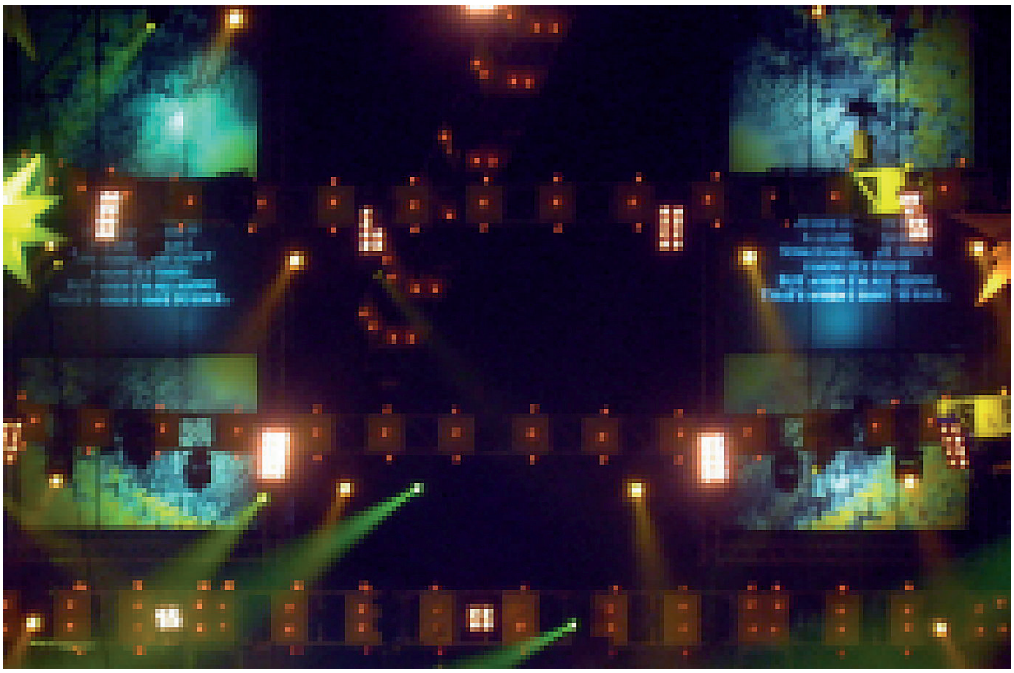
Henna Jousmäki

Christian Metal Online

The Discursive Construction of Identity and Culture



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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2015

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ABSTRACT

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This doctoral thesis looks into the phenomenon of Christian metal from a micro-level perspective on discourse and identity. The central aim is to understand how Christian metal identities are constructed in online discourse through multisemiotic—textual, discursive, visual, and sonic—means. Theoretically, the thesis draws on sociology of language and religion (SLR), sociolinguistic discourse analysis, and media and cultural studies, parts of which are combined into an eclectic framework for present purposes. Previous research on Christian metal is scarce and none has been conducted in the framework provided by these fields. To show the relevance of such study, the present thesis engages in the study of contemporary multisemiotic online realities as meaningful spaces for subcultures and religiosities.

The data consist of 14 Finnish and nine US band websites (15 official band homepages, six *Myspace* profiles and two *Facebook* profiles). Of specific interest are the opening (index) sites and 202 song lyrics published on these webpages and/or in the album sleeves. In the four articles comprising the thesis, two index sites and eight lyrics are analysed from the perspective of textual-visual relations, uses of the Bible, dialogicality, and uses of pronouns and binary opposites. A close documentation and description of these key examples form the basis for considering these practices as indexical of more general issues within the Christian metal community, such as identity, subculture, and religiosity.

The results show, first, how the fusion of Christian beliefs and values and the musical and aesthetic conventions of metal music culture happens multisemiotically, with text emphasizing the religious and the visual, and the sonic the subcultural, these forms of semiosis intertwining with each other in specific ways. Second, the Bible is utilized in Christian metal discourse not merely through quotations but through a more encompassing process of entextualization, whereby biblical passages, values, and ideas are reconstituted as Christian metal bands' own agenda. Third, Christian metal lyrics are shown to prompt belief in and conversion towards God on the one hand and a denunciation of the Devil on the other, as well as explicitness and clarity in the messages of religious authorities. Finally, Christian metal lyrics tend to categorize people into two groups, Us (Christians) and Them (non-Christians), by attributing different epistemological, interpersonal and moral stances to them and by valuing these differently from each other.

Keywords: Christian metal, metal music, Christianity, identity, subculture, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, sociology of language and religion

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Seinäjoki
4 February, 2015
Henna Jousmäki

TABLES

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Ever since my early acquaintance with popular music sung in English, assisted by my cousins two years older than me on our summer vacations, I have developed a great interest in lyrics. Back then, I felt uncomfortable not being able to sing along properly *without knowing the lyrics*. Little did I know that lyrics would come to trouble me academically as well. In this thesis, I further this interest of mine in relation to the broader phenomenon of Christian metal music. I approach this subcultural curiosity from a constructionist perspective to see how it is 'made into being' through discourse online, that is, through using language and other semiotic means in certain specific ways for the discursive construction of Christian metal identity and culture. This is because for today's bands online visibility is an important means to promote their work and address their audiences.

The combination of Christian beliefs and values with metal music culture is not only curious but, for many, controversial and problematic. Many raise their eyebrows, asking me to repeat the topic of my dissertation. Yes, there is indeed such a thing as Christian metal. Yes, they do tend to dress in black with long hair. Yes, they do play metal and they do it loud. Yes, they are believers and often rather conservative, too. Of course, part of the puzzlement experienced among outsiders to the genre is explained by the fact that metal music *per se* is one of the most debated popular cultural forms of our times. In the USA of the 1980s, and since then elsewhere too, Christians, among others, have opposed it loudly as 'the Devil's music' (e.g. Häger 2001; Moberg 2013a: 83—84; Partridge 2010: 498—499; Weinstein 2000: 258—262). Yet, in Finland today, with such internationally popular names as *Nightwish*, *Amorphis*, *Children of Bodom* and the like, metal music enjoys mainstream status. This also shows in how the Evangelical Lutheran Church has welcomed metal music through a special mass, *Metallimessu*, replacing the organ with a live band playing traditional Christian hymns arranged in metal style. The combination of Finland, Christianity, and metal music thus craves scholarly attention.

While the combination of Christianity and metal music may seem odd, it is but one example of the changing facets of Christianity, and of religion in a

broader sense, in today's world. The relationship between religion and popular culture is by now well theorized and documented (see e.g. Partridge 2010), as is the central role of popular music and popular culture in many people's lives more generally (e.g. Bennett 2005: 117—140; DeNora 2000; Kotarba & Vannini 2009: xii—xiii). Changes in the relationship between religion and popular culture are intensified by the development of ICTs and online media (Campbell 2010a; Cheong et al. 2012); overall, it is through the media that much to do with religion becomes known today (Hoover 2006: 1). Despite determinist predictions about secularization, most notably in the Western world (e.g. Bruce 2002), the world seems to be witnessing a resurgence of spirituality, post-secularism and a growth of fundamentalisms (e.g. Woodhead 2010a).

The topic of this thesis is thus situated at the crossroads of various developments related to religion and popular culture. The thesis draws on several fields of research: sociology of language and religion (SLR), sociolinguistic discourse analysis, and media and cultural studies (all discussed later in Chapter 4). The thesis eclectically applies concepts and insights provided by these fields in meeting the aims and needs of the four individual articles that form its analytical substance. Throughout the thesis, the central interests of identity and culture are approached from the perspective of discourse—that is, *language and other semiotic means in use*. With Christian metal, language practices—linguistic and textual—intertwine with other semiotic practices, including the sonic and visual. In the following, I discuss in more detail the aim of this thesis, describe the data collection process, the choices made and methods of analysis used, and set out the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Aim and approach

The aim of this thesis is two-fold: from a social constructionist standpoint, it investigates, first, how Christian metal identities are discursively 'done' in online contexts by identifying, describing and analysing the different types of resources—linguistic, textual, discursive, visual, and, to a more limited extent, sonic—used in the process. Second, the uses of these multisemiotic resources are examined to seek answers to the questions why these discourse choices are made and to what effect, thus focusing on the indexical significance of small choices made in language-in-use (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Blommaert & Rampton 2011). These interrelated questions stem from the discourse study tradition of trying to understand what social, interpersonal, ideological, and identity work language is made to do (e.g. Fairclough 1992; Leppänen 2013, 2014). In a nutshell, without losing sight of the more general social and cultural meanings conveyed in discourse, this thesis pioneers a discourse-anchored micro-level look into Christian metal online. A more in-depth discussion on the theoretical orientations of the thesis is provided in Chapter 4.

In previous work, questions related to religion and music have been mostly addressed within the disciplines of musicology (e.g. Bossius 2003;

contributions in Bossius et al. 2011; Harper 2003) and the sociology of religion (Häger 2001; Moberg 2009). Young people, language and religion online have been of interest to Campbell (2010b) and Peuronen (2011), for example. In more general terms, many more scholars have addressed the intersection of media and religion (e.g. Bailey & Redden 2011; Hjarvard & Lövheim 2012; Hoover & Emerich 2011) as well as language in online media (e.g. Barton & Lee 2013; Kytölä 2013; Leppänen & Peuronen 2012, 2013; Seargeant & Tagg 2014; Thurlow & Mroczek 2011). However, religion, music and online media discourse seem not to have gained much attention previously. A notable exception here is Omoniyi's (2010a) work on 'holy hip-hop': he has studied the appropriation of hip-hop music for religious purposes by Christian and Muslim youth in Britain. His work offers some good insights into the study of religion, music and language use, which I will discuss in more detail in Section 2.2.

Research on Christian metal is not very common, either. Apart from Moberg's (2008, 2009, 2011, 2013a) extensive work on the Christian metal scene and its meanings and functions (discussed in detail in 3.2) and Partridge's (2010) brief, but inspiring, commentary on Christian black/death metal, most writing on the topic is somewhat out-dated and tends to focus either on metal music in general, thus marginalizing and delegitimizing Christian metal at the outset without much reflection (e.g. Larkin 1992; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000 [1991]), or on the societal and historical position of the phenomenon (e.g. Gormly 2003; Luhr 2005).

In this thesis, I approach the same phenomenon as Moberg (2009, 2011, 2013a) but from a different perspective and at another level. Moberg's research is presented in detail in Section 3.2; here, I will briefly explain how my approach differs from his.

According to Moberg (2008, 2009), there are various key discourses that circulate in the transnational scene which Finnish Christian metalheads, among others, *draw on*. For instance, he states that he explores on the *macro level* how the 'key discourses relate to and find expression within real life settings' (2009: 229). In this thesis, I approach discourse from a different angle: for the type of a micro take such as the one utilized in this thesis, there are no discourses 'out there' detached from 'real life' settings. Rather, real life settings and language use therein (i.e. discourse) are what produce and give rise to discourses. In other words, I argue that Christian metal adherents are not merely drawing on already established discourses but are at the same time contributing to and reaffirming them, while possibly also challenging and contesting them. Although Moberg also makes this point (e.g. 2009: 210, 231), such formulations as that cited above rather blur the analysis. Therefore, while Moberg answers questions concerning how scene members define the basic functions and meanings of CM and how those outside the scene view it, as a largely macro-level approach it does not identify in detail the linguistic, discursive, or multisemiotic means with which these definitions are given. These very details are what I find the most interesting.

Although previous studies thus give a general idea of the structures, practices and tendencies in and related to Christian metal, little has been reported on what happens at the very micro-level of Christian metal—for example, how bands represent themselves to their audiences, what they sing about, and what else they say and, importantly, how they say it. To contribute to filling this gap and to show in a nuanced way how Christian metal articulates its message and evokes Christian metal identities, this study includes four empirical case studies that take different but interrelated perspectives on the discursive construction of Christian metal identity online. The articles, introduced more thoroughly in Chapter 5, examine Christian metal bands' online presence with a particular interest in how the bands utilize online spaces to build a Christian metal identity and culture with the help of multisemiotic resources. The articles include a look at the bands' self-representation online, a more detailed investigation of the uses of the Bible on the bands' websites, and perspectives on an important part of Christian metal, the lyrics. All articles have been published in international journals with a referee praxis.

1.2 Data collection and selection of key examples

For the purposes of this thesis, focusing on the Internet as a source of material was a productive and useful decision because, like other contemporary popular music groups, Christian metal bands also make a deliberate effort to represent and market themselves on the Internet. In this study, I decided to concentrate on band homepages, as these contained a great deal of multimodal information about the bands, including, most importantly, the written versions of their song lyrics, as well as audio and video clips and a great deal of other textual and visual material related to the bands.

To gain an overview of the types, forms and contents of Christian metal discourse online, an overall data pool was collected (see Table 1) The pool consists of data from 23 Christian metal band websites belonging to 17 different bands. Of the bands, 10 are Finnish and seven are in the US. The altogether 23 websites can be divided into three: official band homepages (15), *Myspace* profiles (6) and *Facebook* profiles (2). This means that a band would use one or two different types of websites, for instance an official band website and a Myspace account. The websites included, among other things, the lyrics to 202 songs by eight Finnish bands. In addition, 15 albums by six Finnish Christian metal bands were used to facilitate the lyrics analysis. The data collection process, the different types of data, and the selection of key examples are described in more detail in the following sections.

TABLE 1 List of data.

Band	Country of origin	URL	Album
A Hill to Die Upon	US	https://myspace.com/ahilltodieuponband	
As I Lay Dying	US	http://asilaydying.com	
August Burns Red	US	http://www.augustburnsred.com	
Becoming the Archetype	US	http://iambecomingthearchetype.com/index.php	
Demon Hunter	US	www.demonhunter.net/main.php	
Deuteronomium	FIN	www.deuteronomium.net www.myspace.com/deuteronomium	Tribal Eagle (1997) Street Corner Queen (1998, Digipak edition 2006) …To Die and Gain (1999) From the Midst of the Battle (2008)
HB	FIN	www.hbmusic.net	
Impending Doom	US	www.thearteryfoundation.com/artists/impendingdoom/ www.facebook.com/impendingdoom	
Luotettava Todistus	FIN	www.luotettava.net	
Mehida	FIN	https://myspace.com/mehida	Blood & Water (2007) The Eminent Storm (2009)
Oh, Sleeper	US	www.solidstaterecords.com/artists/212/Oh_Sleeper/ www.facebook.com/ohsleeper	
Oratorio	FIN	www.oratoriometal.com/index.html	Reality of Existence (2003) Redemption (2006)
Renascent	FIN	www.renascent.net/index.html www.myspace.com/renascentmetal	Demon's Quest (2004) Through Darkness (2005)
Sacrecy	FIN	www.sacrecy.com/ www.myspace.com/sacrecy	Sacrecy (2007)
Sotahuuto	FIN	www.sotahuuto.com	
Venia	FIN	www.veniaband.com www.myspace.com/veniaband	Genesis (2004) In Our Weakness (2005) Victory by Surrender (2009)
VIP	FIN	www.vipmetal.net	

During the data collection, I also engaged in observational fieldwork (Blommaert & Dong 2010; Cohen 1993), during which I kept a diary reporting

on my first experiences of Christian metal events in Finland[1]. I also observed the standing of Christian metal in relation to the wider (Lutheran) Christian community in Finland and to the rock music scene in Finland through reading newspapers and magazines and through following the public discussion in the Church over marginal movements, especially Christian metal[2]. All this made me more familiar with subcultural codes such as dress and concert behaviour as well as with how Christian metal was perceived by the public.

1.2.1 The process of data collection

The compilation of the overall data pool began with conducting searches on the Internet in spring 2007 to find pilot data. There were three data selection criteria: first, it needed to involve *an official band homepage*. This was because these sites were seen as providing the band's perspective and showing the bands as agents producing discourse about themselves. *Official* homepages were thus seen as a contrast to fan-generated websites and subcultural discussion forums. Second, the homepage needed to belong to a band performing music classified as *Christian metal* by the band itself or by other members of the metal music subculture. Third, the band was to include *Finnish members who mainly used English* for their homepage and for their song lyrics published online. The choice of these criteria reflects two things: first, the fact that many Finnish bands prefer to use English over Finnish in their lyrics, and second, my academic affiliation at the University of Jyväskylä—the English language section in the Department of Languages. Moreover, the choice reflected the general interest of my academic affiliation at the time of the data collection, the Centre of Excellence for the study of variation, contact and change in English in Finland (VARIENG), funded by the Academy of Finland (2006—2011), of which I was then a student member. The research unit has published an array of qualitative language studies on different settings in Finnish society (e.g. Leppänen et al. 2008, 2009; Leppänen & Nikula 2007; Leppänen & Pahta 2012), and, importantly, the results of a first nation-wide survey on the uses of and attitudes towards English by Finns (Leppänen et al. 2011).

As a result of the initial search, four homepages were found. These belonged to *Deuteronomium*, *Renascent*, *Sacrecy* and *Venia*. The next step was to conduct a test analysis of these pilot data by a close examination of their contents and semiotic means. After this, the decision was made that in the analysis proper, the relevant foci would be identity, culture and religiosity: these seemed important aspects in the discourse of Finnish English-language Christian metal. Several ideas and points of interest arose in the course of the

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1 *Immortal Metal Fest*, Nokia, May, 2007; *Organized Hard Music Event*, Keuruu, June, 2007; Alternatiivipommisuoja ('Alternative bomb shelter') at *Maata Näkyvissä-festarit* ('Land Ahoy Festival'), Turku, November 2007; Metal masses in Nokia (May, 2007), Jyväskylä (October, 2007) and Seinäjoki (May, 2008).

2 *Inferno* (5/2008), *Nuotta* (11/2007), *Ristillinen* (1/2007), *Soundi* (2/2009); *Ilkka* (April 11, 2008), *Keskisuomalainen* (November 6, 2007), *Kristillisdemokraattinen viikkolehti* (February 18, 2010, *Seurakuntaviesti* (8, 14, 16/2007), *Uusi Tie* (6/2013).

analysis of the pilot data, some of which were studied further, up to article length, while others were not. One reason for the latter was that some of the sites became inaccessible at the time of storing the online data, in summer 2008.

Data were stored with the help of the *HTTrack* programme that allows for the electronic archiving of all the contents of a website (for a useful account of collecting and managing online data, see Kytölä 2013: 147). At this stage, more data were collected, applying less strict criteria, to study some themes further and to increase the generalizability of results and observations. This involved the inclusion of Finnish Christian metal bands performing in Finnish (instead of English only) and bands coming from the USA (the country where Christian metal first evolved), as well as of other types of band websites besides official homepages (see Section 1.2.3.2). Even here, though, the websites needed to be band-led, that is, general sites and discussion forums dedicated to Christian metal were excluded. At search end, 14 of the 23 band websites studied belonged to Finnish Christian metal bands using Finnish, English, or both as their main language(s) of communication on their websites and in their song lyrics. The remaining nine websites belonged to Christian metal groups from the US. As pointed out earlier, bands would use one or two different types of websites, which explains the difference in numbers—10 Finnish bands and 14 websites of theirs, and seven US bands with the total of nine websites (see Table 1).

Out of this overall data pool, I finally selected key examples for closer analysis in the articles. These were chosen so as to provide nuanced descriptions of discourse practices on individual websites and songs, but in a way that would also more generally be representative of Christian metal. Hence, the key examples include the opening sites of two Christian metal band websites and eight Christian metal lyrics published on band homepages. The different types of data are introduced in more detail in Section 1.2.3.

The compilation of the data pool was helpful in gaining an overview of Christian metal bands in Finland and the US. In principle, it is important to ackowledge the different national backgrounds of the bands to understand the socio-cultural settings in which the bands function. While the bands' different national backgrounds would have allowed me to conduct a comparative analysis between them, in choosing the key examples I decided to narrow the focus almost exclusively to Finnish bands. However, the analysis of Finnish band websites should not be understood as providing a wholly different picture than would be gained from a similar analysis of US ones. This is because, in general, there are no critical differences between Finnish and US Christian metal groups. Further, the two national scenes are not independent of each other in the first place; instead, there is an inherent connection between them in the sense that Christian metal in Finland (and elsewhere in the Western world) is about following up and appropriating what has already been started in the US by musicians with similar types of values, beliefs, and purposes (Moberg 2009: 4; see also Nikula 2012). In that sense, the religious and ideological backgrounds of these bands are, to a certain extent, similar.

The only exception to the decision to focus on Finnish Christian metal band websites occurs in Article 1, where the online presence of one US band is also investigated. This is done to demonstrate the similarities between American and Finnish band websites and to discuss Christian metal as a transcultural phenomenon. As shown in the article, while the bands come from countries with their own socio-cultural, societal, and religious histories, the differences between Finnish and US bands are not significant, although they are taken into consideration in the discussion (see Section 1.2.3.2).

1.2.2 Questions of reliability and ethics

The collection, selection and amount of data are issues that also need to be considered from the point of view of validity and reliability: the researcher needs to consider what ensures that the data are representative—and, if so, how do we know—and not merely anecdotal? Along the lines suggested by Silverman (2010: 275—276), this problem in qualitative research can partly be tackled by making the data available for others to use, too. In this thesis, the data availability issue is resolved by including a table of the items in the data pool (Table 1). In the individual articles, a link to the data source is mentioned in relation to each data excerpt analysed. In addition, the validity of the analyses in this study is also ensured by the fact that, as is generally the case in studies of naturally occurring discourse where the data are made visible to readers—itself a factor increasing the reliability of research (Silverman 2006 [1993]: 285)—in the study of online environments the data are also readily available on the Internet, if anyone were interested in examining them in more detail in their original context. This is also true of data that have been removed from the Internet: thanks to web archiving machines, such data can be retrieved.

As stated, the analysis builds on the pilot data analysis which provides the basis for a constant comparative method and comprehensive data treatment (see Silverman 2010: 279—281, 2006 [1993]: 296—298). This means that in engaging with new Christian metal discourse samples online, I kept comparing what I found with my earlier observations until the data had been comprehensively scanned.

The selection of the amount of data in a study like the present one also evokes the question of the generalizability or, better, extrapolation (Alasuutari 1995: 156—157) of the results. As will be discussed in Section 4.2, the answer to this relies on the linguistic ethnographic view of small things being 'indexical' of the big picture (e.g. Blommaert 2005, 2013; Silverstein 2003). In linguistic ethnography, the analysis of a limited set of data allows us to interpret individual uses of language as indexical of broader, shared social and cultural meanings. That said, it must be acknowledged that in this study the temporal distance between the publication of the online data and their analysis may pose a challenge to their indexicality. The passing of time may influence the interpretation of the results of this study: since 2009 and the release of the two latest albums (by *Mehida* and *Venia*) included in the data, many more albums

have been released by both Finnish and US Christian metal groups. Moreover, some groups have pursued their career in a more focused manner than others, leading to differences in their popularity and visibility both online and offline. However, when it comes to the key questions addressed in this study concerning the discursive construction of Christian metal identity and culture, the passing of a few years does not seem decisive. Rather, having continued the observation of, in particular, Finnish Christian metal since the data collection, it seems to me that many of the issues analysed in this study have remained characteristic of the genre.

The reliability of qualitative research is further enhanced, according to Silverman (2010: 278—279; see also Silverman 2006 [1993]: 381—395), by researchers refuting 'their initial assumptions about their data in order to achieve objectivity'. For myself, as a non-devout metal-listener and as a Lutheran Christian with both scholarly (Jousmäki 2006) and leisure time experience of Christian youth culture, I did, at the beginning of my research, tend to treat the data rather uncritically, and came close to celebrating my 'discovery' of a yet another hybrid phenomenon of subcultural diversity in which young people are connecting religion and popular culture. Soon, however, I began to refute my preliminary views and started to ask more questions of the data, starting with 'how' and 'why' rather than neutrally 'observing' what appeared to be going on in the data.

The data collection, and especially the publication of the analyses, also needed to be considered from the perspective of research ethics. For the purposes of Articles 1 and 2 and for the recognition of artists, I sought permission from respective groups to reproduce their index sites and material included on these sites (e.g. band logos, lyrics) for the purpose of publication as part of research articles and this thesis. As a result, with one exception, all the copyright holders granted me permission to reproduce their lyrics as well as screen captures—electronic pictures—of their index sites as part of this study. Despite several efforts, I was not able to obtain permission from *Renascent* to reproduce a screen capture of the index page of their homepage. Despite this, I proceeded with my publication plan. My justification was that, like many other Internet researchers (e.g. Richman 2007: 197), I was treating band websites as public sites not unlike other types of publicly available media data. However, in my discussion of the website for which I failed to get permission from the band (see Article 1), the actual data are not shown; instead, readers are provided with a URL address.

Previously, Markham (2004: 362) has noted the presence of groups online who 'know their communication is public but nonetheless do not want to be studied (Gajjala 2002; Hudson and Bruckmann 2002).' Such an attitude strikes me as peculiar: in a world where ICTs play such a central role on the everyday lives of many, the Internet, and public homepages by public actors in particular, should be considered as a place where a degree of self-consciousness and censorship—by self and others—should permeate to the extent that actions undertaken on these sites are rendered for public examination, both lay and scientific (see also Kytölä 2013: 69—76). For the time being, it remains

unresolved how online sites, as blurring the boundary between public and private, should be viewed ethically (e.g. Heath et al. 2009: 177—182).

1.2.3 Key examples

In this section, I describe two different but inter-related types of data: band websites and song lyrics. Before that, however, I introduce the bands whose websites and/or lyrics make up the key examples in the articles as representative of the music genre overall.

1.2.3.1 Bands

As stated above, the analysis was conducted on 23 band websites belonging to 17 different bands (see the complete list of bands, their websites and albums in Table 1; in this section, I introduce four focal bands whose websites and/or lyrics are analysed in the articles. Three of the bands were studied already in the pilot phase—*Deuteronomium, Renascent,* and *Venia*, all from Finland—while the fourth, *Oh, Sleeper* (US), was included in the data pool in a later stage. The four bands share many significant features on their homepages and in their lyrics with each other as well as with most of the other 13 bands, and they can thus, also more generally, be seen as typical representatives of Christian metal music. Despite the differences between them, Saari (2005) mentions all three Finnish bands in his account of the history of Christian metal in Finland (discussed more thoroughly in Section 3.2.3). The decision to add to these the website of the US band *Oh, Sleeper* as the fourth key example is by no means random; as described in Section 1.2.1, there are many similarities between this band and the three Finnish ones. The analysis of *Oh, Sleeper* online proved a fruitful way of discussing these in the context of a transcultural phenomenon, especially in relation to the analysis of *Renascent* online (Article 1).

Because the websites and lyrics of these four groups are central in the articles, a closer look at these particular bands and their musical styles is in place here (for a more comprehensive introduction to the different subgenres of metal music, see Section 3.1).

Deuteronomium

By far the oldest of the four central bands is *Deuteronomium*, which has also published the greatest number of songs (in 2013, 73). Consisting of four Finnish men aged 30-35 at the time of data collection—Miika Partala, Manu Lehtinen, Kalle Paju and Janne-Jussi Kontoniemi, the band was established at the beginning of the 1990s and soon became the forerunner of Christian metal in Finland. The group's career has not been a straightforward success as the band's lineup has undergone several changes during the years and the band has both broken up and been re-united. *Deuteronomium* has found success both in Finland and abroad: touring for example in the Netherlands, Norway, and Mexico, many of their early, pre-2000, releases have been sold out. On their

MySpace site (a social networking platform largely building around the distribution of music), the band characterizes its music as

> Death metal/ Metal / Christian
>
> Influences: Mortification, Tourniquet, Saviour Machine, Entombed.
>
> Sounds Like: Melodic Scandinavian Old School Metal
>
> (www.myspace.com/deuteronomium, 2007)

We see that the band attaches three tags describing its musical style: death metal, metal and Christian. The last of these is a peculiar one, for 'Christian' reveals nothing about musical style, unlike the first two do (albeit 'metal' is a very general and a vague description even today). 'Christian metal' is similarly an umbrella term that Larkin (1992: 22) describes as

> The antithesis of Black Metal. As the name implies, the bands spread the Christian message through the proselytizing lyrical content of their songs. Musically, they are characterized by high-pitched vocals, predictable arrangements and an overtly commercial sound. Examples: Barren Cross, Blood Good, Stryper.

Today, Larkin's description is hardly adequate. For example, *Deuteronomium*, a 'Christian metal' band, also uses low-pitched vocals and has published music reviewed as black metal in the press—black metal, as a form of extreme metal music (Kahn-Harris 2007), can hardly be considered as incorporating a commercial sound. It may be the case that *Deuteronomium* characterizes itself as 'Christian' because they want to set out an ideological background in connection with the musical genre they represent—to differentiate themselves from death metal music in general which Larkin (1992: 23) glosses as

> An extreme form of thrash, where the bands are obsessed with the glorification of death, torture, violence, mutilation and putrefaction. Chaotic, high-speed arrangements, complete with gurgling-sewer style vocals. Examples: Death, Obituary, Slayer.

Renascent

Death metal and thrash metal are also included among the three genres that *Renascent* uses to characterize their music in *MySpace*: *Death Metal / Thrash / Metal*. The above quotation shows that death metal and thrash metal are near relatives, thrash also having other predecessors:

> Thrash-metal was the logical progression from punk in many ways. It combined the energy, aggression and attitude of punk with the technical and musical sophistication of the NWOBHM (new wave of British heavy metal)---Thrash involved playing very fast and executing a myriad of complex instrumental time-changes, while the vocals screamed venomously, and at times unintelligibly.---Examples: Anthrax, Megadeth, Metallica, Testament. (Larkin 1992: 20, 27.)

A regular music consumer can recognize *Renascent* as a thrash metal group from the fact that the band plays very fast with an energetic take and a vocal

quality that match Larkin's description—the fact that the vocals are incomprehensible to many listeners probably urges Christian metal groups to publish their lyrics on their websites as well as on their CD sleeves. At the time of the data collection, four men—Eero Tertsunen, Voitto Rintala, Jani Stefanovic and Barry Halldan— in this group were accompanied by a woman keyboardist Mikaela Akrenius. It is precisely the combination of fast playing and the 'bits and pieces' sound of the keyboard that contributes to the band's unique soundscape. Formed in 2003, the band has released one full-length album (*Through Darkness* 2005) and has not been very actively involved in subcultural activities in Finland (including their official website) since the time of data collection. Despite the silence, the band has not been buried, as shown in their more recent online activities (e.g. www.renascent.net/index2.html).

Venia

The third focal band in the analysis, *Venia*, resembles *Renascent* as regards the line-up of four men (Jere Veijalainen, Viktor Fagerström, Markus Lundmark, and Antti Melasniemi) and a woman (Veronica Solje), with the exception that, in *Venia*, the woman plays the violin instead of the keyboard and she also sings the lead vocals. The violin marks off *Venia* not just from *Renascent* but from the majority of (Christian) metal bands which do not use this instrument. *Venia* took its first steps in 2002 with their first studio album *Victory by Surrender* released in 2005, and the band has toured every now and then ever since. Their work has been included on three compilation albums, one a tribute to the American long-term Christian metal band *Deliverance* (*Temporary Insanity – A Salute to Deliverance* 2010). As to the musical style, the band describes itself as playing *Metal / Other / Thrash* in *Myspace.com*, thereby omitting two labels they formerly included, *Indie* and *female fronted melodic metal*. 'Thrash' in *Venia*'s case is different from the thrash metal performed by *Renascent*: *Venia*'s woman lead singer reaches a higher vocal pitch than the lead man of *Renascent*, while, in more general terms, *Renascent*'s style more aptly resembles Larkin's description of thrash metal as aggressive.

Oh, Sleeper

The fourth central band analysed is *Oh, Sleeper*, based in Texas, US. Unlike the three previous bands, *Oh, Sleeper* does not have an official homepage in the traditional sense. Instead, the band makes use of the social media platforms *Facebook* and *Twitter* to instantly update their latest news and connect with fans. In its Facebook profile, the band characterizes its music as *Metal / Rock*. *Solid State Records*, the band's record label at the time of data collection, describes *Oh, Sleeper* as playing 'with an aggressive pulse that pushes extreme music forward', complemented with screaming vocals. The band was established in 2006 and consists of four men—Micah Kinard, Shane Blay, Nathan Grady and Zac Mayfield. The band has released three full-length albums: *When I am God* (2007), *Son of the Morning* (2009), and *Children of Fire* (2011).

1.2.3.2 Band websites

While previous work on Christian metal has rightly addressed bands and the phenomenon at large, it has not touched in detail on Christian metal in online settings. As will be discussed in Section 3.2, the Internet has been identified as having great significance for those interested in Christian metal around the world; despite this, only a little discourse-level research has been conducted into Christian metal band websites. For the purposes of this thesis, band websites provide a rich setting to study the construction of identities in a contemporary music subculture: as already stated, online media is a noteworthy space for Christian metal groups to make themselves known. In doing so, they choose to give out a certain type of (self-)image through multisemiotic means. Consequently, band websites form the main source of data in this thesis, which also means that they make up the primary source for the song lyrics analysed (see the next section).

In studying websites, I draw on Markham's (2004: 360—363) definition of the Internet as both a tool and a place: websites are, for Christian metal bands, a promotional tool to gain visibility and publicity. In addition, they make up 'cultural spaces in which meaningful human interactions occur… they can be perceived as having dimension, comprising meaningful, structured places where things happen that have genuine consequences'. In the latter view, 'the Internet becomes a research context', a place where 'the self can travel and exist' and where '*personalized worlds can be created, organized, and enacted*'. Accordingly, the personalized online worlds of Christian metal bands, while demanding scholarly attention, are not separate from bands' offline activities but do have 'genuine consequences': both online and offline settings provide the subculture with possibilities for interaction and for subcultural and identity performance (Leppänen et al. 2013, 2014; see also Kytölä 2013; Leppänen 2008; Peuronen 2011). While the analysis of online data in this thesis thus complements previous research, the fact that the data are online does not inherently change the phenomenon itself. Rather, being online is state-of-the-art for Christian metal bands as a part of today's popular culture and the construction of subcultural identities (see Section 1.3 for a discussion on how this affects methodology).

In general, by the term 'website' I refer to official band homepages. These typically involve a main (index) page—one of the main objects of analysis; biographical information on the band and its members; a list of the band's releases (often including sound clips and lyrics in text form—the second main object of analysis); a list of upcoming and past gigs; photos; and merchandise. Some homepages also feature a guestbook where visitors can leave their comments, to which band members may or may not react. The decision to focus on index pages only was supported by the aims of the respective case studies; the index page is the first thing a visitor to a website encounters. Therefore, the index sites of Christian metal band homepages provide us with information about how bands capture some of their key identity issues in discourse.

From the overall data pool of 23 websites, two index pages—those of the Finnish bands *Venia* and *Renascent*—were chosen for an in-depth discussion (Articles 1 and 2), because they illustrated some of the typical ways in which Christian metal groups construct their identities multisemiotically on their websites. More specifically, *Venia's* index page was chosen to illustrate the ways in which Christian metal bands utilize biblical discourse on their websites; *Renascent's* index page was chosen to demonstrate the interplay of textual and visual properties in the construction of the Christian metal band's identity online.

In addition, in Article 1, I look beyond official band homepages (and their index pages) by bringing in three other 'virtual worlds' (Thomas 2007: 5) for discussion—*Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Myspace*. This is for two reasons. First, not all Christian metal bands make use of 'official homepages' in the traditional sense. Instead, many of them also utilize other types of websites, and it seems, since the data collection, that bands are increasingly (also) relying, in particular, on social media. While there are differences between different forms of social media, sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Myspace all allow for frequent publication of news items, photos and music and for synchronic interaction between bands and their audiences.

Second, the decision to include these partly co-occurred with the decision to use the US band *Oh, Sleeper* as a focal band in Article 1; more specifically, the analytic focus in this specific case is on how the band's logo is circulated across different types of websites for the band's self-representational purposes. While the use of band logos and other textual-visual identity markers is not uncommon among the Finnish Christian metal bands included in the data pool either, this US band was chosen as a key example, as it provided a particularly interesting perspective on the multisemiotic construction of Christian metal identity, one that complemented the picture gained through the cases of *Venia* and *Renascent*, as described above: in the case of *Oh, Sleeper* one detail (logo) was followed across different online contexts (websites) instead of an analysis of one index site from various different perspectives.

1.2.3.3 Song lyrics

The second type of data this thesis builds on is song lyrics, a special subsection on band websites. For practical reasons, I also utilized 15 CDs and CD sleeves when possible in conducting the analysis of lyrics (for the method, see the following section). These albums, by six bands whose websites were also studied, are also listed in Table1.

Previously, song lyrics have been studied, for instance, as personal accounts or narratives (e.g. Karppinen 2012), poetry (e.g. Griffiths 2003: 42—50), social critique (e.g. Walser 1993; Westinen 2011), and as reflections of contemporary reality, that is, communications about the world (e.g. Machin 2010: 77—97). At the same time, some artists have been reported to view academic pursuits on lyrics as futile and ridiculous in the first place (see e.g. Connell & Gibson 2003: 71). In this thesis, song lyrics are understood as forming a part of the whole together with music, performance, and aural delivery, among other things (e.g. Frith 1996; Karppinen 2012; van Leeuwen 1999;

Machin 2010). Although I thus principally agree that an analysis of song lyrics is an incomplete effort when describing subcultural identities, in the case of Christian metal the analysis of lyrics is justified because, as many writers agree, it is first and foremost through lyrics that Christian metal established itself as a genre of its own (Larkin 1992; Luhr 2005; Moberg 2009; Partridge 2010; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). This is highly important: for Christian metal, lyrics serve as a channel for disseminating one's message and as an ideological terrain on which to express and practise one's belief and for engaging in subcultural and religious dialogue. The high status of lyrics is further strengthened by their reproduction on the bands' websites. Therefore, this study does not offer a reading of Christian metal lyrics for the sake of analysing lyrics; rather, lyrics are investigated in order to understand some of the discourse mechanisms at work within Christian metal subculture.

I argue that lyrics play an important role for the construction of identities in Christian metal, which is why lyrics need to be studied as individual subcultural artefacts while also situating them in the wider contexts of the song/performance, the website, and the relevant subculture(s). In the articles, the analytical emphasis is on lyrics-as-text while some attention is also paid to aspects of sound.

The overall data pool of 23 band websites and 15 album sleeves from 17 different bands yielded the lyrics to a total of 202 songs. In the case studies, I focus on eight lyrics by three Finnish bands:

- *Deuteronomium*
    - Spell of Hell (*Street Corner Queen*, 1998)
    - DDD (*Here to Stay*, 1999)
    - S/S (*Here to Stay*, 1999)
- *Renascent*
    - Exodus (*Through Darkness*, 2005)
    - Corrosion of Emotions (*Through Darkness*, 2005)
    - Sustain me (*Through Darkness*, 2005)
- *Venia*
    - Tormented Souls (*Genesis*, 2004)
    - The Path (*In Our Weakness*, 2005)

These lyrics were chosen because of their representativeness in the genre, meaning that they provide good illustrations of some re-occurring issues I have observed in Christian metal lyrics. Analysis of lyrics complements the picture of

the discursive construction of Christian metal identities and subculture gained through the analysis of index sites.

While analyses of song lyrics have previously been carried out within popular music and cultural studies (e.g. Connell & Gibson 2003: 71—89; Eckstein 2010; Longhurst 2007: 158—164; Middleton 2000), they have not been studied as often within sociolinguistics (but see Harju 2001; Machin 2010; Omoniyi 2010a; Paganoni 2006; Westinen 2010, 2014). In light of the centrality of questions of language and identity in this field (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003a; Benwell & Stokoe 2006; De Fina et al. 2006; Edwards 2009; Joseph 2004; Omoniyi & White 2006), this thesis adds to the limited sociolinguistic and discourse research on lyrics. I will look more closely into this line of research in Section 4.2.

1.3 Methods of analysis

The analytic methods adopted in this study for investigating Christian metal discourse belong to the broad framework of qualitative sociolinguistic discourse analysis. This is a theoretically loaded tool of inquiry, as discussed later in Section 4.2, and suits the purpose of analysing discourse and identity in both online and offline situations (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003a; Blommaert 2005; Gee 2006 [1999]). Here, the primary interest is not 'language' *per se* but the ways in which language practices play a role in the constitution of identities. Analysis of discourse as language-in-use, together with the palpable need to place the data in its wider context, points towards ethnography in the common sense of the word, that is, as a method of data collection. So while the thesis is not an endeavour in (virtual) ethnography as such (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2008; Hine 2008 [2000]), it draws on the models of (socio)linguistic ethnography (Blommaert 2005, 2010, 2013) within the framework of the sociolinguistics of globalization (see Section 4.2).

Today's multimodal realities and 'the multifaceted nature of most data' (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003b: 8—9) call for an integrative analytic methodology. Likewise, the analyses of Christian metal identities in the contexts of websites and song lyrics already partly crave a range of approaches. Therefore, this thesis is a cross-disciplinary endeavour that draws methodologically on work done in sociolinguistic discourse studies (Jaffe 2009a; Jaworski & Leppänen et al. 2009; Thurlow 2009; Wierzbicka 2006) as well as in communication and media studies (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]; Machin 2010). Importantly, it follows the principles of Blommaert's (2005) 'ethnographic-sociolinguistic analysis of discourse' (what he later also terms linguistic ethnography) in which he draws on linguistics, linguistic anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, and history (e.g. Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein 2003; Silverstein & Urban 1996).

In practice, the analysis proceeded in the following way. First, a pilot analysis was conducted on a limited data set to gain acquaintance with the

phenomenon and to gain a preliminary understanding of themes and recurrent issues that are manifested in Christian metal websites and song lyrics (see Section 1.2.1). This led me to build a bigger data pool which I then scanned by repeating the actions of looking at, reading and listening to the multisemiotic material on the websites. As mentioned earlier, at this stage some CDs and album sleeves that were available to me were also utilized for the sake of practical convenience (albeit, as earlier stated, the level of sound was only observed to the extent feasible for an amateur listener such as myself). In scanning the data at the visual level, attention was paid to photos, colours, symbols and lettering, and to the fine details involved in the use of these (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]). At the linguistic and textual levels, attention was paid to such recurrent features as the use of pronouns, ways of wording and naming, and the choice of adjectives and binary opposites (Jaffe 2009a; Jaworski & Thurlow 2009). At the level of discourse, attention was paid to themes, the dialogical nature of the data and processes of entextualization (Bakhtin 1981; Bauman & Briggs 1990; Blommaert 2005; Leppänen et al. 2013, 2014).

Together, the findings of the linguistic, discursive, textual and visual analyses were treated as 'indexical' of 'bigger things'—of such macro level issues as Christian metal identity, stance, and subculture (see Chapter 4). As said at the beginning of this section, this is where theory and method merge: analysis of *discourse* provides the grounds to discuss *Discourse* with a capital D—broader processes, ideologies, and ways of thinking (Blommaert 2005; Edwards 2011; Fairclough 1992; Gee 2006 [1999]: 6—7).

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 offer the reader some background for understanding the topic of this study. In Chapter 2, I discuss the religious context of Christian metal. From describing Christianity in the 21st century, I move to a closer examination of Evangelical Christianity and of religion and popular music. In the latter part, I further discuss Contemporary Christian Music and metal music and religion as cases in point. In Chapter 3, I focus on the core theme of this thesis by looking into the history of metal music before introducing the reader to the history of Christian metal in the USA, in Finland, and on the Internet. This chapter relies largely on Marcus Moberg's (2009) pioneering work on Christian metal. I conclude Chapter 3 by considering some unanswered questions in the literature on (Christian) metal discourse online. Then, in Chapter 4, I introduce the three theoretical orientations of this thesis: the study of language and religion, identity in discourse and in song lyrics, and the self, the Other, and subculture on the web. Chapter 5 introduces, by way of summary, the main points and findings of the four case studies. In the concluding Chapter 6, I review the work done and consider its potential implications for different audiences.

2 CHRISTIANITY IN 21ST CENTURY FINLAND

Today's societies are characterized by globalization, mediatization, pluralization, subjectivization, consumerism, capitalism, secularization, and post-secularism. These processes are claimed to have effects on the religious sphere of life (e.g. Ahlbäck 2012; Bruce 2002; Habermas 2006, 2008; Hjarvard & Lövheim 2012; Nynäs et al. 2012; Vincett & Woodhead 2010; Woodhead 2010a). With respect to Christianity, two counter currents have been documented: on the one hand, institutional Christianity has seen a decline of interest, especially among young people in Europe (e.g. Casanova 2006; Kääriäinen et al. 2005: 134—144). On the other hand, increased interest can also be observed, especially in the 'renewalist' Christian movements in Africa, Latin America and Asia (e.g. Pew Forum 2006; Woodhead 2010b: 227).

In Finland, there has been a strong affiliation with Evangelical Lutheran Christianity since 1593, following the establishment of Lutheranism as the state religion in Sweden, of which Finland was part at the time (Kääriäinen et al. 2005: 38). Today, however, the situation is far from stable. Not only is the Lutheran Church no longer a state church officially (although in lay perceptions it has maintained its status as such; see Kääriäinen et al. 2009: 12—14), but also an increasing number of people are resigning from the church. For example, in 2013 there was a 43,5 per cent growth in the number of those who resigned when compared to the figure in 2012 (Church membership 2013a). A look at the time period 2007-2011 shows that in 2011, some 46,000 people resigned, compared to 35,000 five years earlier (Church membership and demographic change 2007—2011). Simultaneously, the number of Finns not belonging to any specific religious denomination has increased: during the five-year period mentioned above, this number rose from 15.1 to 20.1 per cent (Statistics Finland—Population 2013). At the same time, the number of different religions and religious communities in the country overall has increased, to the extent that measuring them is not a simple task. The Church Research Institute lists the 'considerable' number of '800 communities, associations and other organizations with some religious movement or group in their background' (Kääriäinen et al. 2009: 16—17; see also Kääriäinen et al. 2005: 76—88).

Especially during the 20th century, Finnish religiosity has become more diversified both within and outside the Lutheran church. One of the processes of change within the church has been the rise of revivalist movements, such as the Spiritual Renewal in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Nokia Mission (which later established a church of its own), the so-called Fifth Revival Movement, and a charismatic movement. The latter two span over several different organizations. However, revivalist Christianity is not a new phenomenon in Finland, as Pietist influences from Germany have been apparent in revivalist movements since the 18th century (Kääriäinen et al. 2005: 49—54, 2009: 9—10, 110, 116—117). Today's 'global variant' of Evangelical Christianity (Lehmann 2010: 415) may thus also be seen as but one point in a developmental chain.

Moreover, more Finns than ever before are not currently members of a registered denomination, although this hides from view the strong religiosity that exists outside institutions. For instance, Kääriäinen et al. (2009: 16) estimate that there are 100,000 Pentecostal Christians in Finland of whom only a third are registered members. Moreover, crossing is common, with 'active' members of the Lutheran church often also participating in the activities of different revivalist groups, not only within their own church but also outside it—for example, the Free Church and Pentecostal Church (Moberg 2009: 73). Having said this, Finland remains fairly homogeneous in terms of religion, as around 75,2 per cent of the population were Lutherans in 2013 (Membership statistics 2013b).

To understand the analysis of Christian metal as a religious popular cultural venture, it is necessary to view the phenomenon against two backdrops: one, Evangelical Christianity, both globally and in Finland, and two, religion in relation to popular culture and to metal music in particular.

2.1 Evangelicalism

While the Lutheran Church has been losing members at a steady rate in recent years (Kääriäinen et al. 2005; Mikkola et al. 2007; Niemelä 2007), one type of Christianity that seems to be doing better, even among young adults is Evangelicalism (Hyvönen 2006; Moberg 2009: 70—73; Terho 2006). As perhaps the most encompassing type of religiosity giving rise to and nourishing Christian metal music, Evangelicalism is discussed in more detail here. Understanding the Evangelical interpretation of Christianity and of the Bible and its ways of practising belief provide the wherewithal to follow the argumentation and analysis of Christian metal discourse in the articles comprising this thesis.

As a term, 'Evangelicalism' is generally taken to refer to a type of Christianity that places substantial emphasis on experiences of personal salvation, of being 'born again', and on testimonies to this, that is, conversion narratives. The Bible is also given high authority. Such emphases are found

across various denominations within protestant Christianity, 'including fundamentalists, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Charismatics' (Howard & Streck 1999: 19; see also Hendershot 2004: 2, 10; Woodhead 2010b: 223—229).

As discussed in the previous section, movements with such characteristics in Finland include most notably the Pentecostal and Free Churches, but some are also found within the Lutheran Church (e.g. Kääriäinen et al. 2009: 16—17, 110). What differentiates Evangelicalism from Lutheranism, albeit not always decisively, is the question of salvation. In Evangelicalism,

> Salvation comes through a conversion in which the individual enters into a personal relationship with God's only son, Jesus Christ, and is saved through the latter's atoning work on the cross---the Bible has a unique authority in human life. (Woodhead 2010b: 225.)

So, while two important tenets of Evangelicalism concern Jesus and the Bible, the excerpt above also posits a definition of salvation as happening through conversion, a view that at times causes debate between Evangelicals and Lutherans among others. What exactly is meant by 'conversion' and 'salvation' varies between the groups so that whereas Evangelicals underline the conscious act of repentance of sins, the Lutheran doctrine relies on (child) baptism as a way of entry to God's kingdom (Terho 2006: 281). In establishing these guidelines, the groups refer to passages in the Bible in support of their claim to authority over the issue. Without going into detail here, it is clear that Evangelicalism poses a challenge to the Lutheran Church, whose members have been said to 'belong without believing' (e.g. Martin 2005: 86; Moberg 2009: 75).

As to the relationship between Evangelicalism and Christian metal, since the former is well established in Finland, it is reasonable to view the latter in relation to this sphere of influence. This is supported by Moberg (2009), who reports that while most Christian metallers belong to the Lutheran Church, others belong to 'various free churches', most notably Pentecostal ones. This leads Moberg (2009: 179) to conclude that 'the lines between denominational affiliations become fluid in this context'.

As this thesis is not merely about a religious group but about a group that centrally builds on religion *and* a popular cultural form, I now turn to discussing the relationship between religion and popular culture, with specific reference to online media contexts.

2.2 Religion, popular culture and media

There are many ways in which religion, popular culture and the media intersect. After a general discussion on this, I will move to addressing two cases in point: Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) on the one hand and religiosity and/in metal music on the other.

As mentioned at the beginning of section 2, changes in the status of religions have been among the defining processes of globalization (for a radical

view that has since been contradicted, see Bruce 2002; for a multi-sited analysis of post-secularism, see Nynäs et al. 2012). Interestingly for us, Omoniyi (2010c: 3) writes about the 'popculturization of religion' whereby institutionalized religion has been ripped away from conservatism and serenity and replaced with 'the "cool" factor which in functional terms makes religion attractive to youth'. One of the means with which this is done is popular music, which is evermore important to today's people, as is popular culture more generally (Bennett 2005: 117—140; DeNora 2000; Longhurst 2007; Machin 2010: 9): for example, Kotarba and Vannini (2009: xii—xiii) write, 'popular music is one of the most important sources of culture in our society. Popular music provides the soundtrack for everyday life while providing practical meanings for making sense of everyday life.'

In addition to being popculturized in Omoniyi's sense, religion is now also mediatized (Hjarvard 2008), meaning that religion has become increasingly dependent on the media both as a transmitter of religion and religious themes and as a performer of social functions previously occupied by religion. The literature on religion and the media (e.g. Hoover 2006; Hjarvard & Lövheim 2012; Lundby 2009; Morgan 2008) is now being complemented by research on religion and popular culture *online*. In this line of research, key issues include notions of religious participation, community, and authority, and the possible need for a redefinition of these (e.g. Campbell 2010, 2012; Fischer-Nielsen 2012; Lövheim 2004, 2012; Schimmel 2011; Teusner 2010).

Two central terms in this sub-section, religion and popular music, or popular culture more generally, could be discussed more extensively, as in fact has been the case in previous studies (e.g. Clark 2007; Forbes & Mahan 2005; Lynch 2007; Partridge 2005; see Moberg 2009: 77-102); however, instead of plunging wholeheartedly into this discussion here, I will briefly discuss the forms that the relationship between the two may take. This is important as background for understanding the union of Christianity with metal music addressed in this thesis.

Let us start with Howard and Streck's (1999: 26) notion about the religious roots of rock and roll: they observe that many of the pioneers of rock music 'had ties to the Christian church' and to the sounds of gospel music (also see Omoniyi 2010a: 207). Moreover, they argue, 'the distance between pop music as religion and religious pop music is not as great as some seem to think' (Howard & Streck 1999: 194). There are, however, different ways of conceptualizing this distance and its qualities. In addition to Omoniyi's (2010b: 3) general notion of the popculturization of religion mentioned earlier, Forbes (2005) has presented a more fine-grained typology of the issue (see also Moberg 2009: 84—102; Partridge 2010: 496—506). According to Forbes, there are four ways of understanding the issue: 1) religion in popular culture, 2) popular culture in religion, 3) popular culture as religion, and 4) religion and popular culture in dialogue.

Forbes (2005: 10—12) maintains that when religion is studied *in* popular cultural settings, films have most often been chosen as data, which also shows

in the tables of contents of *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, although fiction and music are also increasingly covered in individual contributions. In these studies, the primary interest lies in how religion is conveyed in and through popular cultural products. In contrast, in popular culture in religion (Forbes 2005: 12—13), one studies the ways in which popular cultural products, flows and styles are used by religious actors for mainly religious purposes. It is with this understanding that Omoniyi's description of the popculturization of religion best resonates, as does the majority of research on evangelical subcultures, in particular that on Contemporary Christian Music (see the next section).

Popular culture serves *as* religion in Forbes' (2005: 14—15) third category. Reconceptualizing the notion of 'religion', on this view popular culture, or parts of it, serve religious functions, provide meaning through rituals, rites, myths and symbols, and help people to cope with real life.

Forbes' (2005: 15—17) final category concerns dialogue between religion and popular culture on topics that are of an ethical nature and relevant to both religious groups and institutions and society more broadly.

The ways in which Forbes categorizes the relationship between religion and popular culture opens up a perspective on the broader issues of which Christian metal music is a part. With regard to this typology, Moberg (2009: 86, 101—102) posits that Christian metal is best, although neither exclusively nor automatically, understood as a case where popular culture is used in religion. More generally, the case of metal music is more complex. I will return to this after the following section.

2.2.1 Contemporary Christian Music

In this section, I look into Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) as an example of the interrelationship between popular culture and religion. As becomes clear in the following discussion, CCM has directly relevance for the topic of this thesis.

In discussing the important role of popular music in the lives of young people, Howard and Streck (1999: 5) point out that 'rock and roll music plays a critical role in establishing identity and defining social groups, but, at the same time, it appears to contradict many of the values [young people] hold as Christians'. It is this controversy that CCM, an initiative closely associated with Evangelical Christianity in the USA, has set out to overcome. Many observers, Howard and Streck continue, have considered CCM

> a "peculiar hybrid" that unites two disparate and irreconcilable cultures into a compromised cultural form. But without dismissing the tensions that exist between evangelicalism and commercial culture, in dealing with contemporary Christian music one must also recognize the ways in which evangelical culture and pop music culture in fact resonate with one another, rather than contradict. (Howard & Streck 1999: 194.)

Howard and Streck thereby assert that there is, in fact, common ground between Evangelicalism and popular music, and this again resonates with the more general discussion on the relationship between religion and popular culture. In a similar vein, Luhr (2005: 104) explains how Evangelical Christians in the US saw 'popular music as a way of introducing young people to [the Christian] conception of morality while fulfilling youth's desire to stay abreast of contemporary music styles.' Today, CCM admittedly functions in a consumerist spirit, attracting mainly white middle-aged, middle-class evangelicals (Hendershot 2004: 11, 56; Kotarba & Vannini 2009: 30).

The origins of CCM lie in the religious revivals of the 1970s, its 'Christian flower children' and the 'earnest' music of Larry Norman (Hendershot 2004: 55—59; see also Howard & Streck 1999: 22—23). From the 1980s onwards, the industry began to flourish with the promotion of such names as *DC Talk*, *Amy Grant*, *Petra* and *Stryper* through Evangelical labels (e.g. *Sparrow*) and institutions (e.g. *CCM* magazine). Later, CCM continued along the path of commercialization; for example, small explicitly 'Christian' labels were fused with large conglomerates. While appearing as 'sold-outs' to some after starting to favour a less pronounced Evangelical agenda, many artists have found further coverage also in mainstream media and among secular audiences.

Indeed, the history of American CCM builds to a large extent on its detractors. In its early days, CCM was condemned by fundamentalist Christians, represented, for example, by the preacher Jimmy Swaggart, who became well-known in the 1980s for propagating a view of popular culture as corrupting both national and religious values (e.g. Gormly 2003: 251; Luhr 2009: 38—53, Moberg 2013a: 89). Instead of separation from the wider cultural context, Evangelical leaders such as Jerry Falwell softened their stance towards CCM, which they began to see as providing yet another means through which to spread the gospel. Even today, discussion goes on regarding the 'limits' of CCM (see also Hendershot 2004: 4—11, 55—59; Luhr 2005: 105).

Similarly to popular music in general, CCM also incorporates a broad variety of musical styles and genres (see Lau 2012). Considering the suspicion with which Evangelicals have regarded popular music, and metal music in particular (see Partridge 2010: 496), Hendershot's (2004: 59, emphasis added) the observation of 'a growing trend of successful Christian music with a *heavier* sound' is truly interesting. In fact, such bands as *Petra* and *Stryper* did bring on these 'heavier' sounds already in the 1980s, although their sound does not even begin to compare to the extreme musical styles of some of today's Christian metal groups. However, as its name suggests, Christian metal adds to and (allegedly) contradicts the nature and agenda of 'pure' metal, and because of this, Christian metal has been accused of not being proper metal at all. Rather than a subgenre of metal, many thus prefer to view Christian metal as an example of CCM instead—a practice fully in line with Hendershot's (2004: 55) discussion of the stigma attached to the label 'Christian band' which tends to block listeners from appraising a band's musical qualities because of their ideological background (see also Moberg 2008: 91—92, 2009: 255—256).

United thus by message, not sound, CCM has been defined in various ways. While Howard and Streck (1999: 9—13) consider CCM 'a viable generic category', they problematize the labelling of some form of music as CCM on the basis of a) an artist's personal relationship with Christ(ianity), b) the way in which the lyrics address Christian themes and faith, or c) the ideological agendas of album production and distribution channels. Instead, they prefer a view of CCM as a 'splintered art world' where, for some, CCM is a religious ministry; for some, entertainment; and for the rest, art.

2.2.2 Religion and metal music

The second case to illustrate the interrelationship between popular culture and religion concerns religion and/in metal music. In this case, there is no one-to-one relationship (see Moberg 2012 for an extensive review). From 'the Devil's music' (see e.g. Häger 2001; Moberg 2013a: 84; Partridge 2010: 498—499) to polished art performed at meetings of heads-of-states (see Rossi & Jervell 2013), metal has many sides to it. Religion is addressed in passing in Walser's (1993) and Weinstein's (2000) classic books on metal music, but the first extensive empirical studies on these themes are those by Bossius (2003) and Moberg (2009). As metal music, Christian metal included, is discussed thoroughly in section 3, I will here confine the focus to the relationship between (especially non-Christian) religiosity and ideologies in the context of metal music. This will help to understand at least some of the debate and discussion caused by the combination of metal music and *Christianity*.

Metal music has evoked numerous instances of moral panic during its existence, most visibly in the US in the 1980s, many of which centred around religion—or, to be more precise, around the fear of metal music conveying Satanist beliefs, both openly and covertly, and promoting suicide and sexual perversion among sensitive young people (Kahn-Harris 2006: 2, 27; Moberg 2013a: 83—84; Walser 1993: 137—151; Weinstein 2000: 249—263). Both parents and the religiously active became increasingly alert in the 1980s, following allegations that metal music was associated with teenage suicides.

Without considering cause and effect here, there is evidence of the centrality of aspects of Satanism, especially among Swedish and Norwegian bands of the early 1990s within the particular subgenre of *black metal*. For example, having interviewed black metal musicians, Bossius (2003: 78, 159) explains how their pronounced aim was to make 'satanic, vicious and destructive music' reflective of their textual brutality which they, again, saw as reflective of their brutal nature. Bossius further argues that while black metal clearly expresses these, it also articulates alienation, insecurity and loneliness through them.

While the song lyrics of an average metal group of the 1980s may thus have been improper, non-Christian, or outright anti-Christian, they were not for the most part necessarily satanic (see Kahn-Harris 2006: 38—40). Following from the more general diversification of metal music from the late 1980s onwards (see 3.1), the musical-religious linkages have also become more varied,

including *within* black metal. For example, in addition to (aspects of) Satanism, mythology, paganism, racism and fascism are now also well documented in the context of black metal (e.g. Bennett 2001: 54—56; Bossius 2003: 107—136; Hagen 2011; Kahn-Harris 2007: 4—5, 2011; Olson 2013; Weinstein 2000: 287). Moreover, Kahn-Harris (2005, as cited in Kahn-Harris 2007: 38—39) argues that black metal ideology is today 'less a coherent doctrine than a common set of reference points.' One such reference point, he continues, is Christianity: 'Ironically though, Christianity, and in particular contemporary American evangelical Christianity, supplies the very symbols and discursive frameworks that scene members seek to transgress'. For this very reason, then, the evolution of *Christian* black metal becomes understandable (see also Bossius 2003: 77—78; Jousmäki 2014).

Because metal music, both secular and Christian, is studied in more detail in the following section, I will conclude by briefly considering the relationship between metal music and religious beliefs as illustrated in Bossius' (2003) dissertation. He writes, first, of black metal as a way for believers to spread their message and express themselves through lyrics and *in combination with* music. Second, he shows how these forms of expression, in which music is used for religious and ideological purposes, often dwell on hate, wrath and aggression. Finally, he interprets black metal as a way for musicians to express whichever godly power and prominence. Interestingly, then, for bands the meaning of black metal was, to a large extent, similar, whether they were Christian or quite the opposite.

Should one wish to define metal music in accordance with Forbes' typology discussed earlier in Section 2.2, the task proves difficult because of the diversity of the genre. If one defines religion as something that gives meaning to and organizes one's life, then surely for many musicians and fans metal music would come into the category of popular culture as religion. When seen as inherently satanic (as in Hermonen 2006: 168—228), metal music becomes a form of popular culture in religion (see Bossius 2003: 112). Finally, metal music can be seen as creating opportunities to engage in a dialogue on music and religion, which, I argue, is also the case with Christian metal.

3 CHRISTIAN METAL AND THE VIRTUAL WORLD

In this chapter, I continue my discussion of metal music and broaden the discussion towards Christian metal in particular. Moreover, I offer a general account of how Christian metal bands inhabit Internet sites and how the subculture becomes, in part, constituted by online actions today. While a lot of work has been done on metal music (e.g. Avelar 2003; Hjelm et al. 2013; Kahn-Harris 2007; Wallach et al. 2011a; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000), less has been written about *Christian* metal in particular. It is illustrative that the two foundational books on metal music mention Christian metal only in passing (see Walser 1993: 55; Weinstein 2000: 53—54, 2011: 43). An exception to this is the dissertation by Marcus Moberg (2009) and his continuing engagement with the topic (Moberg 2011, 2013a, forthcoming) within the research domain of comparative religion. In the pioneering dissertation, Moberg provides a general account of what Christian metal is—what its basic meanings and functions are —according to scene members themselves. His study incorporates a broad data set ranging from albums and ethnographic observation to interviews with band members and Christian metal website administrators. In this chapter, therefore, I rely to a large extent on what can be learned through Moberg's work, although I touch on others' writing, too.

The chapter starts with a description of the history, development, and themes of metal music both in general and with particular reference to the Finnish context. I then introduce the genre of Christian metal and again narrow the focus to the Finnish scene. In the final part, I introduce to the reader to Christian metal in online environments, with a particular interest in band websites.

3.1 Metal music

To understand Christian metal, one needs to be acquainted with the history, basic features, and ideological undercurrents of metal music in general. These issues form the core of this section.

The scholarly literature on heavy metal has expanded considerably in the 21st century, ranging from essential works of reference (Kahn-Harris 2007; Wallach et al. 2011a; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000) to those with more confined perspectives, including nationality (Avelar 2003; Kahn-Harris 2011), gender (Barron 2013; Harju 2001; Overell 2013; Wong 2011), and religion (Bossius 2003). In the following, I scan some of this literature, focusing on the most relevant writing from the perspective of this thesis. For this reason, I will not, for example, touch on the musicological details of metal music; readers interested in this aspect are advised to consult Berger and Fales (2005) and Walser (1993).

Most writers agree that the origins of heavy metal were laid in the music of British 1970's bands like *Black Sabbath*, *Led Zeppelin* and *Judas Priest*, which fused blues with psychedelic tunes. Such music can be seen as a reaction to the optimism, softness and light-heartedness characteristic of post-II World War pop rock (see also Moberg 2008: 85). This was most evident in sound: the distinctive heavy metal sound, produced by distortion of the electric guitar and by powerful, loud vocals, sought to give its adherents a sense of empowerment, transcendent freedom, and intensity. Ideologically, heavy metal was about rebellion towards authorities and societal norms, a theme to which I return below. As such, metal music was stereotypically assumed to appeal to the interests of white, working-class males. (Wallach et al. 2011b; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000.) For example, Walser (1993: 162) sees heavy metal as 'a way of articulating and sustaining individual and communal identities that can survive such strains' as postmodernism, deindustrialization, losses of jobs, declines of income, and so on. Weinstein (2011: 57) preserves this view in her more recent writing in arguing heavy metal is 'a symbolic rebellion of a compromised class, proletarian internationalism in a most imposing' form.

However, the stereotype of a heavy metal fan as a white, working-class male was questioned already by Larkin (1992: 21). Since the early 1990s, a lot has happened in favour of 'metallification' (Wallach et al. 2011b: 20), enabling 'the global conquest of an outcast genre', as the introductory title to part one in Wallach et al. (2011a) expresses it. Indeed, an example from the Finnish context challenges what Wallach et al. (2011b: 16) call *the Weinstein hypothesis* of metal as manual labourers' music: Finns voted the 'monster-metal' band *Lordi* to successfully represent Finland in the Eurovision song contest in 2006, after which Tarja Halonen, Madame President of the Republic of Finland of the time, openly expressed a liking for metal music (e.g. Promised Land of Heavy Metal 2008; Rossi & Jervell 2013; see also Hjelm et al. 2013: 5; Moberg 2009: 179). Finland might make an exception, but for this very reason the exclusion of Finnish metal from Weinstein's (2011: 36—43) genealogy of heavy metal music

is surprising. *Amorphis, Children of Bodom, HIM, Nightwish, Stratovarius,* and *Waltari* are only some of the Finnish metal bands touring and finding audiences outside their country of origin. While traditionally Finland has not been a successful exporter of popular music, the advent of Finnish metal music seems to be changing things (Hjelm 2013).

Metal music has thus become more mainstream—'one of the richest and most vital of today's popular music cultures' (Wallach et al. 2011b: 27)—and this necessarily involves a more varied fan base than suggested by Weinstein. It coincides with a process of diversification of the genre, of which the most relevant example for us is the development of Christian metal, discussed in Section 3.2.

Returning to the issue of rebellion in heavy metal, Wallach et al. (2011b: 23) point out that this can be viewed from two sides:

> …heavy metal is not just about rebellion, the assertion of simplistically oppositional stances, or the adolescent rejection of parental values. It is also a constructive force, providing alternative cultural identities to those offered or projected by the cultural traditions, nationalisms, and religious movements that are influential in the locales where the music takes root.

According to Wallach et al., metal music functions as an alternative way of constructing one's identity in opposition to, among other things, religion, which in the Western context of the origins of metal music means Christianity. Most significantly for us here, this rebellion shown towards religious authorities, and Christian teaching in particular, shows in the ways heavy metal bands intentionally use provocative language and other semiotic resources in their subcultural performance. Weinstein (2000: 27—45) identifies two major themes utilized both verbally and visually in heavy metal: one, Dionysian—celebrating hedonism in the realms of sex, drugs, and rock'n' roll—and two, Chaotic—challenging order through emotional issues such as the underworld, the grotesque, mayhem, and death. Rather than embracing them, then, bands utilize, elaborate, and, especially within the Norwegian-born genre of black metal, reverse the values conveyed in the themes and imagery of the Judeo-Christian tradition (Bossius 2003: 78; Luhr 2005: 105—106). A look at band names such as *Mayhem*, *Death*, *Cannibal Corpse* and *Cradle of Filth* is enough to illustrate the point.

The questioning of religious authorities strengthened the position of metal music as an outcast genre in the 1980s. In the United States especially, with its heightened political awareness of Evangelical Christians—often contributing to the Christian right—metal music was met with serious doubt to the extent that bands were sued for encouraging young people to commit suicide (Moberg 2008: 86; Weinstein 2000: 250—257; Walser 1993: 137—151). Another central concern for Christians was the alleged satanic elements involved in metal music, and not merely elements: some viewed metal as the Devil's music per se (Weinstein 2000: 258—262). However, Weinstein (2000: 260) upholds that 'heavy metal's embrace of deviltry is not a religious statement.' Rather, in her

view, it is a statement about a 'phoney', repressive society (see also Bossius 2003: 78; Kahn-Harris 2007: 38—40).

As noted, a lot has happened since the 1980s to render metal music, or parts of it, more acceptable to the general public, and indeed, to great many Christians as well, as will be discussed in the following section. I write *parts* because, following from the diversification of the genre towards the end of 1980s, some newly born subgenres were more easily tolerated by mainstream listeners than others. Below, I outline the development of metal, relying on Kahn-Harris (2007, 2011) and Weinstein (2011: 36—43). While similar types of genealogies have also been produced by other scholars, Weinstein does not merely reproduce the 'established' history of metal but also problematizes the boundaries of the genre. Her approach is not without problems, however, as discussed earlier. Kahn-Harris, on the other hand, pioneers scholarly approaches to 'extreme' forms of metal music.

Weinstein (2011: 38) describes how heavy metal, as it became understood towards the end of the 1970s, involved distinct vocal, lyrical, guitar, and drum styles. In Britain, the faster-tempo punk music that was thriving at that time also had an influence on metal. This New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM), represented for example by *Iron Maiden*, became together with 1970s heavy metal later called 'classic metal'.

NWOBHM further speeded up the tempo in the early 1980s, creating a more aggressive style, first called speed metal. Later known as thrash metal, as it spread in the West, the vocals in the music of *Anthrax* and *Slayer*, among others, began to sound more like growling. Elsewhere, NWOBHM-derived power metal, represented for instance by the German band *Helloween*, promoted and 'exaggerated' (Weinstein 2011: 40) tenor vocals. Simultaneously, mainstream media began granting airplay to bands like *Aerosmith*, *Bon Jovi* and *Poison*, which played hard rock-inflected lite metal, sometimes also called hair metal due to band members' professionally done 'gravity-defying' (Weinstein 2011: 39) hair. Lite metal, especially in the US, gave way to grunge (e.g. *Nirvana*) in the early 1990s, and later to nu-metal, which borrows from hip hop (e.g. *Korn*, *Linkin Park*, *Rage against the Machine*).

Thrash metal, for its part, continued to develop into the extreme styles of death metal (e.g. *Obituary*, *Six feet under*) and black metal (e.g. *Mayhem*, *Venom*). Kahn-Harris (2011: 201) describes how extreme metal was at first established 'through the efforts of small groups of people across the globe who, as a reaction to what they saw as the effete nature of the heavy metal of the day, sought to create something that would "restore" to metal its transgressive edge.' And this they did: as the opposite of lite metal, death and black metal represent the heaviest end of the metal music spectrum with their downtuned guitars, low-pitched, growling vocals and double-bass drums (Kahn-Harris 2007, 32—33; Wallach et al. 2011b: 12—13; Weinstein 2011: 40—42).

Black metal differs somewhat from the other extreme metal styles in, firstly, having evolved not in the US but in Norway. Secondly, black metal vocalists prefer rasped screams to growling. Black metal bands may also

incorporate keyboards or sampling into their music (Kahn-Harris 2007: 5; Weinstein 2011: 42). What distinguishes black metal from other kinds of metal (culture) is that, in black metal, religion and religious thinking have a prominent role. Black metal is first and foremost against Christianity but also opposed to other organised forms of religion. (Bossius 2003: 107.) Although Weinstein (2000: 260—263; 2011: 42) further emphasizes that embracing deviltry and pre-Christian and folk traditions is not a religious act within black metal, there is some evidence of the involvement of the Norwegian black metal scene, especially, in violence, crime, and outright Satan worship (e.g. Bennett 2001: 55—56; Bossius 2003: 78; Hagen 2011: 180—183; Harris 2000: 16; Kahn-Harris 2007: 37—38; Moynihan & Søderlind 2003 [1998], Phillipov 2013).

While metal music has given rise to criticism among concerned parents, conservative politicians, and Christians alike, a particularly innovative way of challenging (black) metal of crucial importance here emerged in the 1980s in the US—Christian metal. The following section focuses on this phenomenon especially in the context of Finland.

3.2 Christian metal

In this section, we approach closer to the core phenomenon of this thesis. In what follows, I discuss the history of Christian metal in general and its development and present-day status in Finland in particular. How did heavy metal become 'Christian'? How is it possible that what was first perceived as the Devil's music became an acceptable channel of evangelization and worship?

Despite the increased scholarly interest in metal music, surprisingly little work has been done on Christian metal so far (but see Moberg 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013a, forthcoming). Recently, Partridge (2010) offered a brief but inspiring commentary on Christian black metal in relation to the broader theme of religion and popular culture. In Bossius' (2003) dissertation, Christian metal had a more central role: in studying the intersections of music and religion, Bossius looked at two distinct genres, black metal and trance music. He analysed Christian black metal groups alongside secular ones and the similarities and differences between the two ideologically motivated branches. Therefore, his work also provides this study with some important insights. To start with, Bossius (2003: 77) is explicit in identifying the 'problem' posed by the notion of Christian black metal in calling it 'a total contradiction'. With respect to Christian metal more generally, and not just Christian black metal, the paradox—a 'double controversy' (Moberg 2013a)—remains. The following sections further this discussion based on the history of Christian metal.

3.2.1 Christian metal as a subculture

When I write about Christian metal in this thesis, I refer to it as a subculture. This is a self-conscious act: I am aware of the fact that some readers may find

the use of the term questionable. Therefore, this section on Christian metal opens with a discussion on the history of the concept 'subculture' and a review previous literature not only utilizing but also replacing it with other concepts. Finally, it will also become clear why I continue to use this term.

The concept of subculture was developed in two contexts: in the USA, urban sociologists of the so-called Chicago school stressed the centrality of delinquency and deviant behaviour among *sub*cultures (Becker 1963; Merton 1957; Matza & Sykes 1961; all cited in Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004: 2—4). In Europe, subcultural theory developed in relation to and within the sphere of influence of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies (CCCS) in the late 1960s and 1970s by scholars who viewed culture primarily as an expression of class resistance (e.g. Hall & Jefferson 1976). In this line of thinking, attention was predominantly given to post-war British male groups from mostly working-class backgrounds. These gender- and class-biased underpinnings caused many scholars to criticize the understanding of subculture within CCCS, although the studies themselves are of great value as they initiated a new branch of academic endeavour focusing on music, culture, youth and identity (see e.g. Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004: 4—6; Heath et al. 2009; McRobbie & Garber 1976; Moberg 2009: 41—43.) For example, Bennett (1999: 602) challenges the view of subcultures as youth resistance and prefers to interpret them as hyphenated with emerging forms of consumer culture that 'offered young people the opportunity to break away from their traditional class-based identities' towards 'new, self-constructed forms of identity'. Additionally, Frith (1983) raises the question of the coherence of subcultural groups and sees them as not always tightly knit networks but rather as consisting of 'floating memberships and fluid boundaries'. Jenkins (1983: 41) also questions understanding of 'the group' and argues that groups are not always separate or deviant from the more dominant cultures but that there is 'commonality between subcultures'. Finally, Thornton (1995: 119) claims that subcultural theory overlooks the role of the media (representation) on the collective self-image of youth.

Because of the burdens associated with subcultural theory as developed within CCCS, some scholars have preferred to discard 'subculture' altogether and to replace it with something else. From the perspective of Christian metal, the last three criticisms mentioned above—on coherence, deviation, and media—are especially relevant and worth considering. On the basis of Moberg's (2009: 178) extensive sociological exploration of Christian metal we know that Christian metallers do not form a close community with neat borders but that there are also 'hang around' members who come and go. Similarly, Christian metal is not completely about deviance from either Christian or metal music communities but more of a mixture, a new blending, of the two. What is more, the media, and the Internet especially, play an important role in Christian metal.

Moberg (2009: 45—49) provides an excellent overview of the limits of 'subculture' and chooses to follow the work of Kahn-Harris (2007) on global

extreme metal in that he himself uses the concept 'scene' in the context of Christian metal. Moberg views 'scene' as a more apt term than 'subculture' because it does not predetermine the quality of the relationships between different elements of popular music cultures, such as production and consumption. Instead, using the concept of scene helps him to describe the 'interconnectedness between the local, national, and transnational dimensions of Christian metal' as well as the interaction between Christian metal adherents. Moreover, he says, it is an emic term and used by Finnish Christian metal adherents, too ('skene'). According to him, Finnish Christian metal meets the criteria for a scene, as outlined by Kahn-Harris (2007: 101), in that there is scenic structure and stability ('highly independent' scenic institutions), self-consciousness, shared aesthetics, as well as scenic discourses.

In addition to 'scene', two other similar types of concepts have been introduced to tackle the criticisms around 'subculture': 'neo-tribe' (Maffesoli 1996; Bennett 1999; Sweetman 2004) and 'lifestyle' (e.g. Chaney 1996; Jenkins 1983; Miles 2000). Both of these characterize groups of people more loosely and often only temporarily connected (e.g. popular music festivals and leisure activities) which are fluid and unstable by definition. In addition, 'lifestyle' incorporates consumer goods as important and central ingredients in the construction of distinctive aesthetic and material styles. Moreover, the concept of 'Community of Practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), from research on learning, has been applied in sociolinguistics (e.g. Eckert 2006; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992; see also Holmes & Meyerhoff 1999) to describe groups of participants who (are learning to) share a social-communicative way of interacting with each other and also do something practical together, such as sports (Jones 2012; Peuronen 2011). Although it could be applied in the context of Christian metal to study the social-communicative resources shared by Christian metal bands on their websites to orient to and participate in the social world, in Eckert's (2006) line of thinking, it is by no means clear to what extent the adherents of Christian metal music can be said to form a community. Moreover, with written discourse on band websites, one may also question how much concrete action and shared hands-on practice is involved.

Despite the harsh criticism and range of alternative terms, there are scholars who continue to see 'subculture' as useful. For example, Hodkinson (2002, 2004) reworks the notion by replacing 'some of the problematic elements' with '*cultural substance*, a relative quality that can be contrasted with cultural fluidity, and which might be identified primarily through evidence of group distinctiveness, identity, commitment and autonomy' (Hodkinson 2004: 136). Also, Bennett (2004: 169) notes that the concept may find new currency in studies of virtual contexts, such as *YouTube*, where 'young people are able to fashion meaningful and "authentic" identities, framed around issues of knowledge, power and exclusivity—all key elements of subcultural memberships such as these are understood reflexively and enacted by young people.' In this thesis, I align with Hodkinson and Bennett in retaining 'subculture'. To make myself clear, in using 'subculture' I am not

suggesting that Christian metal is class-based, male-centred, anti-social, delinquent, inferior, fixed, or homogeneous. For as Hodkinson (2004: 142) says,

> There is simply no requirement that all the minutiae of that particular adaptation should stand as integral and irremovable components in the definition and use of subculture, now or in the future.

In fact, in this thesis I do not aim at suggesting anything about the structures of Christian metal. Rather, I prefer to use 'subculture' to illustrate the characteristics of Christian metal as a hybrid or a border culture—one that very much depends on its 'mother cultures', Christianity and metal music, for resources (message and means). Although it is possible to argue that contemporary Christian metal could be produced independently of the two, the case is not so clear when one thinks about the whole discursive and socio-cultural processes related to Christian metal: for different types of audiences, being familiar with Christianity and metal music culture in more general terms is helpful in understanding what Christian metal is all about. On these grounds, it seems, many listeners either approve or disapprove of it (see Jousmäki 2014, forthcoming; Leppänen et al. 2014: 120—123).

Finally, I also see 'subculture' as more useful for describing Christian metal than any of the other concepts discussed above because of its connotation with 'resistance'. While 'scene' may be particularly apt for Moberg's (2009) purposes of analyzing Christian metal in Finland and transnationally—that is, in a macro perspective—my purpose is not to conduct a systematic exploration of Christian metal in general. 'Subculture' has been accused of evoking associations with resistance (which it does because of its history), and this association is precisely why I prefer to use the term. In this thesis, I argue that the perspective of resistance continues to be relevant in Christian metal today. I show in the articles that, although Christian metal draws on some aspects of Christianity and metal music, it simultaneously and importantly resists other aspects of these two domains. This tension sparked the formation of Christian metal in the first place and continues to exist in various ways, as becomes clear in the case studies.

3.2.2 Development in the USA

The origins of Christian metal lie in 1980s California. Luhr (2005) has described how Christians started 'appropriating' metal music, alongside other popular music forms, for their own uses from the mid-1980s onwards. According to her,

> heavy metal provided an appealing arena for cultural contestation in part because the genre addressed themes and used imagery that were important – even sacred – to Christian audiences. The common symbols, while used in divergent ways, provided an entry point for evangelical commentary. (Luhr 2005: 114.)

Borrowing from Hart (1988: 19), Luhr (2005: 106—107) calls Christian metal artists 'metal missionaries' and explains how they found heavy metal a possible genre to engage in, as it put 'emphasis on theatrics and power' and made use of

sacred symbols, although this sometimes meant violating them. Luhr further describes how these metal missionaries also 'found that the evangelical language of dissent gave them an entry point into the linguistic styles of metal music, a genre that emphasized themes of power and struggle'. Luhr also takes into account the socio-political context of the US in the 1980s: she asserts that North American youth were facing a lot of social problems, and to tackle them, Christian bands utilized the 'cultural position that secular artists already held' and wanted to provide 'models for moral living' and an inspiration to 'a return to submission to the authority of parents, God, and churches among their youthful fan base' (Luhr 2005: 115).

Appropriating heavy metal into the service of Christianity involved, as Luhr (2005: 115) explains, Christian bands using 'all aspects of their work—including interviews, lyrics, liner notes, album art, and music videos—to convey a "Christian" perspective' (Luhr 2005: 115—116). This perspective included, first, placing emphasis on 'personal responsibility' as regards salvation, for example through calling people into belief and through testifying to one's own spiritual turning point. Second, the perspective was later widened to include contemporary social issues, such as abortion, drugs, and national values. Luhr thus posits that Christian metal built on the basic premises of Evangelical Christianity, known for adapting its means of telling the never-changing message (see Section 2.1).

At first, Christian metal was not very well received in the USA by either secular or Christian audiences. Luhr (2005: 118—120) explains how secular and non-Christian listeners found it difficult to come to terms with Christian metal ideologically. The pursuit of relatively well-known Christian metal bands of the time (e.g. *Barren Cross, Guardian*, *Stryken*, *Stryper*) to re-submit themselves and their listeners to authorities simply made them appear inauthentic—after all, metal music was supposed to be about rebellion *against* authorities.

Neither were things going smoothly on the Christian front: Luhr (2005: 106—107, 120—124) continues by describing how socio-politically active Christians in the US, suspicious of metal music in general (see Section 3.1), found Christian metal perhaps even more questionable. Although 'wordly' music was already being utilized for evangelical Christian purposes in the form of CCM (see Section 2.2), metal music was not at first considered an appropriate alternative. According to Luhr, Christians feared that Christian musicians would give up on their moral values in the face of metal music and in particular its literal appearance:

> Many Christian bands favoured 'glam' rock, which featured ornate costumes and hairstyles as well as a sound that emphasized melody rather than aggression. But for conservative Christians, clothes and hair provided important insights about gender roles: long hair on men suggested effeminacy---the challenge to 'manliness' presented by long hair and glam makeup posed a further threat to heterosexual norms. (Luhr 2005: 121—122.)

So, while they were justifying their music to secular audiences, pioneering Christian metal groups also had to justify what they were doing to a larger

Christian population (see also Moberg 2013a: 87—92). Luhr (2005: 121) argues that the problem was primarily whether metal music should be a lifestyle, stressing personal preferences over faith, or a tool for proclaiming the gospel and achieving faith (see also Moberg 2009: 156; Section 3.2.3 in this thesis).

The fact that Christian metal music was marginalized by the majority of evangelical institutions led, among other things, to the establishment of a congregation of their own for Christian metalheads in 1984. Known as *Sanctuary*, it was led by Pastor Bob Beeman, who has since become known worldwide as a model and a supporter of Christian metal. Growing later into a larger movement, Sanctuary featured religious practices (worship, holy communion, Bible reading, prayer) and evangelization among listeners of metal music, accompanied by metal sounds and style (Luhr 2005: 111; Moberg 2008: 90, 2009: 200).

Since the 1980s and 1990s, the status of Christian metal in the USA has strengthened and there are now more US-based record companies releasing Christian metal music than ever before (e.g. *Solid State Records, Bombworks Records, Bloodbought Records*). Some acts, such as *Stryper* and *P.O.D.*, have also been well received among not-exclusively-Christian audiences (Moberg 2009: 134, 137). Following the establishment of Christian metal bands in the USA, groups have also been formed in Canada, Mexico, and Brazil, as well as in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium; and, importantly, in Sweden, Norway and Finland (see Moberg 2009: 172—175.)

3.2.3 Christian metal in Finland

The development of Christian metal in the US, as discussed in the previous section, resonates to some extent with the rise of Christian metal music in Finland. As pointed out in Section 3.1, metal music has become rather mainstream in the country today, already having achieved a solid footing in the 1990s. During that time, Christian metal also began making its way into the country.

The literature on Finnish Christian metal has so far been scarce; neither has much been written about Christian popular music in Finland in general. As Könönen and Huvi (2005: 9, 22—23, 42—44, 112—114, 129, 138, 142, 146, 154—157), the authors of the pioneering book on the history of Finnish (Contemporary) Christian music, explain, the combination of popular music and Christianity was for a long time met with suspicion in Finland (see also Halme 1994). This, they argue, went both for religious leaders and the general audience, some members of the latter having maintained their prejudice till the 21st century. In fact, one can hardly talk about Contemporary Christian music in Finland in the same sense one can in the context of the US, as discussed in Section 2.2 (the writers acknowledge this in preferring to use the term *Suomi-gospel*, 'Finnish gospel', instead): the Christian popular music produced and distributed in Finland has tended to be a small-budget pastime undertaken by people who, despite their competence in music, earn their living in 'proper' jobs. Not many artists have found success and airplay in both the Christian and

secular arenas; Könönen and Huvi name the 2000's singer-songwriter *Juha Tapio* as the first to have really preserved his popularity among Christians even after signing with a secular label and changing his approach (i.e. the style of his lyrics) somewhat.

Könönen and Huvi's (2005) book is especially important from the perspective of this thesis as it also incorporates a short section on the development of Christian metal music in Finland (Saari 2005). This, together with a Wikipedia article (Kristillinen metallimusiikki 2013), is practically all that has been published, magazines and newspapers aside, in Finnish on Finnish Christian metal music. A notable exception to the limited literature on the topic and therefore of high value for this thesis is Moberg's (2008, 2009, 2011, 2013a, forthcoming) work in religious studies: despite disciplinary differences, the broad scope in his work, particularly in his dissertation (Moberg 2009), provides a valuable source for this thesis, as well as a point for comparison. In his thesis, Moberg reviews the history of Christian metal in Finland and maps the infrastructure and institutionalization of the scene. By interviewing (what he calls) scene adherents, he paints a comprehensive overall picture of the meanings and functions of Christian metal. Interestingly to us here, Moberg also sets out to identify the main verbal, visual, and aesthetic features of Christian metal. I will return to these issues after a review of the history of Finnish Christian metal.

All the writers mentioned above agree that *DBM* (Destroyer of Black Metal) and *Sanctify* were among the first Finnish Christian metal groups, preceded in sound by such Christian hard/melodic rock groups as *Terapia* and *The Rain*. Illustrative of the close ties between the scene members in Finland today is that *DBM* involved two names, Aki Särkioja and Manu Lehtinen, who would later become influential in the successful Christian metal groups *Immortal Souls* and *Deuteronomium*. The latter, established in 1993, is generally described as the first big name and as perhaps the most celebrated one among Finnish Christian metal groups (also see Section 1.2.3.1).

Two members of *Deuteronomium* went on to start the record label *Little Rose Productions* in 1998, a company that released many popular Christian metal albums during the years, including some by *Deuteronomium* itself. Moberg (2009: 175—178) discusses the company as also functioning as a central distributor of both domestic and foreign Christian metal in Finland. Half of the label was later sold onwards and became the record store *Maanalainen Levykauppa*, 'the underground record store', which today retails Christian music of all styles and has also released some Christian metal albums (e.g. 'Blood and Water' by *Mehida* in 2007, and 'Punainen lanka' by *Punainen Lanka*, 'red thread', in 2009, the latter of which pioneers Finnish Christian women's hard rock). In addition to these, other important Finnish scenic institutions have included the fanzines *The Christian Underground Zine* and *Ristillinen Metal Magazine*, the online discussion forum *Kristillinen Metalliunioni*, 'the Christian metal union', as well as great many festivals and events, featuring bands from Finland and abroad.

Such events, Moberg argues, have been more prominent in Finland than in most other countries.

As to the number of people in the Christian metal scene in Finland (by 'scene', I refer to the infrastructure around and activities related to Christian metal), Moberg estimates the presence of up to 30 active bands involving roughly 500 people. Further, the number rises to around 1,000 if one counts those whose attachment to the scene is more temporary in nature. Most of the active adherents of the scene are young males (around 16–30 years old), but Moberg (2009: 178—179) notes that also women constitute 'a clearly visible group' within the scene. Moberg argues that Christian metallers do not come from a single religious denomination, but show more varied backgrounds. More precisely, 'most are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church but many are also affiliated with other free churches'.

Besides Moberg's (2009: 180) argument that denominational affiliation is unimportant within Christian metal, which is probably the case, it is also true that the Evangelical Lutheran Church has played a significant role in pronouncedly welcoming metal music: since 2006, the Church has granted a shelter for metal music adherents with its launch of *Metallimessu*, 'metal mass'. This differs from the 'metal parish movements' in Sweden, Germany, Brazil and Mexico, which function as alternatives for established Christian institutions (see Moberg 2009: 196). Today, such services, including Holy Communion, are organized around Finland, some of them now going by the name *Hevimessu* 'heavy mass'. They follow the outline and sequence of a traditional church service with the exception that all of the liturgy and hymns are accompanied by metal music performed by a live band, often featuring (local) Christian metal musicians.

Institutions in the scene, together with skilful musicians, have laid the way for Finnish Christian metal's success outside Finland. Some musicians co-operate across the Nordic countries—for example, the Finland-based *Oratorio*, *Renascent* and *Mehida* have featured Swedish members as well, and Finnish bands have performed at Nordic Christian music festivals (e.g. *HB* at Gullbrannafestivalen, Sweden, 2010, and *Deuteronomium* at Seaside Festival, Norway, 2013).

However, Christian metal remained unfamiliar to most Finns until the end of the first decade of the 21st century. This started to change with the establishment of Metal Mass, music magazines featuring Christian metal (e.g. *Soundi* 2/2009, *Inferno* 5/2008), and *Hevinkelium*, 'heavyngelium', a project with Finnish metal musicians performing covers of traditional hymns that started in 1997. Along the way, *Tuska Open Air Metal Festival* in Helsinki, the largest metal music festival in the Nordic area, has also featured such names as *Immortal Souls* and *Callisto*, associated more or less obviously with Christianity (Moberg 2009: 198).

In the following two sections, I look more closely into subcultural discourses, themes and visuality in Christian metal in general, at the same time reviewing Moberg's dissertation on the topic.

3.2.3.1 Subcultural discourses in Christian metal

In his 2009 dissertation, Moberg reports both on the history and the current state of Christian metal in Finland (also see Moberg 2011). Related to the latter, one of Moberg's—as also for most lay people—key questions is what Christian metal is all about. To start with, Moberg (2009: 136—137) notes that what makes metal music Christian is to a large extent the same factors that make Contemporary Christian Music: artists' personal backgrounds as believers, a Christian message, and the agenda of the distribution channels. Moberg further explains that defining 'Christian metal' is a question of the 'discursive construction of the scene. As such, [it is] characterized by constant contestation and negotiation.' In other words, Christian metal becomes what it is through discursive processes in which the phenomenon is talked (or written) into being—often without full consensus.

Moberg (2009: 204) aims to gain an emic perspective on Christian metal by 'approaching the scene from within'. After inquiring into what meanings and functions Christian metal music and culture have for the people involved in it (website administrators, band members, etc.), he argues that Christian metal musicians and fans agree that the members of a 'truly Christian' band have a personal Christian faith and seek to lead Christian lives, and that these features also show to some extent in the content or message mediated by the band's music. But again, 'not all Christian metal bands share the same degree of evangelistic fervor', especially if trying to break through on the secular market and not wanting to put listeners off with too straightforward a message. Some even wish to discard the attribute 'Christian' altogether and thereby authenticate their music as 'just' metal. At the same time, Moberg (2009: 136—145) argues, there is another kind of an audience, one that needs support and inspiration in the Christian faith they already possess.

More specifically, Moberg (2009: 210) observes four interrelated discourses, 'ways of representing certain phenomena in a certain light', that are used within Christian metal transnationally and at different levels of scenic activity (e.g. media, lyrics, live performance) to convey the meaning and function of Christian metal. These describe Christian metal as 1) an alternative form of religious expression, 2) an alternative means of evangelism, 3) a legitimate form of religious expression and evangelism, and 4) an alternative to secular metal. As to the first type of main discourse, the key issue is that Christian metal is considered an alternative form of religious expression in that it merges Christian faith with the particular music culture of metal, which makes it different from the more traditional forms of religious expression. Second, Christian metal is conceived as an alternative, often an effective, form of evangelistic outreach among people not interested in institutionalized Christianity. To stress the legitimacy of Christian metal music for religious expression and evangelism, third, is not as typical among Finnish Christian metal musicians as it is transnationally (Moberg 2009: 249—253). Finally, Christian metal is regarded as positive metal—an alternative to the allegedly destructive message of secular metal or, less categorically, a complement to the

overall metal music genre (Moberg 2009: 253—258). The latter discourse is, according to Moberg, more commonplace among Finnish Christian metal adherents than transnationally. This Moberg explains as partly resulting from the socio-historical and religious context where Finnish Christian metalheads grew up—listening to metal music at a time when it was flourishing in the country; the purchasing by parish workers of the kinds of Christian popular music, including metal, favoured by young people in their congregations; and, importantly, a situation where the activities of Christian metal musicians were 'generally viewed in a clearly positive light'.

Thus, within the subculture, 'Christian metal' can be conceptualized in particular ways. On the other hand, the subculture is also partly constructed by outsiders, for example through media representation (see Moberg 2009: 225—229); this issue, however, is outside the scope here. More relevant from the perspective of this thesis are Moberg's descriptions of the visual and verbal dimensions of Christian metal—the focus of the next section.

3.2.3.2 Themes and visual expression in Christian metal

So far, we have learned that Christian metal conveys a Christian perspective, involves some amount of evangelism, and differs to some extent from secular metal. We might remember Luhr's (2005: 114) observation, discussed in Section 3.2.2, that the symbols utilized in metal music more generally, 'while used in divergent ways, provided an entry point for evangelical commentary', and the parallel she draws between 'the evangelical language of dissent' and 'the linguistic styles of metal music' (Luhr 2005: 107). But *how* does Christian metal incorporate all of this?

Moberg (2009: 146—171) argues that, 'Christian metal bands tend to write lyrics on serious and austere topics, using strong language and rhetoric, [but] they usually also emphasize the 'good news' of the gospel in various ways.' In more detail, Moberg argues that Christian metal songs are typically written around six main themes:

1) Biblical, eschatological, and apocalyptic themes;
2) Crucifixion, suffering, and the sacrificial death of Christ;
3) Evangelism;
4) Spiritual warfare;
5) Rebellion against sin; and
6) Everyday social and personal struggle.

Moberg illustrates each theme with plenty of examples from song lyrics and websites. The list helps to understand what Christian metal songs are more concretely about, and it should come as no surprise that these themes also come up in the data analysed in this thesis. Importantly, it must be remembered that in particular the first two themes above also come up in secular metal lyrics. In contrast to Christian metal, however, secular, and especially anti-Christian, metal tend to view Judeo-Christian ideology and imagery negatively and seek to subvert their biblical uses. As discussed in Section 3.1, some bands, black

metal bands in particular, have taken this further and deliberately rejected Christian values.

As with the musical style itself, the visuality of Christian metal is also inspired by similar practices in secular metal. According to Weinstein (2000: 27), the visuality of metal music is depicted in a range of subcultural commodities such as T-shirts, badges, album covers, magazine artwork, band logos, and so on. In more detail,

> the colors and imagery on the album covers enhance the power conveyed by the logos. The dominant color is black, used especially as the background for the other artwork. Red is the second most important color. The color scheme is not gentle, relaxing, or merely neutral. Rather, it is intense, exciting, or ominous. Whereas the code for pop and country albums mandates photographs of the faces of the performers, the fronts of heavy metal albums are not graced with close-ups of band members. The heavy metal code specifies that what is depicted must be somewhat ominous, threatening, and unsettling, suggesting chaos and bordering on the grotesque. (Weinstein 2000: 29.)

Although Weinstein's comment, published originally in 1991, gives us some idea of the basic elements of the visual design of the metal music genre, it may now be somewhat out-dated due to the diversification of metal genres, and to metal music having become more mainstream more generally, as discussed in Section 3.1. In contrast to Weinstein's categorical description of metal, metal music today is more varied in its visual expression—symphonic metal, for instance, embraces nature and fantasy as visual themes (see also Moberg 2009: 161).

This said, it is surely interesting how the power, intensity and chaos conveyed through metal's visuality, as suggested by Weinstein, find currency in metal music built on a Christian worldview. According to Moberg (2008: 90, 2009: 161), Christian metal comes close to secular metal not only musically but also visually, aesthetically, and stylistically, and that the visual dimension plays an important role in Christian metal, for example in concerts, on websites and album covers, and in musicians' and fans' appearance. More specifically,

> Christian metal's visual dimension also conforms to a broadly defined metal aesthetic. It includes typical gloomy metal imagery such as skulls, fire, weapons such as swords and axes, motives of violent battles and death, apocalyptic images of hell and the destruction of worlds and so on. With the exception of overtly anti-Christian motifs, the *type* of imagery used is largely identical with that of secular metal. (Moberg 2009: 161.)

We thus see that Moberg's findings resonate rather well with Weinstein's (2000: 27—31, 127—131) description of visuality in secular metal. However, Moberg (2009: 162) also points out that some, not all, Christian metal groups use visuals to make 'pronounced references to Christianity' and to anchor the music institutionally, for instance through images and icons representing biblical figures (e.g. Jesus, angels) and events (e.g. crucifixion), and religious objects and sites (e.g. the Bible, grave, cross). From the perspective of this thesis, what is especially interesting is *how* these references are made and for what purposes. I

will return to this after the following section on Christian metal in online settings.

3.2.4 Christian metal online

Popular culture is today largely characterized by an *e*-perspective: phenomena spread from offline to online and vice versa, even to the extent that parts of popular culture are built and take place solely in the Internet (see Leppänen et al. 2014). Examples of popular culture online range from bands' and artists' commercial websites to discussion forums, games, e-zines and user-generated memes in *YouTube*, *Facebook*, and other forms of social media. Online media also plays a central role in Christian metal:

> … The Internet has played an important role in the formation of what can be viewed as a transnational Christian metal discursive community with a set of common ideals and goals as it also offers a range of opportunities for communication and interaction among its members. However, in doing so it has not only affected the nature of Christian metal discourse by making it more fixed and concentrated but, arguably, also entailed the formation of certain requirements on participation, such as the acquisition and understanding of a specific use of language. (Moberg 2009: 192.)

Moberg posits that the Internet has enhanced the communication between Christian metalheads based in different local and national scenes, and that, in engaging in such communication, they work not only for the discursive construction of the subculture but also of its language norms. A similar tendency for peers to regulate and monitor each other's language use is found in online discussions around other types of interest; Leppänen et al. (2013, 2014) discuss fan fiction and football as examples. However, Moberg (2009: 186—194; see also Moberg 2008: 91—96) does not describe the kind of discourse used online in detail, except for the four main discourses on the meaning and function of Christian metal. These, he says, are found across different forms of Christian metal media online: webzines (e.g. the US-based *The Whipping Post*, Finland-based *Victory Zine*), so called resource sites (e.g. the Sweden-based *The Metal for Jesus Page*, US-based *Christian Xtreme*), discussion forums (e.g. the US-based *Firestream.net*, Finland-based *Kristillinen metalliunioni*, online radio sites (e.g. the Sweden-based *Metal Countdown*, Sanctuary International-run *Intense Radio*), and, of course, official band websites.

Online contexts, such as the ones mentioned above, favour and enunciate the visual, and indeed, multisemiotic, aspects of the subculture. With respect to metal music websites in general, Weinstein (2011: 52) argues they 'tend towards a highly graphic visual format, with dark colours, and they often sport moving visuals of fire, skulls, and dripping blood.' Less dramatically, Moberg (2009: 162) describes how official Christian metal band websites and (online) Christian metal media sometimes include visual references to Christianity, 'usually in the form of crosses.'

As can be seen from the literature review presented in this section, this thesis fills a gap in the current research on Christian metal. Previous research has observed the history and scenic structure of as well as the type of visuality

and certain discourses used within Christian metal. This thesis adds to this research tradition by addressing the discursive construction of identities and subculture and complements it by providing a detailed micro-level look into certain multisemiotic discourse practices in Christian metal online. The study contributes to the picture of (Finnish) Christian metal identities and culture in online environments through four case studies. Before summarizing the four articles in Chapter 5, I will first present the theories that my approach orients to.

4 THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical orientations of this thesis. The discussion is divided into three parts that introduce the main theoretical underpinnings of this study: language and religion; identity in discourse and in song lyrics; and representation of the self and othering. As will become clear, these themes combine in this thesis into an eclectic framework. Such an approach is necessitated by the aims of this thesis: to explore the discursive construction of Christian metal identities and subculture as a multifaceted phenomenon, a cross-disciplinary approach is called for, one that helps to highlight different but inter-related aspects of the phenomenon, as shown through the four case studies. This chapter presents one solution for tackling such a theoretical challenge.

4.1 Language and religion

The first theoretical orientation of this thesis is the study of the interrelationship between language and religion. Recently, Mukherjee (2013: 1—2) has noted the inseparability of language from religion, and vice versa, but identifies a lack of research that aims at 'reading them together'. Along similar lines, Darquennes and Vandenbussche (2011: 1) point out that although religion has been established in some of the founding literature of the sociology of language (the so-called macro, or society-level sociolinguistics) as playing a role in language variation, change, maintenance and policy, systematic developments towards the study of language and religion as a (micro) sociolinguistic field of inquiry are relatively recent, and—we may rejoice—'currently experiencing vibrant development' (Darquennes & Vandenbussche 2011: 2). Both Mukherjee and Darquennes and Vandenbussche credit the work by Tope Omoniyi and Joshua Fishman (2006) as the first serious attempt at building a critical paradigm for the study of the two fields together. In this section, therefore, I look more closely into their and their colleagues' contributions and consider their

relevance with respect to the aims and purposes of this study. First, however, I review Darquennes and Vandenbussche's (2011) work (which appeared as the introduction to a sociolinguistics yearbook) in which they provide an excellent overview of the development of studies on the interface of language and religion (also see Mooney 2010: 323—325; Spolsky 2003) as well as suggest a research framework on the basis of the papers they introduce.

Darquennes and Vandenbussche (2011) explain how the now developing sociolinguistic field combining language and religion first emerged in studies focusing on religion and language maintenance and shift among immigrants and in multilingual contexts (Haugen 1953 and Fishman 1966, as cited in Darquennes & Vandenbussche 2011: 1) and on language in the domain of religion (Ferguson 1959; Crystal 1966; Stewart 1968; Samarin 1976; all cited in Darquennes & Vandenbussche 2011: 1—2). In their account, which they admit is a 'very brief' one, less attention is paid to studies on the linguistic aspects of missionary activities (on these, see e.g. Edwards 2009: 118—125, 2011: 132—134). Among the more recent contributions to the field of language and religion, they mention Fishman (2006, see below), Sawyer and Simpson (2001) and Spolsky (2004, 2006, 2009) (all cited in Darquennes & Vandenbussche 2011: 2—4).

Importantly from the perspective of this study, Darquennes and Vandenbussche (2011) suggest a framework for the study of language and religion together within sociolinguistics. This they do in an introductory manner in order to group the relevant sociolinguistics papers into four thematic wholes: anthropology of language and religion; meanings and uses of religious language; the role of religion in language standardization and language spread; and the relationship between language and religion as markers of identity. As such, these categories are not immensely helpful for the present study; however, Darquennes and Vandenbussche's work does provide a relevant point of reference when arguing on behalf of what could be called the *sociolinguistics of religion* as one theoretical orientation of this thesis. I will return to this towards the end of this section; for the present, I turn to reviewing the pioneering work by Omoniyi and Fishman (2006), who have lead the way in furthering research on the interrelationships between language and religion.

As a result of the joint efforts by Joshua Fishman, an eminent sociologist of language, and by Tope Omoniyi, a renowned scholar of sociolinguistics and identity, a field of study was launched under the name sociology of language and religion (SLR) (Omoniyi & Fishman 2006), with the compilation by Omoniyi (2010b) continuing the empirical work in the domain.

It was Fishman (2006), however, who in his foundational paper set the SLR study agenda on questions related to both language and religion. In this paper, in the same way as in sociology of language, he proposes that language variation, contact and change are central issues in SLR. In SLR, these are investigated in relation to questions of religion, religiosity, and secularism. More specifically, Fishman formulates a ten-part list of principles, wittily calling it the 'Decalogue' of SLR. Perhaps because of the strong influence of sociology of language on SLR, this framework has thus far rather alienated non-linguists.

This influence shows particularly in the heavy reliance on terminology from sociology of language, such as speech community, linguistic variation, vernacularization, and sociolinguistic repertoire. Fishman, however, successfully combines these issues with questions of religion as a form of social organization, as I will illustrate below.

Fishman's Decalogue is a fruitful framework for scholars studying the use(s) of language(s) in religious settings and religious discourse in general. In SLR, language, or varieties of religious language, are investigated as intersecting with religion, or varieties of religion, in various ways. Bernard Spolsky (2006: 5), another central scholar in the field of language and religion, identifies three such categories in the individual chapters making up Omoniyi and Fishman's (2006) compilation: effects of language on religion, effects of religion on language, and the mutuality of language and religion (see also Mukherjee 2013: 3). Although Spolsky (2006: 5) admits some contributions are 'satisfied with detailed studies of areas where there is some interaction between language and religion', it is important that SLR nevertheless emphasizes the interconnectedness of language and religion. In this, it differs, on the one hand, from sociology of language, which tends to treat religion only as a subcategory or a specific domain of language use, one outcome of which is descriptions of 'religious language' (e.g. Samarin 1972). On the other hand, thanks to its specific interest in the roles, forms and meanings of language use in the context of religion, SLR differs from sociology of religion, where language is not always dealt with systematically, if at all (Fishman 2006: 13; for a discussion, see Moberg 2013b).

While the full list of the principles of SLR appears in Fishman (2006), I introduce here in more detail the ones that guide my approach to Christian metal discourse in this thesis. One of the key principles for the present study is the sixth tenet in Fishman's Decalogue, and it is also one that Omoniyi (2010a) relies on in his work.

> All sources of sociocultural change are also sources of change in the sociolinguistic repertoire vis-à-vis religion, including religious change per se. (Fishman 2006: 18.)

For Fishman, this principle means that social life and religious life, as well as the language(s) or language varieties of these are not separate from one another but are intimately related to each other. This means that neither language nor religion could exist without influencing the other, and neither of them can be reduced to the other. Indeed, Fishman (2006: 18—19) continues, 'language spread itself is, of course, the most common carrier of sociocultural change'.

In the context of this study on Christian metal, this principle is important because it suggests that the phenomenon we now know as Christian metal is, first, influenced by more general socio-cultural changes, and, secondly, that in our socio-cultural context, Christian metal inherently involves a sociolinguistic component in terms of religion—from within Christian metal, the certain ways of talking and writing about religion may spread elsewhere. In addition to the fact that the sociolinguistic practices of the people involved in Christian metal

reflect the union of Christianity and metal, these practices also continue to develop and transform this union (see also Fairclough 1992: 65). Following from this principle, Christian metal, as an example of a possibly transformative sociocultural practice, invites one to study its sociolinguistic practices to understand the dialectic relationship between language and religion (see also Mukherjee 2013: 3). This relates, second, to Fishman's (2006: 20) seventh tenet:

> Multiple religious varieties may co-exist within the same religious community.

With this principle, Fishman establishes that sociocultural, religious or sociolinguistic changes are not uniform but unevenly dispersed. What this means in the context of Christian metal is that as the relationship between language use and a particular socio-cultural setting is two-way, the sociolinguistic practices of Christian metalheads are not uniform but vary for example between different bands and songwriters and across time and space. This, thirdly, makes Fishman's (2006: 23) tenth principle relevant to the task at hand:

> Religious emphases ebb and flow and so do their religious varieties.

In other words, the language uses, together with other aspects of discourse practice, such as textual patterns and images, of religious movements are not unchangeable and eternally fixed but involve processes of change and variation—as do religious movements themselves. Thus, a look into Christian metal websites provides information of how Christianity and metal music manifest together in the digital era—of how religion 'reinvents itself and its representations in order to remain relevant and maintain the loyalty of its constituents, especially where youths are concerned' (Omoniyi 2010a: 221). While historically there has been a preference for a High language variety in church settings (i.e. a certain language, a certain language variety, or a certain (most often formal) register; a modern-day example would be the use of Latin in Catholic liturgy), Christian metal provides an example of how, in some respects but not necessarily in others, religious discourse undergoes change, thereby also redefining established notions of religion and of religious norms.

The three principles introduced above provide the present thesis with a theoretical anchoring preparatory to examining language and religion in the context of Christian metal online: to comprehend the mutuality of language and religion, SLR compels to approach Christian metal from the perspective of its sociolinguistic and discourse practices, as Christian metal both reflects and affects (by way of transforming) the sociocultural practices in our societies, albeit in a gradual and an uneven fashion.

That said, as Fishman's framework is largely concerned with broader, society-level issues (see Omoniyi 2010c: 3—4), we need to look elsewhere for empirical applications of the theory to find support for the use of SLR in the analysis of Christian metal discourse. This is very well in line with the original

theory: as Fishman (2006: 24) himself argues, the framework should be tested and modified, as it is a 'proposition' for the emerging discipline.

From the perspective of studying Christian metal discourse and identities, Mooney's (2006) contribution to Omoniyi and Fishman's (2006) compilation is valuable as she, too, studies how the language of marginal religious movements is constitutive of community and identity. Mooney (2006: 291) writes, 'because of the marginal status of such groups, they tend to borrow discourse forms from existing repertoires. This can be understood as a re-embedding or re-contextualisation of certain language habits (Giddens, 1990) and is symptomatic of their marginal status.' Mooney argues that sociology of language and religion matters in the context of law by showing how marginal religious movements coming up against the UK law are even further marginalized whereas the law itself seems to constitute an acceptable 'religion' (Mooney 2006: 302). However, in building on Fishman's (2002) earlier work, Mooney leaves the linkage between her rationale and Fishman's Decalogue implicit. This may be a general symptom of an emerging field of inquiry; in a subsequent book on the topic (Omoniyi 2010b), a number of writers, while orienting towards SLR, do not explicate their relationship with the framework either.

There are exceptions to this, however. In his introductory chapter, Omoniyi (2010c) argues for the relevance of the concepts of change, accommodation and conflict in the framework of SLR, because they are also central in the three older disciplines preceding SLR—sociology, religion and sociolinguistics. Importantly for this thesis, he also argues that while SLR 'by default takes a macroanalytical perspective…it does not completely rule out the consideration of…micro-level linguistic elements' (Omoniyi 2010c: 3—4). However, he also maintains that SLR is interested in 'languages as systems and the purposes and rationale advanced for choices made in language behaviour' (Omoniyi 2010c: 4). In the collection, the combination of micro and macro perspectives shows for example in the contribution by Salami (2010), who investigates language contact, accommodation, and change in connection to the influence of Islam via Arabic language for the world-view of the Yoruba people. In his micro-level analysis, Salami focuses mostly on lexical items. In turn, Pandharipande (2010) analyses language choice and the authentication of change in the context of Hinduism in the United States. He examines the linguistic structures and their religious functions in devotional English-language Hindu rituals. Kamwamgamalu (2010) also goes beyond the analysis of vocabulary and language choice to describe the creation of black preachers' sacred style through identifying central characteristics, such as 'call-and-response', rhythmic pattern, spontaneity, concreteness, and signifying in their speech. These examples show how SLR can be applied in empirical analyses of more micro-level, situated language uses.

Reviewing previous, (more or less) micro-analytical applications of SLR also helps us to see that individual scholars emphasize different principles of the SLR framework. The features of SLR, or, more precisely a selection of the features of SLR, thus seems to provide different researchers with a theoretical

background for launching and anchoring their research and also for reflecting on their findings—this is also the case with the present study. This renders more understandable what Spolsky (2006: 5) means by articulating that there is considerable variation in the extent to which writers operationalize the principles of SLR in their work.

For the purposes of this study, the most relevant mobilization of the SLR framework is the study by Omoniyi (2010a), who analyses the appropriation of hip-hop music by both Christians and Muslims to attract youth to their respective religions. He discusses language use and social and religious change as a two-way process, in line with one of Fishman's (2006: 18—20) principles, also utilized in this study, according to which 'all sources of sociocultural change are also sources of change in the sociolinguistic repertoire vis-à-vis religion, including religious change per se'. Omoniyi shows how hip-hop artists bridge between the secular and the sacred by drawing on sacred texts and ideas, as well as hip hop vernacular, dress, and naming practices, to complement institutional religious authorities in their (presumed) disability to reach the young whose lives and values are increasingly shaped by globalization and popular culture (Omoniyi 2010a: 221). Using examples from religious hip-hop ministries' websites and song lyrics, Omoniyi explores the sacralisation of secular music (i.e. hip hop) and *the discursive processing entailed in such a transformation* (Omoniyi 2010a: 206, emphasis mine). Importantly for this study, Omoniyi thus provides a prime example of how SLR can be applied to the study of discourse, that is, language in use at the micro level, while also situating the analysis in the more macro-level contexts of religiosity/secularism and sociocultural change.

In this thesis, I argue that SLR can benefit from an even closer analysis of text- and discourse –level phenomena (such as carried out e.g. in Peuronen 2013, although without reference to SLR). For example, while Omoniyi (2010a: 214) observes 'heavy use of (biblical) intertextuality' in Christian hip-hop, I argue that the analysis of intertextuality could, in fact, be pursued further analytically and also with slightly different theoretical tools. In this thesis, more specifically, I suggest that, instead of intertextuality, the notion of 'entextualization' (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Leppänen et al. 2013, 2014) provides a more dynamic tool with which to investigate the uses of biblical scripts in Christian metal discourse (lyrics and homepages) through the processes of decontextualization and recontextualization (see Article 2). As the concept itself is investigated in Section 4.2.3, I will confine myself here to a brief explanation of why this is the case. From a sociolinguistic discourse analytic point of view, what is interesting is not just the existence of intertextuality or the resemblance between different texts. Rather, what is interesting is finding out how such a resemblance is produced and, importantly, for what purposes. To do this, 'entextualization' provides an efficient tool.

In this section, I have discussed how this thesis orients theoretically towards the developing field of studying language and religion together. By reviewing recent contributions to this field, I aligned with three principles of

SLR while also pinpointing that, for the purposes of the present thesis on Christian metal identities, SLR needs to be complemented by a sharpened focus on discourse. Following scholars who have already started moving towards this direction, as described in this section, I suggest a further step be taken towards developing the sociolinguistics of religion. In this thesis, this means that the conceptual apparatus of SLR stemming from the influence of sociology of language is complemented with contemporary sociolinguistics. The following section continues by considering how this can be achieved.

4.2 Identity in web discourse and song lyrics online

The second theoretical orientation of this study is provided by sociolinguistic discourse analysis and the constructionist understanding of identity embedded in it. In the overall theoretical frame of this study, this orientation is used to compensate for the minor role discourse plays in the purest form of SLR, as discussed in the previous section. In this line of thinking, discourse analysis is viewed not only as a method but also as a theory (Fairclough 1992; Gee 2006 [1999], Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Although social constructionism 'gets a peep' into the SLR project (Omoniyi & Fishman 2006: 3; Mukherjee 2013: 1), sociolinguistic discourse analysis highlights more explicitly the constructivist nature of the relationship between language and reality, and discourse and identity. In this section therefore, I will show how sociolinguistic discourse analysis, in particular recent developments in sociolinguistics, contributes theoretically to the study of the construction of Christian metal identities and subculture on band websites and in song lyrics online. I will then examine how the question of identity manifested in Christian metal online discourse and in song lyrics may be examined with the help of the interlinked concepts of stance, dialogicality and entextualization. One must note that although in this thesis, identity questions are studied in online environments, in this section the focus is on text and discourse, and on song lyrics in particular, while the multisemiotic aspects of identity construction in web discourse is discussed in the following section in relation to the broader themes of the self and the Other. This division between the two sections is a practical and a heuristic one rather than an essentialist distinction, however, as can be seen in the use of cross-references below, and serves us here only to draw rough distinctions between approaches from different disciplines.

As already stated, this section relies on recent developments within sociolinguistics. By this I refer particularly to sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2010). Bridging the gap between linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and critical discourse studies, Blommaert (2005, 2010, 2013) relies in his agenda on the ethnographic approaches of Hymes (1972), Gumperz (1982) and Fabian (1983). According to them, ethnography lends itself to a more theoretical understanding than functioning merely a methodological tool for

collecting research data. (As pointed out previously, discourse analysis is, similarly, essentially a theoretical orientation, yet it is often mistaken for a mere method.) In this spirit, Blommaert (2005: 16, 2013: 1) interprets small phenomena—word choices, spelling, and other 'bits' of language—as *indexical* of more general issues, such as identity, ideology, and (in)equality (see also Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 5—6; Edwards 2011: 1; Mooney 2010: 326). This view also underpins much of the work in this thesis, where observations made at the linguistic, textual, discursive, and visual levels are interpreted as indexical and indicative of more general issues, such as identity and subculture. This, it seems, is a perspective that has so far been underrepresented in SLR.

Interestingly for present purposes, this view finds resonance within religious studies: Knott (2010: 29) encourages a focus 'on particular, small-scale examples', the analysis of which 'can help us to see larger questions, movements and relationships' related to religious issues. Lehmann (2010) also differs from scholars of religion who view social change as the outcome of top-down processes (e.g. Beyer 1994) and favours taking into account also bottom-up, grassroots action as (possibly) leading to wider practices—even, perhaps, to social change.

In order to understand how the construction of Christian metal identities and subculture in discourse and in song lyrics is studied in this thesis, we must first investigate the very notion of identity in discourse. Again, we are not far away from religion as a topic:

> If language is a central feature of group belonging, then religion has historically been at least equally salient…although there is a literature on 'religious language'…there is relatively little on the intermingled contribution of religious and linguistic perceptions and markers to group identity. (Edwards 2011: 17.)

The argument Edwards poses above supports the rationale of this thesis in encouraging the study of the interrelationships between language, religion and identity. However, Edwards is not merely interested in 'language' per se, as a system, but also in how language is actually used (i.e. in discourse) in relation to religious group identities. Following theorists such as Butler (1990, 1993) within gender studies and Hall (1996) in cultural studies, Edwards thus perceives language as constitutional and constructionist—as having a major role in shaping and building people's situational identities, in contrast to an essentialist understanding of language as merely reflecting people's inner, 'true' and fixed nature. This thesis adopts this social constructionist line of thinking in studying how subcultural identity is discursively 'done' on band websites, online song lyrics included. This is especially valid as, borrowing from Markham (2004: 367), 'online, culture is literally constructed discursively.'

Understanding identity as fluid and multiple shows in today's emphasis on the multidimensional character of identities: it is often not a question of age, nationality or religion alone, but about the ways in which these intertwine and are co-enacted in discourse (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003b: 8—9; Jousmäki 2006; Lutz et al. 2011; Omoniyi 2006). However, Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 6) have presented a radical critique of the continuing practice of

using the term 'identity' for this purpose, and have called it 'an uneasy amalgam', arguing that, 'it is not clear why what is routinely characterized as multiple, fragmented, and fluid should be conceptualized as "identity" at all.' Instead, they favour 'identification', to highlight the process nature of becoming (see also Hall 1996: 4, 6). In more detail, they suggest the use of alternative terms such as commonality, groupness, belonging; self-understanding, self-identification, and self-representation, to increase the analytical purchase of what are now referred to as 'identity' studies (for applications of 'identification', see Jousmäki 2014; Leppänen et al. 2013, 2014).

In the case studies included in this thesis, 'identity' has a central role theoretically—it spans all the articles unlike most of the other concepts discussed later in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**. This means that while I acknowledge the criticism levelled at the social constructionist understanding of identity, like Hall (1996: 1), I continue to think with it here. The main reason for this is that, traditionally, the concept of 'identity' plays a central, established role in the literature on popular music and subcultures (see Section 4.3) as well as on religious thinking. (Having said this, Article 1 also introduces the notion of 'identification' although in a fairly general sense, an issue I address in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**.) In using the term identity, I follow Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 7—8) in referring to a certain degree of *sameness* within and between Christian metal bands as shown in their collective action of functioning as bands within the subculture; simultaneously, this *groupness* provides the basis for their further, similar, action of this type. However, in the case of Christian metal, 'identity' also points to *multiplicity* and *difference* within the subculture—as we will see in Chapter 5, there are discourses and identities that contradict each other. By 'sameness', then, I do not suggest a fundamental and ever-lasting similarity between and within Christian metal groups, as this would contradict the third meaning ('difference'). Rather, I point to the likeness I have perceived between different Christian metal groups and their discourse practices online during the data collection and analysis. In a similar vein, Moberg's (2009) analysis produces a fairly unified picture of Christian metal transnationally *while also* noting differences in time and between bands.

Despite the surge of identity studies within discourse studies today (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003a; Benwell & Stokoe 2006; De Fina et al. 2006; Edwards 2009) and musicological, literary and cultural analyses of lyrics (e.g. Eckstein 2010; Griffiths 2003; Karppinen 2012; Machin 2010: 77-97; Shuker 2013 [1994]: 78-94), few to date have looked at the discursive construction of religious or subcultural identities in song lyrics. Among these are Harju (2001), Omoniyi (2010a), Paganoni (2006), and Westinen (2010). Omoniyi (2010a), to start with, addresses religious identity in song lyrics by Christian and Muslim hiphop artists as part of his more extensive analysis of 'holy hip-hop'. Paying particular attention to morphological and discursive strategies of artists, he writes about 'the fusion of street and church' in lyrics through which the rappers demarcate a divergence from secular hip hop

identities (Omoniyi 2010a: 212). Similarly, Westinen (2010) is interested in the construction of hiphop identities in lyrics. She shows how the use of different linguistic and discursive resources constructs a Finnish rapper as a local representative of a translocal popular cultural form. Paganoni (2006), on the other hand, makes identity construction in lyrics the centre of her text linguistic analysis of British (Asian-origin) bhangra lyrics. Paying attention to semantic coherence, rhetorical devices and themes in the lyrics of two bands, she shows how contemporary bhangra contests essentialist understandings of 'British Asian' identities and creates multiple and hybrid ones instead, which she describes as 'sort of empty maps inscribed with a kaleidoscopic mix of globalized cultural citations' (Paganoni 2006: 243). Finally, with Harju's (2001) Master's thesis on the construction of femininity in black metal lyrics, we move closer to the topic of this thesis. Harju describes black metal lyrics as 'a site of struggle' where femininity is articulated both in patriarchal ways (e.g. women as passive and as objects of action) and in more emancipatory ways (e.g. women as agents of action) although, in the end, feminine power is 'only presented "negatively"' (Harju 2001: 79). Negative other-representation also plays a role in Christian metal lyrics, and this will be discussed in Section 4.3.2.

These four examples illustrate the relevance of analyzing lyrics from the perspective of identity construction, rather than merely treating them as poetical or nonsensical—although, as Machin (2010: 77) argues, even such types of lyrics 'communicate discourses, along with identities, values, and courses of action.' The relevance of lyrics may of course be more pronounced in some musical genres than others; Christian metal is surely one where lyrics are *the* realm in which to analyze and understand questions of identity, since it is first and foremost through the lyrics that Christian metal bands discursively distance themselves from other metal music genres and ideologies. Therefore, it is not only individual identities that are at stake but, in broader terms, the subculture as well.

While identity is an important concept across the four case studies, the situation is different with the concepts of stance (see Article 4), dialogicality (Article 3) and entextualization (Article 2). Unlike 'identity', these three concepts are applied each in a different case study. This, of course, does not mean that each of the three concepts has no relevance for the topics of the other three case studies; rather, the concepts are interlinked in the way I describe below. Moreover, all three are relevant to the broader theme of this section, identity in web discourse and song lyrics, as will become clear.

4.2.1 Stance

The concept of stance plays a central role in Article 4 in this thesis. It is applied in the analysis to shed light on how stancetaking contributes to the construction of subcultural identities and 'difference' in Christian metal song lyrics published on band websites.

The sociolinguistic approach to stance (Jaffe 2009a; Du Bois 2007) is neither a wholly unified theoretical project nor a simple one to make sense of in the

network of intertwined, often interchangeable concepts. The definition by Du Bois (2007: 163) is generally considered an apt summary of what is meant by 'stance' in the (socio-)linguistic literature:

> stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field.

Du Bois' definition of stance suggests a triangular model of analysing stance. Put simply, this model focuses on the evaluation of an object, the positioning of subjects and the alignment between subjects. Similarly, Jaffe (2009b: 3) stresses the positionality involved in stancetaking, and Englebretson (2007: 15—20) the issues of subjectivity, evaluation and interaction.

However, while Du Bois and others stress the dialogical nature of overt interaction between subjects, the model is not applicable as it stands for the purposes of analyzing Christian metal song lyrics. This is not to deny the importance of dialogicality in Christian metal (indeed, see the following section) but to take into consideration the specific nature of song lyrics: they are monologues by one author who on the one hand takes stance and on the other hand also attributes stance to others—quite in line with Jaffe (2009b) and Du Bois (2007). Consequently, the analysis focuses on how the author evaluates the addressees and thereby positions him-/herself.

Stance benefits research interested in connecting linguistic instances and socio-cultural realities, such as this thesis. For example, Bucholtz (2009: 165) sees stance as becoming 'a critical mediating concept' in the study of 'linguistic construction of social identity'. Furthermore, as Jaworski and Thurlow (2009: 13) point out, stance relates closely to ideology in that stancetaking indexes ideological positioning and is therefore a motor of producing difference in texts. Finally, Jaffe (2009b: 4) argues that stance is a 'productive way of conceptualizing the processes of indexicalization that constitute the link between individual performance and social meaning'. It is exactly this link that makes stance relevant for the second theoretical orientation of this thesis—song lyrics and the individual choices made in them are indexical of their broader meaning within Christian metal subculture and of Christian metal identities. In this thesis, the concept of stance is used for the purpose of identifying the construction of 'difference' (see Section 4.3.2) in Christian metal lyrics. Together with the concepts of 'othering' (Said 1978) and 'devaluing' (Häger 2001), stance helps to describe how Christian metal identities and subculture are constructed in relation to and by differentiating from what they are not.

4.2.2 Dialogicality

As discussed above in relation to 'stance', Du Bois (2007: 163) stresses the dialogical properties in the production of stance—'overt communication between subjects'. In Christian metal lyrics, the communication is one-way (from lyricist to audience); nevertheless, dialogicality plays a crucial role in

Christian metal and also contributes to the discursive construction of Christian metal identities and subculture. It played an integral role already at the outset when the Christian metal subculture was being formed, as discussed in Chapter 3: on the one hand, the makers of Christian metal music wanted to communicate to non-Christian metallers what to them was an important message about a better life and spiritual salvation. On the other hand, the establishment of Christian metal congregations was also a dialogical act directed towards the more traditional kinds of Christian communities where no such thing as metal music could be thought of.

However, in this thesis, more is meant by 'dialogue' than verbal interaction between different participants. In fact, according to Bakhtin (1984), dialogue is what happens every time a person utters something, whether in the company of other people or not. To him, language use always entails dialogicality; no piece of language is original but relates retrospectively to preceding fragments of language and prospectively in anticipation of future uses. Criticizing system-oriented linguistics, Bakhtin (1984) urged for the study of the 'external politics' of language to pay attention to questions of 'addressivity'—to the fact that language is a social, dialogical phenomenon.

The dialogicality of song lyrics has previously been discussed in Westinen's (2014: Ch. 4) analysis of Finnish rap lyrics. Westinen observes Bakhtinian 'double-voicing' in rap lyricists' practice of writing a line with both immediate meaning for the narrative of the lyrics and a meaning that extends beyond lyrics to the broader hip hop scene.

In a similar vein, in this thesis, and in Article 3 in particular, I undertake the task of analysing and describing the ways in which Christian metal song lyrics are used by particular groups to encapsulate and represent their spiritual and ideological stance, to address their audiences, and to challenge other groups and (sub)cultures and their (differing) ways of understanding and making sense of the world. The term 'dialogue' is thus used to refer to, firstly and simply, the fact that song lyrics are a channel through which Christian metal groups, for their part, engage in the discursive construction of musico-religious subcultures— for them, lyrics are a way of having a say in the dialogue with both metal music and Christianity. This definition follows Wierzbicka (2006: 677) who writes about extended talk 'about a weighty and abstract topic'. Secondly and relatedly, the concept describes the nature of Christian metal lyrics in Bakhtin's (1984) sense of being written for (real and imagined) addressees in anticipation of future uses, such as a listener searching for a way out at difficult times in his/her life. Thirdly, this addressivity at times manifests in sequential dialogues—verbal exchanges (Wierzbicka 2006: 677)—between two or more figures in the lyrics. In short, the concept of dialogue is used to refer to the co-presence of and interaction between two (or more) participants, as well as to interaction on a deeper, more ideological level.

4.2.3 Entextualization

Continuing with 'dialogicality' discussed above, in Christian metal, there is one specific way of acting dialogically in order to express a religious and ideological stance that is of specific interest here: this is the recirculation of biblical passages on band websites and in lyrics. This is a dialogical practice in that by using the Bible in certain ways, the bands manifest their values and agenda, which (may) contrast with those of other metal bands as well as with those of some Christians. The close relationship between dialogicality and recirculation of other texts and discourses is also noted by Westinen (2014: Ch. 4) who systematically uses both concepts when describing rap lyrics as involving (socio-)cultural references and commentaries. Again, given the importance of discourse for the construction of identity, the practice of recirculation makes a relevant component for Christian metal identities and subculture.

While the recirculation of biblical passages in Christian metal web discourse could be studied by looking into the intertextual relations between 'old' and 'new' texts (Ben-Aaron 2005; Fairclough 1992; Omoniyi 2010a; Solin 2001), in Article 2 I prefer to approach this issue as entextualization. This concept comes from Bauman and Briggs (1990) and has more recently been applied for example by Blommaert (2005) and Leppänen et al. (2013, 2014). Instead of viewing context as a presupposed category in discourse studies, Blommaert (2005: 47—53) points out, in line with Bauman and Briggs (1990) and Silverstein and Urban (1996), that entextualization acknowledges the relativity of context: presenting a particular critique of the focus on 'intertextuality' in the critical discourse analytic sense, he argues that 'context' is not fixed as an objectively observable 'background' against which data can be interpreted. Instead, entextualization presumes the ever-emerging nature and on-going construction of what (in the researcher's view) contributes to 'context', that is, contextualization:

> The shift in emphasis from context to contextualization suggests… it is necessary to study the textual details that illuminate the manner in which participants are collectively constructing the world around them.---Taking the practice of decontextualization as the focus of investigation, we ask what makes it possible, how it is accomplished in formal and functional terms, for what ends, by whom, under what circumstances, and so on." (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 69—72.)

Bauman and Briggs explain above how entextualization operates through decontextualization, extraction of a part of discourse, followed by its recontextualization or relocation (Pennycook 2010: 35) into new surroundings or metapragmatic frames (Blommaert 2005: 251—252). The questions Bauman and Briggs pose therefore point the way for analyzing language practices critically: what is said (written), how is it said (written), and what purposes does saying (writing) it serve?

With Christian metal, entextualization is a useful concept to describe the processes that biblical discourse and biblical stories undergo when leaving the Bible and entering Christian metal discourse and song lyrics, and so settling

into new metapragmatic frames. In Article 2, rather than merely treating the web design and the lyricists as quoting the Bible, 'entextualization' helps to explain the fuller picture—what specifically is utilized, how, and for what ends.

In this section, I have examined the role of sociolinguistic discourse analysis in the overall theoretical framework of this thesis. In particular, I discussed the over-arching theme of identity as well as the concepts of stance, dialogicality and entextualization as contributing to the construction of identity in discourse and in song lyrics. From here, we will continue by re-orienting ourselves theoretically again—this time, towards two concepts stemming from media and cultural studies.

4.3 Representation and othering

The third theoretical orientation of this thesis comprises theoretical elements from media studies and cultural studies. By focusing on issues arising on Christian metal band websites that have to do with othering and the multisemiotic representation of bands, this section complements the theoretical insights discussed so far—the study of language and religion (Section 4.1) and identity in web discourse and in song lyrics (Section 4.2). The interface of media and cultural studies is relevant for the present study in that it provides tools, such as representation, multisemioticity, and othering, with which to analyze the construction of Christian metal identities and subculture in the context of the web in particular. It is also relevant because, today, online media is an important (sub)cultural tool with which and a place where subcultures are formed and strengthened through distinctive representational practices.

4.3.1 Multisemiotic representation of the self

In Section 4.2, I discussed the discursive construction of (Christian metal) identities by drawing on sociolinguistic discourse analysis. From the perspective of the interface of media studies and cultural studies, the question of identity can also be approached as a question of representation. According to Hall (1996: 4), it is first and foremost *within* representation that identities are formed. I utilize the concept of representation most notably in Article 1 to investigate the making of self- and group identities on band websites. Here, it is important to note that on band websites, bands' identities are very much about self-*re*presentation. As Thomas (2007: 5) writes, in the digital world, identity essentially

> relies upon the texts we create in the virtual worlds we inhabit. These texts are multiple layers through which we mediate the self and include the words we speak, the graphical images… and the codes and other linguistic variations on language we use to create a full digital presence.

In this quotation, Thomas highlights the constructionist nature of identities (see Section 4.2) online, the aspect of multisemioticity, and the conscious nature of the acts of representation. Here, I will first focus on the question of multisemioticity.

Following Thomas (2007: 5), in studying self-representation on band websites, one should look into the multilayered texts created by the inhabitants of those particular sites. These texts are increasingly multisemiotic, meaning that the use of language(s) is one aspect or layer in them, but only one (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 6; Leppänen et al. 2014: 113). Others include photos, pictures, symbols, colours, layout, and more specific details of these (Kress 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]; van Leeuwen 2012; Machin & van Leeuwen 2007).

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006 [1996], especially Ch. 4), visual representation is connected with interaction, which means, among other things, that visual and textual resources are meaningful in representing a band in a certain way and *for* and *in relation to* other actors (e.g. viewers, other bands, etc.). Here we are moving towards Thomas' third point above: the websites thus convey a certain picture of the band, one purposeful perspective, according to their or the record company's wishes (see also Hall 1997a; Cheung 2000; Thurlow et al. 2004: 97—102).

As pointed out at the beginning of Secion 4.2, representation and discursive construction are thus not distinct issues. Rather, as concepts stemming from different research traditions, they help to shed light on different aspects of identity work, as shown in the individual case studies. An important part of this type of identity work relates to what one is not, and this is what I will discuss next.

4.3.2 Othering

As discussed above, visual and textual resources are used on Christian metal websites to represent bands in distinctive ways that construct them specifically as *Christian metal* bands. Moreover, the representational practices and the meanings they convey mark Christian metal bands as *distinctive from non-Christian* groups. Simultaneously, Christian metal web discourse produces its Other.

Indeed, like identities in general, religious ones are also to a large extent based on difference: on what one is not (e.g. Gilroy 1997: 301; Hall 1995; Woodward 1997). While the use of binary opposites has become a normalised act of conceptualising the world around us, it may also do the work of 'othering', an ideological exercise of evaluation between One and the Other, such as Us/Them, white/black, and man/woman. The issue is discussed most notably in Said's (1978) account of the problematic, purposefully negative representations of the 'East' as a place of lower rank in contrast to the 'West' in history. (For more recent work on othering, see e.g. Coupland 1999; Coupland & Ylänne-McEwen 2006; Duszak 2002; Lassen 2009; Leppänen & Häkkinen 2013;

Shi-xu et al. 2005; and Wodak 2008.) The use of such binaries reflects a dualistic worldview based on dichotomies while also contributing to that kind of thinking (Häger 2000: 156; Hall 1997b). It is in this way that difference is constructed in discourse.

Although othering is certainly relevant also within the framework of religion (Hall 1995), Article 4 in this thesis is among the few ones to address othering in the contexts of religion, music and song lyrics. More specifically, I apply the related concept of 'devaluing' (*devaluering* in the Swedish language original) to emphasize the aspect of negative evaluation. In Häger's words (2001: 24, my translation), devaluing

> includes the condemnation of what is experienced as threatening by giving it an "inferior ontological status"… What is alien to one's own symbolic universe is defined as belonging to another, lower category. It is explained as completely different and not "real" at all – it does not belong to the orderly cosmos but to chaos.

Analyzing othering in the context of Christian metal is justified due to the importance of 'difference' in this specific subculture more generally: both Christianity and metal music have traditionally been uncompromising to start with, meaning that they have been categorical about what they are and what they are not (Moberg 2009: 134). The setting of such group boundaries is shown, for example, in the rejection of certain lines of thought from the Christian church (e.g. movements that deny the divinity of Jesus) as well as in the on-going subcultural discussions on what counts as 'proper' metal music. Consequently, Christian metallers have been marginalized (othered) by both Christians and metal musicians, as discussed in Section 3.2. Against such a backdrop, Christian metal is certainly interesting in terms of how it constructs itself by differentiating itself from what it is not.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the theoretical orientations of this thesis. I opened by introducing the current developments taking place in the study of language and religion. In particular, I examined SLR and the mobilization of the framework in discourse studies, and I also identified three principles of SLR as the most relevant for this study. I concluded that this thesis contributes to the field of studying language and religion in combination primarily by developing it further towards sociolinguistics of religion (rather than sociology of language and religion) and the analysis of discourse. From here, I drew a parallel with the focus within sociolinguistic discourse studies on discourse and identity, paying particular attention to the few previous studies on identity construction in song lyrics. I further discussed the role of the interlinked concepts of stance, dialogicality and entextualization in the present study. Finally, I discussed the theoretical contribution to this study of the issues of the multisemiotic representation of the self and othering in online contexts.

Separating these theoretical orientations into three separate blocks in the way done in this chapter may be misleading, in so far as it suggests that the three also diverge theoretically. For the purposes of this thesis at least, they are not seen in this way: all of the orientations share an interest in various social uses of language and other semiotic means. They all provide tools to theorize the data from different perspectives and to highlight different issues in them. How the notions stemming from these fields are operationalized in the four case studies is the topic of the next chapter.

5 INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTICLES

This chapter summarizes the core issues of the four research articles included in the appendices. The articles are presented in order of specificity—from the most general to the most specific: Article 1 takes a multimodal approach to different types of data (the title 'This is us' illustrates this rather well), while Article 2 focuses on bands' specific textual strategies both on their websites and in lyrics. In Articles 3 and 4, in search of particular details the focus narrows down to lyrics. What connects the four articles is their central motivation of investigating how Christian metal identity and subculture are constructed in discourse. To this end, the articles take different but inter-related perspectives. For this reason, the more specific research questions vary between the articles, as do the specific conceptual and methodological takes.

5.1 Article 1: This is us: multimodal online self-representation of Christian metal bands

The first article, *This is us: multimodal online self-representation of Christian metal bands*, explores the multimodal properties of Christian metal websites. The aim is to learn about the use of semiotic resources in the merging of metal music culture and a Christian worldview in the construction of Christian metal identities and subculture. Drawing on Blommaert (2005) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]), specific attention is targeted at the interrelationship between textual and visual content on band websites. The research questions embedded in the article are:

> 1) How do Christian metal bands represent themselves on their official homepages through textual and visual resources?
>
> 2) How do(es the use of) language and visuality together contribute to Christian metal identity and culture?

The article provides answers to these questions through an analysis of two cases different in kind. The first follows the uses of a particular symbolic band logo across different online contexts. The second one, in turn, analyzes a particular band homepage with special attention to various ways of self-representation.

Overall, the analysis shows how the online self-representation of Christian metallers first and foremost as a group of metal musicians is implemented through a certain type of band photography: meant for press release, promotional band photos on these sites typically involve a frontal, low angle, which constructs the band as superior to the audience. Metal bandhood is also constructed through using specific fonts, logos, and colours, as well as through complying with band homepage genre conventions as regards the contents of the site: they most often feature the band's biography, a store, a section for latest news, and audio material. *Christian* metal bandhood, on the other hand, is brought forward through transforming the visual practices of metal music through giving new meaning to traditional metal imagery. In doing so, Christian metal bands reproduce evangelical Christian religiosity in emphasizing personal repentance and religious renewal. The article thus shows how different semiotic means contribute in different ways to the construction of Christian metal bands' identities and to the subculture more generally.

5.2 Article 2: Bridging between the metal community and the church: entextualisation of the Bible in Christian metal discourse

Continuing with band websites and song lyrics, the second article, titled *Bridging between the metal community and the church: entextualisation of the Bible in Christian metal discourse*, investigates the circulation of biblical texts in Christian metal lyrics and on the bands' websites. As the holy book of Christianity, the Bible has important meaning potential for the construction of Christian metal identities and subculture. This is not, however, the only reason to study its uses in Christian metal discourse; namely, as discussed in Section 2.2.2, also secular metal music has addressed biblical themes and values, which is why the uses of the Bible in Christian metal discourse will be telling of Christian metal and subculture. Applying the concept of entextualization (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Blommaert 2005; Leppänen et al. 2013, 2014; Silverstein & Urban 1996), in this article I ask

> How are biblical scripts entextualized into the websites of Finnish Christian bands, and to what effect?

After recognizing biblical extracts, ideas and themes in Christian metal discourse, the analysis shows that while the song lyrics involve various ways of using biblical verses and ideas, the Bible is also manifest elsewhere on several

homepages, most notably on the opening page. While the Bible is sometimes quoted word for word, especially on the opening page, at times the biblical origins of Christian metal 'texts' are more explicit. This is the case, for instance, when lyrics are thematically built around the Bible but delivered in the words of today's metal musicians. In conclusion, the Bible seems to play an important role for these groups: at times, it is used as a source of inspiration for song writing and for the creation of other textual and multimodal artefacts. Sometimes it is also used as an authoritative source for the thoughts expressed in songs and a landmark for manifesting and anchoring the spiritual stance of the bands. Finally, biblical passages are also used as a tool in practicing religiosity, as is the case when ancient, Bible-based prayers are embedded in songs and made thereby relevant for today's people, as well.

Although Christian metal bands consider the Bible holy, it does not mean they are not allowed to play with it, however: instead, in many lyrics we see excerpts from the Bible that have been reconstituted to form part of the bands own message and agenda. Thus, we might speculate whether the bands function as alternative, or at least additional, sources of spiritual practice and guidance to the more institutionalized forms of religion.

5.3 Article 3: Dialogicality and spiritual quest in Christian metal lyrics

The third article, *Dialogicality and spiritual quest in Christian metal lyrics*, looks at the meaning Christian metal lyrics attribute to conversion, that is, spiritual awakening and a turning towards Christianity. The results are seen as having implications for the understanding of 'religious stance', 'believing', and 'being a Christian' also more generally in the Christian metal subculture. The research questions are:

> 1) How is spiritual quest represented in Christian metal lyrics? Who is involved and in what way?
>
> 2) How do these representations contribute to the ideology of Christian metal culture?

The analysis focuses on dialogicality (Bakhtin 1984) at different levels: in the uses of pronouns and different voices (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002) in written lyrics, as well as in aural voice, that is, in the sounds and vocal practices used in the singing of songs. The article shows how first-person narrators and the figures of God, the Bible, and the preacher, are used in Christian metal lyrics to share 'the good news'. The lyrics make up a conscious, dialogical act through which bands address their listeners, both searching for the meaning of life and fascinated by (what is supposedly) evil. The lyrics thereby explicitly guide the listener towards a spiritual conversion in the evangelical Christian sense where 'the individual enters into a personal relationship with God's only son, Jesus

Christ, and is saved through the latter's atoning work on the cross' (Woodhead 2010b: 225). Moreover, such songs are dialogical in Bakhtin's (1984) sense in that they are responding to subcultural and ideological debates around metal music and in society more generally. This means, by implication, that the bands are also expressing their wish to find more clarity in what religious authorities teach people.

All of this contrasts somewhat with traditional Finnish religiosity, which favours privacy, silence, and modesty (Ketola et al. 2011) and which is visibly changing with the increasing number of people resigning from the Lutheran Church (see Kääriäinen et al. 2005; Niemelä 2007). Christian metal on the other hand promotes a more straightforward approach to evangelizing people, answering their existential questions, and guiding them towards conversion.

5.4 Article 4: Epistemic, interpersonal, and moral stances in the construction of us and them in Christian metal lyrics

In contrast to Christian metal as reaching out to (non-believing) listeners, addressed in the third article discussed above, the fourth and final article, *Epistemic, interpersonal, and moral stances in the construction of us and them in Christian metal lyrics*, tells another kind of a story. It focuses on practices of othering (Said 1978; Hall 1997b) through stancetaking (Du Bois 2007; Jaffe 2009a, 2009b) in Christian metal lyrics, asking

> 1) How are personal pronouns and binary opposites used to categorize different actors in Christian metal lyrics?
>
> 2) What kinds of epistemic, interpersonal and moral stances are attributed to different actors and how is this achieved?
>
> 3) How do stance-taking and stance attribution contribute to the ideological construction of difference?

Attending to such micro-level phenomena as the use of pronouns and word choices shows that, in Christian metal lyrics, othering works through describing 'us' as superior to and knowing better than 'them'; through portraying 'our God' as better than 'their god' (note the differing use of upper case); and through depicting 'us' as having a bright future whereas 'theirs' is represented as a dead end (quite literally, too). Despite its missionary agenda (Luhr 2005), Christian metal thus seems to encourage a categorical worldview with binary oppositions such as good—evil, heaven—hell, and, importantly, us—them. In doing so, Christian metal identities and subculture resonate with conservative Christian values on the one hand and with the uncompromising register of metal music on the other.

6 DISCUSSION

From a cross-disciplinary viewpoint, this thesis set out to study the discursive construction of Christian metal identities and subculture on band websites. The phenomenon under scrutiny was contextualized as relating on a general level to Christianity in the 21st century and to metal music. More specifically, Christian metal was situated in the broader contexts of Evangelical Christianity and questions about the relationship between religion and popular culture. Theoretically, the study oriented towards the study of language and religion, sociolinguistic discourse analysis, and elements of media and cultural studies. The rationale of the research was supported by a lack of sociolinguistic discourse analytical research on Christian metal online; changes in people's religious profile in the Western world and in Finland in particular; the success of metal music worldwide and in Finland especially; and the growing importance of online media for today's popular cultural ventures.

Out of the datapool of 14 Finnish and nine US Christian metal bands' websites and the lyrics to 202 songs collected on the Internet during 2007—2009, two index sites and eight lyrics were chosen for closer examination in four research articles. In all four individual case studies the central research impetus was to learn more about how Christian metal identity and subculture is constructed in online discourse, with each study approaching the question from a slightly different viewpoint. Analytically, the case studies relied on qualitative discourse analysis with specific foci on textual-visual relations, uses of the Bible, dialogicality, and uses of pronouns and binary opposites. The decision that these should be the key interests in the analyses was made on the basis of a pilot analysis of four websites, as these seemed to be typical, reoccurring issues in Christian metal discourse online.

On the basis of the case studies, the following observations were made. In Article 1, and to some extent Article 2, it became clear that the combination of Christianity and metal music on band websites takes place multisemiotically, with text emphasizing the religious and the visual and the sonic the subcultural. Importantly, it is the particular ways in which these intertwine that is crucial for the self-representation of Christian metal groups. Article 2 showed how the

Bible, as a valuable book for Christians, is utilized in Christian metal discourse not merely through quotations but through a more encompassing process of entextualization whereby biblical ideas, values, and passages are reconstituted as Christian metal bands' own agenda. In Article 3, Christian metal lyrics were found to function dialogically in prompting belief in and conversion towards God on the one hand and a denunciation of the Devil on the other, as well as an appeal for greater explicitness and clarity in the message of religious authorities. In Article 4, finally, Christian metal lyrics were shown to categorize people into two groups, Us (Christians) and Them (non-Christians), by attributing different epistemological, interpersonal and moral stances to them and by valuing these differently from each other.

The four articles included in this thesis illustrate how a small-scale analysis is helpful in shedding light on wider practices and ideologies (Knott 2010: 29). Analysing visual particularities, such as colours, photographs, and symbols, as well as uses of the Bible, pronouns, and binary opposites shows how Christian metal becomes what it claims to be—a fusion of Christian beliefs and values and the musical and aesthetic conventions of metal music culture. While this has already been established by scholars (e.g. Luhr 2005; Moberg 2009, 2013), fanzines and subcultural websites, nothing has been said on *how* this happens at the grassroots level of discourse where self-representation, identity construction, and communication take place. This is the gap this thesis contributes to filling, through showing that Christian metal identities and subculture are discursively constructed through fusing metal-style soundscapes and visuality with particular ways of re-using the Bible; with a missionary purpose; and with a tendency towards binary thinking. The thesis thus provides a more fine-grained picture than established in previous literature about how Christian metal identities and subculture are constructed online by drawing on multisemiotic resources provided by both Christianity and metal music culture.

6.1 Evaluation

In this section, I review the thesis by comparing it to previous research on the topic and to research conducted in the same fields, as well as by considering its shortcomings.

The theoretical orientations of the thesis make it unique and experimental. Unlike most (sociological) literature on Christian metal, the present thesis approached the phenomenon from a sociolinguistic perspective, looking into linguistic, discursive and multisemiotic details used on band websites and in song lyrics. This type of an approach complements previous research on (Christian) metal music by providing micro-level analyses of Christian metal bands' ways of using language and other semiotic means, mentioned in passing or discussed on a general level in previous literature but not documented in detail. In particular, this thesis pioneers in the use of the concept of stance to

analyse song lyrics. In applying the concepts of dialogicality and entextualization, it resembles Westinen's (2014: Ch. 4) analysis of lyrics but uses them in a more encompassive manner: while Westinen uses them for the purpose of exploring the construction of authenticity, this study makes entextualization and dialogicality the key foci of attention in Articles II and III respectively.

Importantly, the study promotes the study of the interrelationship between language and religion through a selective implementation of the sociology of language and religion (SLR) framework. Although increasing interest can be observed in language and religion by language scholars (Darquennes & Vandenbussche 2011; Mukherjee 2013; Omoniyi 2010b; Omoniyi & Fishman 2006; Peuronen 2011, 2013; the organization of a workshop on the theme in Sociolinguistics Symposium since 2012), more needs to be done to remove the marginal status of the field and to make its aim and relevance more widely known. This thesis has taken a more detailed look into discourse than most previous SLR scholars have. The inspiration for this was Omoniyi's (2010a) examination of the discourse of faith ministries built on hip hop music. There are several similarities between Omoniyi's article-length study and this thesis—a discourse-analytical take on data from websites and song lyrics with a macro-level take on identity, religiosity and secularism. Together, these studies should guide further explorations of discourse, identity and religion online.

One understands that no research effort is perfect; research is about making relevant choices and validating them. Now, I will reflect on the shortcomings of this thesis, both in the individual case studies and in the overall set-up.

To start with, in Article 1 there is a degree of terminological confusion in relation to the overall project. This concerns the use of the term 'multimodal' in connection to the case study describing the multimodal self-representation of bands on their websites. While the term runs consistently throughout that particular study, elsewhere in the overall study the term 'multisemiotic' is preferred to refer to discourse as involving more than written language, such as pictures, colour and sound. For the purposes of Article 1, the choice to use 'multimodality' was influenced by the terminology used by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]) whose approach was also influential for the whole case study. However, as O'Halloran (2011: 120) points out, it has been rather typical for scholars to use the two interrelated terms loosely and interchangeably.

In Article 2, to continue with, another terminological revisit is in place. In this case study, this concerns the use of the term 'identification', referring to identity processes at a general level. While a link has been established between this term and entextualization—a project I myself contributed to (Leppänen et al. 2013, 2014)—in Article 2 this link is neither highlighted nor is the term properly introduced theoretically or applied consistently in the analysis. In a similar vein, the term 'bridging', introduced in the main title, is not addressed theoretically in depth nor utilized consistently in the analysis. Therefore, future

research could engage in reconsidering the status of the two concepts for the analysis of entextualization in Christian metal discourse.

As regards Article 4, which was the first one written, the sociolinguistic concept of 'stance' is used centrally. Although it is natural that the papers written after the first publication do not seamlessly integrate with the first one, the use of stance in this case study exclusively makes the paper stand out. This divergence can be explained by thinking about the writing of articles as a learning process and a process of epistemological shifts (Martin-Jones, personal comm.). Because of this, the term is largely neglected in the three papers published later, although a link is established in Article 3 (see Jousmäki 2013: 273), a paper that was already in its formative stages at the time of writing Article 4: 'In previous work, Jousmäki (2011) has described how Christian metal lyrics set up discursive boundaries between Us and Them… this paper argues that the issue of stance within CM lyrics is more complex than that.' In other words, the use of stance is by no means contradictory to the overall aim of the thesis. Rather, it is used as a 'mediating concept' to study the 'linguistic construction of social identity' (Bucholtz 2009: 165), which, as shown in Article 4, has helped to foreground some interesting and problematic practices in the construction of Christian metal identities and subculture.

When it comes to the overall project and Articles 1 and 3 in particular, a general criticism concerns the collection and choice of data (addressed in detail in Section 1.2). It is worth asking whether more variable data should have been included in terms of bands' national backgrounds and the types and numbers of websites analysed. While this would have done no harm, except perhaps timewise, the choice of the present data was justified by the interest in the context of Finland on the one hand and by the US as the homeland of Christian metal on the other. A broader approach remains for future endeavours.

6.2 Implications

In a sociolinguistic discourse-analytic spirit, the findings of this thesis hold various implications. The discussion in this section reviews these, starting with the general implications of the individual articles, moving on to the contribution of the thesis to different disciplines and future research, and concluding with a consideration of the relevance of the thesis for lay people as well as for Christian metal adherents.

To begin with, Christian metal challenges some of the established textual and visual practices of metal music culture by modifying and converting them, and, at the same time, also some of the traditional ways of practising Christian faith, especially in the Finnish context. This happens through bringing the Bible to the fore more explicitly and through evangelizing listeners in a more straightforward fashion than is the case in mainstream Lutheranism in Finland today. Overall, in Christian metal discourse we find a reliance on and the reproduction of some views central to Evangelical Christianity, such as making

believing a concscious choice. Despite this, Christian metal still largely builds on the discursive, visual, and sonic ways of expression that are typical in metal music culture. Thus, Christian metal seems to hold a rather unique position between religion and popular culture, one from which it bridges *into* the communities of both metal music and (Evangelical) Christianity.

Considering these discourse practices from the perspective of religious identities today, the thesis strengthens theories of postmodern religiosity as building on popular cultural forms of expression (e.g. Forbes 2005; Lynch 2007; Partridge 2010). Importantly, the thesis does so by illustrating *how* this takes place in practice. In doing so, it contributes to research on religion, media and popular culture by serving as an example of a bottom-up approach to the study of religious identity in online media discourse. Moreover, for scholars of popular music, the thesis offers food for thought, especially in arguing for the relevance of analyzing lyrics not only in the context of performance but also as independent artifacts. Media scholars in turn can benefit from learning more about bands' ways of utilizing websites in their 'projects of the self' (Giddens 1991).

Finally and most importantly, this thesis contributes to the sociolinguistic study of religious phenomena. For example, apart from Omoniyi (2010a), the framework of SLR has not until now been applied to the analysis of the discursive construction of a religious music subculture and identities in online media. Although Fishman (2006) does not acknowledge online media per se in his proposition for the SLR framework, his concern for language as constitutive of sociocultures and sociocultural change makes the framework also relevant for the study of online contexts. Having said this, it is also the case that 'going online' does not seem to have altered the nature of Christian metal (see also Luhr 2005; Moberg 2009)—rather, it has intensified its translocal, cross-cultural character (see Jousmäki 2014, forthcoming). Theoretically and analytically, however, the online context compels a focus on the *re*presentational character of Christian metal: it is not merely about Christian metal groups 'being' online but doing so in distinct and in more or less self-conscious and professional ways, as discussed in Article 1. Therefore, although SLR has favoured 'language' as the main object of analysis, this thesis shows that the study of discourse online craves a more nuanced approach that looks more specifically into linguistic, textual, visual, aural, and discursive practices than has hitherto been done within SLR. This is vital for gaining a proper understanding of how contemporary subcultures are created and maintained multisemiotically in their mediated online realities.

In this way, this thesis also contributes methodologically to the study of language and religion together in a way that comes close to the sociolinguistics of globalization in its attempt to understand the macro through an analysis of the micro. In this sense, the study can be considered as a move towards the *sociolinguistics of religion* rather than *sociology* of language and religion. This is something that needs to be addressed in future scholarship on language and religion. Conversely, the thesis complements research on the sociolinguistics of

globalization in addressing religion and religiosity, which have not been pursued as central themes in this line of research so far.

As for future research outside the study of language and religion, the thesis has several implications. Questions of identity and culture remain important research topics in today's superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton 2011), and this thesis might inspire the investigation of other Christian music subcultures (e.g. Christian trance), other controversial metal music features (e.g. the Japanese *Babymetal*), or other spiritually oriented groups in Finland to enhance understanding about the relationship between music and religion, about curious ideological and subcultural combinations, and about spiritual diversity in today's Finland respectively. As Christian metal in particular, more data could be collected in different national and socio-cultural contexts, and the data could, and should, be analysed from a cross-disciplinary perspective to gain a better picture also about the musical and multimodal aspects of Christian metal. As stated in Article 1, Christian metal, and especially its ways of representing the spiritual aspect, remains open to debate for many, and thus merits further research attention (see Jousmäki 2014, forthcoming). Article 2, in turn, invites more research on the issue of entextualization in online media to gain a fuller understanding of how language practices in, around, and across marginal movements are transforming religious practices today. Researching this is something I have also already engaged in (see Leppänen et al. 2013: 15—18, 2014: 120—123) but much remains to be done.

What about the broader public? How might the present interest in band websites, song lyrics and linguistic details, such as pronouns, benefit them? In a nutshell, the answer is that the thesis provides all of us with new information that has not previously been documented. In particular, it gives groups of different kinds different things to consider. First, those suspicious of *Christian* metal might find it reassuring that this type of music is shown here, through a careful examination of discourse, to be strongly rooted in conservative Christian values and beliefs. For others, of course, this may not be reassuring at all but instead annoying or ridiculous, proof that Christian metal is inauthentic *metal*. Again, those suspicious of metal music more generally may be pleased to learn about a 'positive' subgenre of metal that does not encourage suicide or immorality but introduces the aspect of hope.

However, those who enjoy Christian metal because they find it 'positive' may then find it questionable that some lyrics incorporate a stark distinction between two groups of people, Us and Them, and ascribe different worth to each. This again may raise the interest of those who strongly support equality, freedom of religion, and of the idea of loving one's neighbour. On the other hand, those put off by the Bible as a book may find it stimulating to see how it lives on in young people's popular cultural practices and how it can be used for spiritual purposes in today's world. This may also open up avenues for youth workers across religions to teach their clients about diverse religious beliefs.

Finally, the thesis has implications for Christian metal bands. As discussed at various stages of this work, in Christian metal, Christian beliefs and values

fuse with the conventions of the metal music culture, a fact that should always be kept in mind when considering, talking and writing about Christian metal. For those who do not fully embrace either one of these spheres, the phenomenon will surely remain a somewhat obscure one. Because of this, individual bands would find it worthwhile to reflect carefully on what it is they wish to achieve through their music so as to not put people off. While putting people off is not surprising in the context of metal music, which is essentially about transgression (Kahn-Harris 2007: 29—49), it would be a good thing for bands to (re)consider their activities in relation to their aims and the needs of different audiences. For example, how do words that devalue other people harmonise with the principles of evangelicalism, especially from the audience perspective?

6.3 Conclusion

Given the puzzlement expressed by the audiences to whom I have presented parts of this work at its various stages, I feel obliged to say something, by way of conclusion, on the appeal of Christian metal. It is perhaps not surprising that academics are not a focal group enjoying Christian metal, but what is the case with outsiders, for those who do not already listen to this type of music or do not subscribe to an evangelical Christian way of thinking?

Many have asked me whether I think Christian metal is a useful way of preaching the gospel. There can be many ways of answering this, but if one considers the discursive means through which the message is delivered in song lyrics, as discussed in Article 4 especially, I have some doubts. As Edwards (2009: 99) writes, 'it is sad to think that systems which ought, overall, to have generally benign tendencies, to contextualise human frailties and to curb excesses and pretensions of all kinds, have created so much division and discord.' Whether the discursive devaluation of the Other in song lyrics *de facto* turns listeners away from the gospel cannot, of course, be determined on the basis of this thesis as it did not take audience perspectives into account. Here, we may revisit Moberg's (2009: 160) study according to which Christian metal musicians claim metal lyrics need to match the confrontational nature of metal music more generally. For this reason, to criticize Christian metal as xenophobic is to misread the discursive style of metal music. However, I believe it would do no harm if Christian metal artists sat down to critically review the lyrics they (intend to) perform, from the perspective of how their means match their message.

TIIVISTELMÄ (FINNISH SUMMARY)

Suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa evankelis-luterilainen kirkko ja uskonnollisuus ovat pitkään olleet valta-asemassa. 2010-luvun alkupuolella tilanne näyttää kuitenkin olevan muuttumassa: Euroopan yleiset kehityssuunnat, kuten maallistuminen, yksilökeskeisyyden lisääntyminen, maasta- ja maahanmuutto, väestön ikääntyminen, ja teknologinen kehitys erityisesti sosiaalisissa medioissa vaikuttavat myös suomalaisten uskonnollisuuteen. Eräs Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon käytännön keinoista vastata ajan haasteisiin, erityisesti nuorten aikuisten vähenevään kiinnostukseen kirkkoa kohtaan, on vuodesta 2006 järjestetty *Metallimessu*, joissa perinteistä kirkon messukaavaa täydentävät metallimuusikoista koostuvan ryhmän säestämät metallimusiikkiin sovitetut virret.

Kristinuskon ja metallimusiikin yhdistäminen ei kuitenkaan ole Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon oma ajatus, vaan kristillisen metallimusiikin juuret juontavat aina 1970-luvun Yhdysvaltoihin ja kristillisen rockin uranuurtajan Larry Normanin musiikkiin. Varsinaisesta alakulttuurista voidaan puhua kuitenkin vasta 1980-luvulla, jolloin kristillinen metalli, tai white metal, kuten sitä myös nimitettiin, tarjosi ”soveliaan” vaihtoehdon esimerkiksi Black Sabbathin, AC/DC:n ja Iron Maidenin heavy metal –musiikille jonka kantavia teemoja yleisesti olivat kapinointi auktoriteetteja vastaan, äänekkyys ja voima, sekä kiinnostus tuonpuoleiseen. Suomeen kristillinen metalli rantautui 1990-luvun alussa, ja nykyään maassa on lukuisia yhtyeitä ja niiden toimintaa tukevaa infrastruktuuria, kuten levy-yhtiöitä, tapahtumia ja medioita. Kristillisen metallin suosio ja hyväksyttävyys esimerkiksi evankelis-luterilaisessa kirkossa heijastelenevat metallimusiikin suosiota maassa yleisemminkin.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli selvittää kuinka kristinuskon ja metallimusiikkikulttuurin yhteensovittaminen tapahtuu kielenkäytön ja viestinnän mikrotasolla, diskurssissa. Aiempi, lähinnä sosiologinen tutkimuskirjallisuus aiheesta tarjoaa laajan kuvan kristillisestä metallista ja siitä mitä se on, mutta kielenkäytön ja muiden semioottisten valintojen tasolla tapahtuvaa identiteettityötä ei ole tähän mennessä kuvattu ja dokumentoitu tarkasti. Teoreettisesti tutkimus ankkuroituu kielen ja uskonnon yhteyksien tutkimukseen, sosiolingvistiseen diskurssintutkimukseen ja erityisesti sen painotukseen identiteetistä kielenkäytössä rakentuvana, sekä median ja kulttuurin tutkimuksen rajapintojen tutkimukseen representaatiosta ja alakulttuureista. Näiden teoriasuuntausten valikoiva yhdistäminen antaa mahdollisuuden tutkia kielenkäytön ilmiöitä indekseinä, vihjeinä, laajemmista kristilliseen metalliin liittyvistä asioista, kuten identiteeteistä, alakulttuurista ja uskonnollisuudesta.

Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu 23 suomalaisen ja yhdysvaltalaisen kristillisen metalliyhtyeen kotisivusta, kuuden suomalaisen yhteen julkaisemista 15 albumista, sekä näihin sisältyvien 202 laulun sanoituksista. Osa aineiston analyysista valittiin tarkemman tarkastelun kohteeksi neljässä

artikkelissa, jotka on julkaistu kansainvälisissä vertaisarvioiduissa kausijulkaisuissa. Kaikki neljä artikkelia löytyvät väitöskirjan liitteinä alkuperäismuodossaan.

Ensimmäinen artikkeli käsittelee kristillisten metalliyhtyeiden tapoja esittää, representoida, itseään Internetissä. Aineistoesimerkkejä on kaksi: ensimmäisessä seurataan erään tietyn symbolin tai logon käyttöä yhtyeen eri verkkosivuilla, ja toisessa analysoidaan erään tietyn yhtyeen virallista kotisivun visuaalisten ja tekstuaalisten ominaisuuksien yhteiskäyttöä itsen esittämisen näkökulmasta. Analyysin perusteella kristilliset metalliyhtyeet käyttävät visuaalisia keinoja kytkeytyäkseen metallimusiikkigenreen mutta samalla muokkaavat keinoja osoittaakseen oman arvopohjansa ja kristillisen uskonsa. Tekstien kautta yhtyeet osoittavat toisaalta yhteytensä kristinuskoon—joskin yhtyeiden nimet, jotka usein pohjaavat tai viittaavat Raamattuun, kirjoitetaan metallimusiikkikulttuurille ominaisilla ”rihmaisilla” kirjasintyypeillä.

Toisessa artikkelissa selvitetään Raamatun käyttöä kristillisessä metallidiskurssissa entekstualisaation käsitteen avulla. Kotisivun aloitussivua sekä kolmen laulun sanoituksia tarkastellaan siitä näkökulmasta, kuinka ne ottavat palan tekstiä, idean tai tarinan Raamatusta ja siirtävät sen omaan käyttöönsä osaksi omaa tarinaansa ja viestiänsä. Tutkitut yhtyeet osoittavat eri tavoin Raamattua käyttämällä arvostavansa Raamattua, uskovansa sen sanomaan ja haluavansa tehdä Raamattua tunnetuksi nykypäivän ihmisille myös uskonnonharjoituksen (rukouksen) välineenä.

Kolmas artikkeli tarkastelee kristillisen metallin laulujen sanoituksia hengellisen etsinnän ja dialogisuuden näkökulmasta. Esimerkkeinä toimivat kaksi sanoitusta esittävät hengellisen etsinnän eri tavoin: ensimmäisessä käsitellään niin sanottua kärsimyksen ongelmaa (”Jos Jumala on hyvä, miksi maailmassa on niin paljon pahuutta?”) ja toisessa helvetin ihannointia joka on tulkittavissa saatananpalvonnaksi. Molempiin tapauksiin sisältyi erilaisten kertojien (kriittinen totuuden etsijä vs. eksyneet lampaat) ja auktoriteettien äänen käyttämistä (Jumala, Raamattu, saarnaaja). Sanoitukset olivat lisäksi dialogisia sekä nykyhetkessä että menneisyyden suhteen: sanoitusten kautta yhtyeet puhuttelevat yleisöjään jotka saattavat tunnistaa itsensä kertojahahmojen joukosta sekä kutsuvat avoimesti ja selkeästi kuuntelijoitaan tietoisesti hyväksymään ja vastaanottamaan Raamatun Jumalan omaan elämäänsä.

Myös neljännen artikkelin huomio kohdistuu kristillisen metallin sanoituksiin. Artikkelissa tutkitaan eri toimijoiden luokittelua sanoituksissa persoonapronominien ja vastakohtaisuuksien käytön kautta, sekä näihin liitettäviä episteemisiä, ihmistenvälisiä ja moraalisia asemointeja. Analyysin perusteella kristillisen metallin sanoituksissa on taipumus tehdä erottelua ’meidän’ ja ’muiden’, ’minun’ ja ’sinun’, sekä ’Jumalan’ ja ’jumalan’ välillä. Vastakohtaparien ensimmäinen osapuoli arvotetaan sanoituksissa korkeammalle kuin jälkimmäinen. Tämä ’Toinen’ kuvataan sitä vastoin tyhmäksi, tietämättömäksi, alempiarvoiseksi ja pahaksi. Kristillisen metallin sanoituksissa tehty jyrkkä kahtiajako ei ole ominaista pelkästään kristilliselle

metallille, vaan sanoituksissa ammennetaan tässä(kin) suhteessa sekä Raamatusta että metallimusiikkikulttuurista, jonka tyyliin aggressiivinen rajankäynti kuuluu.

Tämän tutkimuksen avulla saatiin uutta tietoa siitä, kuinka kristinusko ja metallimusiikki sulautuvat yhteen diskurssissa kristillisen metalli-identiteetin rakentamiseksi. Tällainen alakulttuurinen identiteetti saa tekstuaaliset, diskursiiviset, visuaaliset ja musiikilliset rakennusaineensa kahdesta vakiintuneesta emokulttuurista joiden olemassaolosta se on vahvasti riippuvainen mutta joiden välille se on muodostanut oman ainutlaatuisen asemansa. Kristillinen metalli voidaan etenkin Suomen kontekstissa ymmärtää kaipuuna muunlaiseen uskonnollisuuden harjoittamiseen kuin mitä valtavirtakirkko tarjoaa, Metallimessusta huolimatta. Tutkimuksen mukaan kristillisten metalliyhtyeiden toiminta verkkoympäristöissä ei vastaa perinteistä käsitystä suomalaisesta uskonnollisuudesta hiljaisena, vaatimattomana ja yksityisenä. Sen sijaan siinä näkyy maailmalla kasvussa olevan evankelikaalisen kristillisyyden piirteitä, jossa selkeä sanoma rohkaisee kuulijoita kääntymykseen ja parannuksentekoon, samalla kun sanoma paketoidaan populaarikulttuurisin, kuten nykyaikaisen musiikin keinoin.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

THIS IS US: MULTIMODAL ONLINE SELF-REPRESENTATION OF CHRISTIAN METAL BANDS

by

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This is us: Multimodal online self-representation of Christian metal bands

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Abstract

In today's imagocentric world, increasing attention is paid to the visual aspects of communication (Stocchetti and Sumiala-Seppänen 2007: 10). This also shows in how Christian metal (CM) bands feature in online media. Theoretically anchored in the emerging field of sociology of language and religion (Fishman 2006, Omoniyi 2010), this paper studies the ways CM bands represent themselves in online media, such as band homepages, Myspace, Facebook, and Twitter, which provide them with a market place for self-promotion. With a particular reference to their uses of emblems, the analysis seeks to understand how the subcultural performance of two specific bands, helps them to connect Christianity with metal music culture – an incoherent and contradictory fusion for many.

1. Introduction

For today's bands, social media and the Internet provide a valuable channel of promotion, advertising and finding an audience. Official band website URLs, together with Facebook, YouTube and Myspace addresses, among others, have become something like a business card to give to potential clients. Online appearances need to attract attention, be it through the use of special fonts, colours, symbols, or something else – in Kellner's (2007: 28) words, "it is necessary to present oneself as a spectacle." Aiming to attract audiences on various websites, some CM bands tend to stress the Christian aspect over metal, while others do the opposite. This relates to the essence of the whole scene: CM is the child of both Christian religion and of metal music culture.

As such, CM has been met with both criticism and appraisal since its very beginning in California, USA, in the early 1980s. Metal music fans, critiques, and artists tend to view CM as inauthentic in that CM wipes off the rebellion towards authorities (e.g. parents, church, society) traditionally involved in metal music (e.g. Luhr 2005: 118–120). Neither have all Christians approved of the music style they associate with anti-Christian topics and practices being put into the service of the evangelical Christian mission (e.g. Luhr 2005: 106–107, 115–116, 120–124). After decades, CM has grown into a big business especially in the US and it also has a fairly established institutional and fan base in Brazil, Mexico, the Netherlands, Germany, and Northern Europe (Moberg 2009: 172–175). How, then, do these bands balance between the two ideological terrains to find their way in representing themselves online? Relatedly, what do such practices tell us about the ideological and musical identification of the bands? In this paper, these questions are approached from an ethnographic-sociolinguistic perspective on discourse as multimodal.

2. Visuality in metal music culture

From its beginning, Christian metal was to a great extent a visual effort. Similarly to

mainstream metal music groups of the 1980s, such as Aerosmith, Bon Jovi and Poison, CM bands such as the North American Stryper became known as rocking high and loud with distorted guitar sounds and as performing with appearances that involved long hair, leather wear, excessive make-up and accessories such as bandanas, wrist strings and chunky jewellery. Two issues bothered the Christian community: whether metal was an acceptable musical style for Christian youth, and whether metal style wear and gear were suitable for Christian men. (Luhr 2005: 106, 120–123; Weinstein 2000: 39). Even today, according to Moberg (2009: 3–4), CM is very much about adopting the specific *ways* of doing CM through the musical style as well as certain types of rhetoric, style and aesthetics. Following Gormly (2003), it can thus be said that CM appropriates from secular metal the subcultural codes of performativity: playing, singing, and being. For CM, these are the gates through which an ideological and cultural dialogue becomes possible with other musical subgenres, worldviews and ideologies (Jousmäki 2013).

The general visual dimension of metal music culture has been described by Weinstein (2000: 27). According to her, the visuality of metal music genre involves a spectrum of subcultural commodities such as T-shirts, badges, album covers, magazine artwork, band logos, and so on. Moreover, visuality in performances includes costumes, lighting, stage set, choreography, and music video images. (Weinstein 2000: 27). Further, Weinstein argues,

> the colors and imagery on the album covers enhance the power conveyed by the logos. The dominant color is black, used especially as the background for the other artwork. Red is the second most important color. The color scheme is not gentle, relaxing, or merely neutral. Rather, it is intense, exciting, or ominous. Whereas the code for pop and country albums mandates photographs of the faces of the performers, the fronts of heavy metal albums are not graced with close-ups of band members. The heavy metal code specifies that what is depicted must be somewhat ominous, threatening, and unsettling, suggesting chaos and bordering on the grotesque. (Weinstein 2000: 29.)

Although Weinstein's comment, originally published in 1991, gives us some idea of the basic elements of the visual design of the metal music genre, it may have become slightly out-dated, due to the more recent diversification of metal genres, and to metal music having become more mainstream, instead of or not as obviously "ominous, threatening, and unsettling, suggesting chaos and bordering on the grotesque". In contrast to Weinstein's categorical description of metal, today's metal music is more varied in its visual expression (symphonic metal, for instance, embraces nature and fantasy as visual themes) and it is no longer the music of white working-class males exclusively (cf. Hjelm 2013, Larkin 1992: 21; Promised Land of Heavy Metal 2008, Rossi and Jervell 2013).

3. Theoretical background

The theoretical standpoint of this paper is located at the crossroads of sociology of language and sociology of religion, a point that that has recently evolved into its own branch of research of: sociology of language and religion (SLR). The way has been paved by Omoniyi and Fishman (2006), with Omoniyi (2010) continuing the effort. According to Fishman (2006), SLR starts off with the assumption that both language and religiosity (vis-à-vis secularism) vary within societies and between them, as well as

across time. From the perspective of language, this simply means that religious ways of speaking and religious registers and discourses are but some of the ones available for the members of any socioculture. Moreover, the language of religion is open to change in line with changes and transformations in the surrounding socio-cultural context, "*including religious change per se*. Language spread itself is, of course, the most common carrier of sociocultural change." (Fishman 2006: 18, emphasis original.) However, social change is a long process and not evenly spread, which is why multiple religious varieties may co-exist within the same religious community. (Fishman 2006: 14–24.)

Fishman's ideas make up a fruitful framework for scholars studying the use(s) of language(s) in religious settings as well as religious discourse in general. It is a framework which, similarly to the sociology of language and to the sociology of religion, analyses and describes macro-level phenomena related to the interconnectedness between language and religion. To elaborate on a good example where SLR is of relevance, provided originally in the introduction to Omoniyi and Fishman (2006: 3–4), many Western, Protestant societies have witnessed the entrance of women into the clergy, a space previously only available to men. In countries with languages that mark gender differences with distinct pronouns, this change of a sociocultural practice resulted in a reformed sociolinguistic practice – a social practice of using language in a certain way – in some churches: instead of referring to 'him' (for example), the choice was now to be made between 'him' or 'her' when referring to the minister. As the masculine pronoun lost its default value at the pulpit, religion changed as well: the time of the Church Fathers (understood in a loose sense, i.e. male authorities) was indeed beginning to pass.

Although Fishman's framework is mostly concerned with macro-level, societal issues, it also provides a good starting point and a reflective base for bottom-up approaches (e.g. Darquennes and Vandenbussche 2011, Omoniyi 2010), such as the ethnographic-sociolinguistic discourse analysis conducted in this paper (see below). As an example of a (possibly) transformative sociocultural practice, CM invites one to look at its sociolinguistic (or, in this case, socio-semiotic) repertoire to understand the dialectic relationship of language and reality: through language use, CM can both reproduce and transform existing social, cultural, and religious categories (cf. Fairclough 1992). Since the linguistic dimension of religious movements, together with other aspects of its discursive realization, such as texts and images, is not eternally fixed but instead involves processes of change (Fishman 2006: 22–23), a look into CM websites provides information of how Christianity manifests itself in the digital era. This will also serve the interests of future scholars analysing more long-term processes, perhaps looking back to the beginning of the 21st century.

The ethnographic-sociolinguistic discourse approach adopted in this paper draws on Blommaert (2005) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), asking what the textual and visual features of band websites tell us about the practices of self-representation among CM bands. In other words, this type of an approach is not happy with presuming that CM bands draw on Christianity and metal music culture on their websites (although this may well be the case); instead, it is crucial to explore, at the grassroots level of multimodal discourse, whether the "drawing on" in fact takes place – and if so, how. Only on the basis of those observations is it possible to draw conclusions of a more general kind, and

indeed, in this line of research, discursive details are taken as indexical of wider practices and invested with meaning potential (e.g. Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 5–6). This does not mean that existing societal, cultural, or religious tendencies are neglected but it does require the analyst not to take their impact for granted so that they are simply seen as imperial machines that produce CM in a one-way, top-down fashion. Instead, this paper sets out to investigate how CM bands make themselves into being. As Thomas (2007) argues,

> in the digital world… the performance of identity… relies upon the texts we create in the virtual worlds we inhabit. These texts are multiple layers through which we mediate the self and include the words we speak, the graphical images… and the codes and other linguistic variations on language we use to create a full digital presence. (Thomas 2007: 5).

Therefore, the analysis of self-representation in the virtual worlds inhabited by CM groups begins with looking at the textual and visual resources they utilize. A key issue here is the prefix 're' in 'representation': CM websites convey a certain picture, one aspect, of the band, according to bands' (or the record companys') wishes. (Cf. Cheung 2000, Deumert 2014, Hall 1997, Lee 2014, Schau and Gilly 2003, Schwämmlein and Wodzicki 2012, Thurlow et al. 2004: 97–102.)

4. Aims, approach and data

The core interest of this paper is in discourse, understood as every semiotic act of producing information about who we are or who or what we aspire to be (Blommaert 2005: 203). The websites analysed in this paper include written text as well as illustrations of different kinds, and attention will here be paid especially to the interrelationship between the text and the visuals. Following Blommaert (2005: 116–117), the analysis begins by looking at text before reading it. This method is particularly suitable when analysing digital material, often packed with multimodality (cf. Peuronen, this volume). The analysis will focus on the main, index site where the visitor first encounters the band, or, better, a representation that is consciously textured perhaps by a professional web page designer and approved by the band as if to say, "This is us." For conducting the analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006 [1996]) work on visual representation is helpful in determining the specific points of attention as well as in explaining their influence for representation. (See also Kress 2010, Machin and van Leeuwen 2007, van Leeuwen 2012, Pauwels 2012.)

As CM is not a phenomenon that solely exists online but, rather, utilizes the Internet to expand its terrain, this paper is not a study on computer-mediated communication in a strict sense. However, as it is the case that websites provide bands with means to link up with their audiences, representation, the focal issue in this paper, ties up closely with interaction (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: ch. 4). Therefore, the following analysis focuses on the interactive meanings created between the viewer and the social actor(s) represented, for example through adopting a certain angle, shot size, and direction of gaze (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 114–153). Second, the analysis studies the composition of images, that is, the information value, salience and framing of different elements in an image (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 175–214). The interest is in the practices of using text, graphics, symbols, colour, and font on CM websites for the purposes of self-representation. These are, finally, discussed as constitutional in the

construction of (sub)cultural identities or identifications (cf. Leppänen et al. 2014; Peuronen, this volume; Seargeant and Tagg 2014).

The data come from four different "virtual worlds" (see the quote from Thomas (2007) above), so the term 'band websites' is used to refer to band homepages, Myspace, Facebook and Twitter. These sites are often but not always similar to each other, and bands may use only one of them or more. The homepage typically involves a main (index) page, biographical information of the band and its members, releases (often also including sound clips and lyrics to be read), a list of upcoming and past gigs, photos, and merchandise. Some homepages also feature a guestbook where users can leave comments to which band members may react (or not). Myspace, Twitter and Facebook, on the other hand, are sites for social networking. For example, Myspace "creates a creative community of people who connect around mutual affinity and inspiration for the purpose of shaping, sharing, and discovering what's next" (Myspace About page 2014). The sites allow for different degrees of intimacy and privacy between different users, ranging from open to everyone (Twitter updates) to private messaging (as in Facebook). Myspace additionally features Myspace Music, which allows artists at various phases of their careers to publish and disseminate their music for worldwide audiences. The purpose of 'connecting' people makes Myspace, Twitter and Facebook somewhat different from the more traditional official homepages of bands which tend to allow for less social interaction than the newer forms of social media.

The data presented in this paper were collected and analyzed in connection with my doctoral project. The overall data pool consists of 23 Christian metal band websites and 202 song lyrics. In the following sections, two bands are examined: the North American Oh, Sleeper and Renascent from Finland. As to their musical styles, in Myspace, Oh, Sleeper classifies itself as playing Metal/Rock and Renascent as playing Death Metal/Metal/Thrash. Although metal bands, together with rock journalists and fans, are often eager to use such specific terms for drawing lines between different sub-categories of metal, to an amateur listener, such as myself, the two bands sound roughly the same – for academics, the style could be classified simply (and unofficially) as ultra-heavy metal with rough sounds and incomprehensible vocals.

As to the two bands' religious backgrounds, they are not explicitly revealed on their respective band websites. However, we learn from Moberg (2009: 179) that CM band members mainly belong to Evangelical Christian congregations. Moberg also points out that border crossing is common: many CM adherents are simultaneously affiliated with more than one denomination. This relates to the different prominence of the two bands within the music industry and to the different national and cultural backgrounds of the bands: in the United States, the market for Christian popular music (Contemporary Christian Music) is much wider than in Finland where religious artists still struggle to find success among people outside Christian congregations (and, if they do, it may easily happen that they lose their religious supporters; see Moberg 2009: 137; Könönen and Huvi 2005: 155–156). That said, CM has evolved into a fairly active genre in Finland and, according to Moberg (2009: 176–178), more active than in many other countries apart from the USA. This means that in the USA, the bands' association with the Evangelical Christian movement gives them both possibilities (i.e. money) and responsibility (i.e. a missionary agenda), whereas the Finnish bands may more freely express themselves as artists although with less time and money.

5. Analysis

Based on my analysis of the data collected for my larger project, CM band websites seem to have several typical features in common. The most prominent of these is the use of band photographs and especially the ways in which these are used to represent a band: band members are typically standing side by side, looking intensely at the camera without smiling. The choices of colours and the uses of specific types of graphics on the sites also seem to be fairly established, in favour of black together with other dark shades. In addition, the contents of CM band websites are fairly conventional in featuring current issues related to the bands, such as upcoming gigs, latest releases, and so on, and in providing information on the bands' history, musical samples for listening and, importantly, lyrics for the visitors to read. However, the bands differ from one another in the extent to which they incorporate spirituality on their websites: while some are open about their Christian agenda (e.g. *Luotettava todistus* 'reliable witness', *Venia*), others favour representing themselves as musicians over anything else (e.g. *August Burns Red*, *Sotahuuto* 'war cry'). The following analysis is two-fold: it starts with investigating the uses of one particular symbol by a CM band in online environments, and proceeds to analyze one specific band homepage from the perspective of self-representation.

5.1 Symbols and self-representation

For different types of communities and groups, logos work as self-representative tools that enhance recognition and help to create a sense of communality and status. In rock and metal music especially, they play an important role in the creation of bands' brands: well-known examples include the Rolling Stones, Bad Religion, Metallica, and HIM (see e.g. Karjalainen et al. 2009; The Art of the Band Logo 2012). Some of these combine text with graphics while some use symbols alone. Across times, symbols have also played a central role in many religions, which is why it is no surprise that CM bands also utilize emblems for their self-representation.

The analysis of the first case begins with a look at a 2011 album cover (Figure 1) by the band Oh, Sleeper. The picture of the album cover was published online although the album cover is not, as such, to be understood as online media. Rather, different forms of online media became sites for marketing and celebrating this product.

Figure 1. The album cover of *Children of Fire* (2011) by Oh, Sleeper. ©SolidState Records. (Free use for press purposes.)

Figure 2. The cover of *Son of the Morning* (2009) by Oh, Sleeper. ©SolidState Records. (Free use for press purposes.)

Figure 3a. The Pentagram.
Source

Figure 3b. The Pentagram with the goat.
Source

On the album cover, the central figure, a woman with a long, brown hair is standing barefoot in the sand with some grass growing here and there. She is wearing a longish dress that used to be white but is now soaked with rain pouring from the night sky and stained brown. The salience of the woman is emphasized by the fact that she is located

in the middle of a circular symbol carved on the ground, and it is this symbol that I will now pay closer attention to.

The circular symbol is something Oh Sleeper also uses elsewhere beside this album cover. In fact, the symbol had made its first appearance two years earlier as the cover art of their previous album (Figure 2). Since then, the symbol has been found in a lot of the band's merchandise. More recently, it has also been incorporated into the band's profile picture both on Twitter and Facebook as well as into a mobile phone game application *Oh Sleeper – Stand your ground* where it functions as a key emblem for the player. Moreover, all of the 2011 album cover (Figure 1), rather than the mere symbol, was circulated elsewhere in the Web: first, it remained as the sole substance of the band's homepage for an entire year after its release, where it was complemented with the release date of the album. Similarly, on Myspace the image was adopted as the background image on the band's profile, which is where it remained for years before being substituted with new visuals.

The symbol seems thus to play an important role for the band and for how they wish to be recognized by the audience. The question is, "Why?" According to the former record company of Oh, Sleeper,

> the broken pentagram symbol made its first appearance on the bold cover for Son of the Morning. The graphic quite literally subverts [an] "evil" symbol by breaking off the top points, in direct reference to the line "I'll cut off your horns!" which Kinard screams while posturing as the voice of God against the devil. Many fans have connected with the purpose associated with this new symbol and have tattooed it upon their bodies. (Solid State Records | Artist | Oh, Sleeper 2012.)

In the quotation above, the record company labels the symbol reproduced in Figures 1 and 2 as a "broken pentagram". They acknowledge the modification of the pentagram (Figure 3a), a symbol that usually in the context of rock music is associated with anti-Christian ideologies expressed particularly by some black metal groups. The appropriation of this non-Christian symbol by Oh, Sleeper shows how the band performs a subcultural act through which it relates to other bands in the metal music scene. Importantly however, the band also modifies the symbol by "breaking off the top points" of the goat's head, which some interpret as the Devil's horns (Figure 3b). They do this to challenge the values put forth by the pentagram and to comment on them. Thus, by removing some of the power conveyed through the original symbol, the band brings in its own values and beliefs – the Devil's defeat – in order to represent itself as both a Christian and a metal band. As the symbol is used in merchandising across online and offline media, and as it is also being used by fans, this example does not illustrate the nature of online media discourse per se. Instead, observing the uses of the symbol sheds light on the ways in which a CM band represents itself by drawing on multimodal resources associated closely with Christian religion on the one hand and metal music culture on the other. (See also Jousmäki 2012: 220; Leppänen et al. 2014: 120–123.)

5.2 Band's home on the web

Whereas the previous section looked at the circulation of one specific symbol on various forms of online media, this section studies one specific website from different aspects. The analysis involves a detailed look into textual and visual organization on the official

homepage of Renascent for the purposes of the band's self-representation. [Ed. note: An image of the Renascent homepage under discussion is available via the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine: https://web.archive.org/web/20100130151955/http://www.renascent.net/. Viewing the image this way ensures that it remains accessible. The link will open in a new tab.]

On the main page, the overall tone is dark and most of it colored black. Two imposing images stand out from the black background to greet the visitor on the site. Looking at the top banner, first, it conveys the piece of information that this is the official homepage of Renascent. The pictures at the top are somewhat intimidating: the pictures of a foetus at the centre and a skull on the left give a harsh impression and they are certainly not what most Christian artists (not even CM) include on their homepage. It is also crucial to note that the band name is lettered in a specific way. Although specific to this band, the font that Renascent uses to letter its name closely resembles the font used to letter many other metal bands' names (Jousmäki 2012: 220). Written on red and placed next to a foetus, the rhizomatic edges of the letters bring to mind flesh, blood, and the intestines, which certainly resonates with Weinstein's (2000: 29) description of the heavy metal code which "specifies that what is depicted must be somewhat ominous, threatening, and unsettling, suggesting chaos and bordering on the grotesque." Therefore, the Renascent homepage shows that the band resorts to the standard semiotic practices of metal music culture, which is exactly what makes this band Christian metal.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 186–187), the information placed on top of a page is often used to illustrate the ideal, whereas what follows in the horizontal dimension gives a more realistic picture of the issue. On the Renascent homepage, the banner at the top can thus be taken as a symbolic summary of the band's self-representation. The themes put forward at the top – the visual imagery and the band's name – are all developed further on the main page, below a thin, white horizontal line that separates the top banner from the rest of the site. Below this disconnecting line (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 210), we find two vertical columns: on the left, a band photograph and writing in red, and on the right, a section for the band's latest interests. the left side is typically the place reserved for sharing information that the audience is already familiar with, whereas the right-hand side is typically used to portray the new issues (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 179–185). Here, however, the band photograph on the left is made more salient because of its relative size. By contrast, the text in the right-hand column is in small, white font, which already weakens the salience of what in fact is the *News* of this band. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 181) argue, the placing of given and new information is an ideological act as it neutralizes the fact that what is represented as given may not in fact be so; by contrast, it may entail and hide problematic issues. The Renascent homepage thus neutralizes the distinction between given and new: although both share roughly the same amount of vertical space, the left is made more salient because of the large size of the image especially when compared with the tiny letters used to convey the news on the right.

As to the interaction built in and through the image, the band is looking down on the viewer in the stairway as if 'demanding' the viewer's attention (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 118). Moreover, as it is shot from a low angle, the photograph constructs the band as a threatening superior, which, by contrast, makes the viewer feel small. A personal bond is created between the viewer and the lead singer who is placed a little further

ahead than the others and shot close, but the distance between the others and the viewer is not too far, either, not least because of the eye contact and frontal angle which index the crew's involvement with the viewer. (See Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 114–149; Chandler 2007: 193). In the group shot, the longhaired band members (some with tattoos visible on their arms) are dressed in black and red, thus matching the colour code of metal as described by Weinstein (2000: 29). So the represented participants are connected to each other, which constructs the band as a united group of metal heads (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 210).

Below the group shot, there are two textual passages divided into two small columns. The red writing against the black background (again, the colours of metal music culture) juxtaposes two genres, the Bible and the dictionary:

> *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. 2 Cor. 5:7*
>
> *Renascent (a.) Springing or rising again into being; being born again, or reproduced.*

Above, we see how Renascent quotes a passage from the Second Letter to the Corinthians in the New Testament of the Holy Bible talking about becoming born-again ('a new creature') and also clarifies the everyday meaning of their name – again, *becoming born again* – in the manner of a dictionary (*a*. standing for 'adjective'). Thus, as a band, Renascent indexes to be a *Christian* metal band by relocating the Bible extract as part of what *they* are about (cf. Jousmäki 2012). These are therefore the syntagmatic cues (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 191) for understanding the visuality used in the banner at the top of the page: the skull signifies death of the 'old' which is replaced with a 'new-born' associated with 'becoming born anew'. Similarly, while the connotation of the band's name is Christian, the way it is lettered brings metal into the picture. Renascent thus shows it is a part of the Christian community through identifying with Bible-based spirituality and, also, a part of the musical community of metal heads through using the visual forms specific to metal music culture. The latter also becomes evident when one listens to the musical samples on the website – a topic that deserves more attention in future research.

6. Discussion

This paper has addressed the sociocultural curiosity of Christian metal (CM) and looked into how it is textually and visually manifested online, and into the consequences of these choices. The two case studies have helped to show that CM bands represent themselves, to varying extents, as both Christians and musicians by using language, graphics and symbols in certain ways. With regard to the sociology of language and religion (SLR), Christian metal, as a source of sociocultural change, affects the discourse (text and visuals) used within the metal music genre as well as the ways of Christians' religious expression. First, CM transforms the visual practices of metal music through giving new meaning to traditional metal images, such as a skull. For instance, while secular metal imagery favours the skull as a subcultural motif of celebrating death, the Finnish Renascent goes beyond this and celebrates the death of 'old life' and brings in an image of a child as an index of new life in Christ. Similarly, the North American Oh, Sleeper modifies the well-known subcultural symbol of the pentagram to disidentify with

some parts of metal music culture and to identify with the Christian community instead. In fact, the reversal of metal imagery also marks a homecoming, since a lot of metal imagery is about the rebuttal of originally Judeo-Christian ideas and values (as shown, for example, in placing the cross upside down). Second, CM bands also challenge the more established ways of practicing Christian faith and they certainly clash with religious ideals in Renascent's home country: according to a 2010 survey conducted in the mostly Lutheran Finland (Ketola et al. 2011), these include modesty and privacy. Instead, Renascent, together with the North American Oh, Sleeper, can be seen as reproducing Evangelical Christian religiosity in emphasizing becoming born-again (also see Jousmäki 2013). However, Christian metal is a heterogeneous constellation: whereas some bands tend to emphasize the spiritual aspect, others let the sounds and symbols speak for themselves. The latter type of a practice often results in mixed feelings among the audience – another topic that deserves more attention in future research – which shows that Christian metal, and especially its ways of representing the spiritual aspect, is, for many, open to debate. With reference to SLR, CM provides an example of how religious discourse is undergoing change that is neither evenly spread nor accepted in terms of people's age and their geographical place but that is nevertheless happening at the grassroots level. This illustrates some of the more general processes taking place today, such as diversification and translocalization of religious movements, which are being accelerated by the use of new media technologies.

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The Pentagram. Shared work, no copyright. Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pentagram.png

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II

BRIDGING BETWEEN THE METAL COMMUNITY AND THE CHURCH: ENTEXTUALIZATION OF THE BIBLE IN CHRISTIAN METAL DISCOURSE

by

Henna Jousmäki, 2012

Discourse, Context & Media 1, 217—226

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III

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IV

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by

Henna Jousmäki, 2011

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