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The Reception of Biblical and Mythological  
Patterns in the Lyrics of Extreme Metal Music

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## Köszönetnyilvánítás

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Külön köszönöm szeretett feleségemnek, Lilinek, hogy végig hitt bennem és lankadatlan lelkesedésével és szeretetével megkönnyítette a legnehezebb órák végigküzdését. Hasonlóképpen köszönöm családomnak, édesanyámnak, és feleségem szüleinek, hogy szeretetükkel támogattak. Ugyanígy hálás vagyok a barátaimnak érdeklődésükért és az általuk nyújtott támaszért, valamint drága munkatársaimnak a PPKE BTK Dékáni Hivatalában, hogy hajlandóak voltak elviselni a kutatási és alkotási folyamat során is.

Végül, de nem utolsó sorban pedig hálás vagyok néhai édesapámnak, hogy élő emlékével a mai napig is munkára és fejlődésre sarkall.

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# 1. Introduction

Shrieking vocals, distorted guitars, thundering drums and half-naked male performers on stage furiously headbanging with a glass of beer in their hand. The typical image of a metal musician and their performance may be summarized in this short and intense sentence. But is metal music only about drinking, thrashing and aggression? The movement within extreme metal music that could be named as “*mythological metal*” attempts to confront the picture cited above and made to be part of common sense about the scene. On the outside metal music may be like just noise but certain musicians’ literary interest and source of inspiration sinks deep into the world of ancient mythologies. Our thesis is that mythological metal is a designated movement within metal music that shapes and fills the genre with creative power based on knowledge and conscious endeavour to revitalize ancient cultural heritage for today’s listeners. The method we are going to use is to illustrate and examine the working mechanics from the perspective of lyrics in mythological metal music.

In the focus of our research stands a musical subculture. To gain an insight not just to the plain lyrics but to the context of it as well thus Chapter 2, the methodological introduction is to be spent to the detailed analysis of the metal scene(s). In accordance to this investigation we begin with the question of the origins of metal music and the meaning of popular music. In the second part we address the academic problems arised by metal music, e.g. the history, sociology and musicology of the great genre with references to the up-to-date scholarly literature of each field. The third part is considering the aesthetics of metal music, namely the “code of heavy metal” and the “underground ethics” witnessed within it. The last portion focuses on the verbal dimension of the heavy and extreme metal scene. Connected to the aforementioned topics the key concepts of music and madness in philosophical tradition (Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche), elements of the history of religion close to the essence of heavy metal (New Age Cults and New Religious Movements) and related literary theoretical issues (Bakhtin, Northrop Frye, Richard Schusterman, etc.) are also to be introduced and discussed to draw up a colourful picture whereas we are going to examine and contextualize lyrics.

The next greater portion (Chapter 3) focuses on the myths of different ancient cultures. The starting point differs here as the first religious topics covered in metal lyrics are often connected to Satanism thus this case should not be forgotten. Satanism is compared to its counterpart known as “Christian metal” showing the two sides of the same coin. Onwards we

focus on the cultures themselves. All these subchapters start with general introductions to the most important attributes of each culture and their mythologies with sub-introductions to the particular myths as well to draw up the main plot elements and their context. The cultures chosen are: Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Ancient Israel, Hellenic-Roman antiquity, Viking and Celtic mythologies. As these topics are the main sources for Western esotericism and are the most popular ones amongst metal musicians it seems reasonable to start the process with the mentioned. Following this lead the most important extreme metal bands with mythological lyrics are to be examined with some outlook to underground examples to show both ends of the same palette.

The extreme metal scene is a constantly developing global phenomenon thus it is impossible to accumulate all the possible examples from all around the world or even from Europe to be examined in this paper. Because of this the approach of our work is more a qualitative than quantitative research using a sample of 85 songs to be analysed from the whole history of extreme metal music (1980s to today). In the last section (Chapter 4) the gathered data is going to be systematized with possible categorization of both the myths and the lyrics mentioned in order to draw up the framework of mythological metal with an interpretation of the different approaches, attitudes and modes of speech of the ancient heritage of Europe. Let us now begin with the search for heavy metal on the ground of European culture!

## 2. Metal Studies

### Background & Academic Perspectives of Metal Music

#### 2.1. The Origin of Metal Music

##### 2.1.1. Forging Heavy Metal: Preceding Black Sabbath

Heavy and extreme metal are amongst the most popular subcultural genres of popular music. To make it easier for us to find its place amongst all the other popular arts, we begin with a short historical introduction to the formation period of heavy metal music. But first of all, what is popular music? Two definitions may arise in answering this question:

- 1) Everything is popular music what is not art (classical) music or (traditional) folk music, and does not require any previous musical training to enjoy.
- 2) Popular music is the commercialized side of music that is *produced*<sup>1</sup> for larger audiences.<sup>2</sup>

These definitions tend to localize popular music on the horizon outside of high culture and sophisticated, professional art. It does not necessarily mean that the quality of the popular production is of a low scale (obviously there are many examples on this tendency) but the main aim of a popular art or production is the commercial success.<sup>3</sup> It is an important feature that will play a significant role during the fragmentation period of metal music.

Independent from which definition do we choose to accept (the combination of both may give a more detailed picture of the topic) the advent of popular music is the musical milieu of the Southern part of the United States of America during the 1920s. The developing jazz and blues of Louisiana and New Orleans later became a cultural phenomenon (thinking about the first successful black musicians like Robert Johnson or James Brown) not just amongst the originator black musicians of the named geographical territory but also amongst the dominant white culture of the 1920s and 1930s US and later Europe. The musically professional but border breaking manner of jazz music made unconventional music to be part of Western culture. The jazz-stars of the pre- and postwar US and Europe together with the usage of acoustic, and later with the invention of the electric guitar also contributed much to the cause of popular music. The many cases rhythmical music of blues and jazz was turned

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<sup>1</sup> From the stable financial background of a large distribution company with professional studio equipment.

<sup>2</sup> Roy SHUKER, *Understanding Popular Music*, New York, Routledge, 1994, 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> John FISKE, *Understanding Popular Culture*, New York, Routledge, 2011, 9-10.

during the 1950s to become rock'n'roll. Rock'n'roll and its biggest stars (like Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis or Chuck Berry) also meant for the culture to be a primitive music of the lower classes, lacking talent and any aesthetic quality,<sup>4</sup> a pejorative attribute also presented in the judging of later metal music.

As Britain is the birthplace of heavy metal we travel to the British Isles now. Two tendencies defined the popular musical scene of the 1960s Britain: the emergence of big rock and beat stars and the blues revival. Two acts are to remember from the commercially successful side of the story: Rolling Stones and the Beatles. From the beginning the two bands represented two sides of a popular all boy band: the first one being the bad boys with leather jackets and in their time violent music, while the other one originally were the good boy band with elegant clothing and love songs to sing along. Not being the only ones to form these tendencies for our case the bands present the defining trends. Rolling Stones' fashion derived and inspired by the biking culture represents independence and rebellion<sup>5</sup> while the Beatles later works introduced the progressive rock into the musical market. Their highly anticipated record, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*<sup>6</sup> was the first catalyst to prove that rock can be quality music with many inspirations from world music in a professional way. Being a turning point we can count the beginning of progressive rock from the release of the mentioned record.<sup>7</sup>

The second root of heavy metal as mentioned above the blues revival of the 1960s in Britain. The so called "*British Blues Boom*" that with its impassionate tunes defined many of Britain's rock groups' sound (in many cases also serving as a source of inspiration for the progressive rock bands) is on one hand a cultural import from the US and on the other hand a movement with its independent features. The many great artist and pioneers are not to deal with in this short introduction, we only note that Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Pink Floyd, alongside with Jimi Hendrix, The Who, The Kinks and so on are also important contributors not just to the cause of blues driven progressive rock but also for the development of heavy metal.<sup>8</sup>

It should be noted as well, that along with the pop cultural changes and emerging new genres the spiritual map of Western societies started to develop towards alternative ways as

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<sup>4</sup> Edward MACAN, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Compare: The Rolling Stones, *Sympathy for the Devil = Beggars Banquet*, The Rolling Stones, Decca Records, 1968.

<sup>6</sup> The Beatles, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Parlophone, 1967.

<sup>7</sup> Edward MACAN, *ibid.* 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Helen FARLEY, *Demons, Devils and Witches: The Occult in Heavy Metal Music = Heavy Metal Music In Britain*, ed. Gerd BAYER, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, 74-79.

well. After the Second World War the map of Western Culture was re-drawn. Not just in a political manner, meaning the establishment of the Eastern Block until the end of the 1980s, but also in regard of society and religion. The great cataclysm of the Second World War, the holocaust and the Gulag together with the developing globalisation the religious life of Western civilization (meaning Europe and North America as well) changed. Through the new methods of telecommunication the world of the Far East became a point of interest. The intercontinental wars of the US during the cold war, namely Korea and Vietnam also strengthened this interest, expanded by the newly came immigrants after the repealing of the Oriental Exclusion Acts by Lyndon Johnson in 1965 opening the borders of Far Easterners to come to the US.<sup>9</sup> Protest against the postwar authority systems, thought and a criticism against the Church together built up the well-known counterculture, which chose to create something new, revolting against the current streams of cultural tendencies.<sup>10</sup> After the events of 1968 of France and the US antiwar protests, the development of the hippie movement a “New Age” started to bloom in Western society. The “New Age” is an umbrella term for all the movements, cults, thoughts and practises that show an alternative to the mainstream of Western society. Its roots, as presented above go back to the counterculture of the 1960s, but the main thoughts are loaned from ancient sources, in a shape that it could be fitted for the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century consumer societies. It also should be noted that in the spreading of New Age thoughts the role of developing telecommunication and later the internet also plays an important role. Without the rapid travelling of information and unknown exotic cultural features, the wide spreading and popularity of New Age could not be achieved.<sup>11</sup> According to some certain theories the world must witness changes in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the Age of Pisces is declining giving space for the coming Age of Aquarius (compare the famous musical of hippie lifestyle and thought: *Hair*). In this sense the New Age coming is not equal with the New Age cults (the New Age cults are predecessors of the coming New Age). The advent of the coming New Age was predicted by numerous earlier occultist and esoteric teachers like Jacob Boehme,<sup>12</sup> Rudolf Steiner,<sup>13</sup> and the Christian theosophist Alice Bailey.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> J. Gordon MELTON, Robert L. MOORE, *The Cult Experience – Responding to the New Religious Pluralism*, New York, The Pilgrim Press, 1982, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Carole FINK, Philipp GASSERT, Detlef JUNKER, *Introduction = 1968: The World Transformed*, eds. Detlef JUNKER, Daniel S. MATTERN, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 1-27.

<sup>11</sup> Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, *New Age Movement = The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsey JONES, New York, MacMillan Reference USA, 2005, Vol. 10. 6495-6500.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), a saxon shoemaker from Lutheran origin, who preached about a new age to come in the spiritual life of Europe, declaring the arrival of an eschatological *enlightenment* of the believers. Andrew Weeks, *Boehme, Jacob = Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2006, 188-191. Maybe he had the greatest influence on William Blake: compare his „Songs of Innocence” and „Songs of Experience” cycle in connection with the struggle of Light and the Dark. Aldo

### 2.1.2. The Beginnings: Black Sabbath and Birmingham

Thus with the blooming progressive rock and blues world of Britain we arrive to 1968, the formation year of Black Sabbath. Based in Birmingham is traditionally held as the first ever heavy metal band of the globe. The founding members and their positions are the following: Ozzy Osbourne (vocals), Geezer Butler (bass), Tony Iommi (guitars) and Bill Ward (drums). To understand the importance of the band the first question that is to arise is of the place of origin: why Birmingham? It would be more understandable if Liverpool was the birth city of heavy metal, as being a cultural metropolis of the mentioned decade gave many boost and inspiration for the rock era of the '60s Britain. Blues, rock'n'roll and jazz all could name Liverpool as their capital, also serving as an icon for other parts of the country (it is enough only to mention that the Beatles also came from Liverpool).<sup>15</sup> On the contrary Birmingham was a long-tradition industrial city that suffered from the de-industrialization after the Second World War. The decline of manufacturing sector in the city leading to job losses in the male population also lead to a form of crisis in the masculinity of the population, especially for the younger generation not just to see their fathers to lose their jobs but also to experience the decline of social mobility as an effect. Together these attributes gave place amongst youngsters for rebellion against the current social and political situation. Thus, Birmingham became the origin for the music of rebellion: heavy metal.<sup>16</sup>

Turning back to Black Sabbath, starting off as a blues rock group in the manner of their contemporaries mentioned above, the first and most important of their sound is the new intensity given to their genre. The aggressive and highly distorted guitar and drum techniques (compared to their contemporaries) laid down the foundations for heavy metal: the usage of riffs and the power-chord that until present day drives the genre and represent the rebellious

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MAGRIS, *Gnosticism: Gnosticism from its Origins to the Middle Ages (Further Considerations)* = *The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsey JONES, New York, MacMillan Reference USA, 2005, Vol. 5. 3515.

<sup>13</sup> Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), Croatian born later Swiss philosopher is the main man behind the Anthroposophical movement. The esoteric doctrine claimed by Steiner is a way to connect the spiritual in man with the spiritual in the cosmos. It stresses more the wisdom of man than the wisdom of God. Cees LEIJENHORST, *Anthroposophy = Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2006, 82.

<sup>14</sup> Alice BAILEY (1880-1949), theosophist, later left the Society of misunderstanding and founded her School of Arcane and book publisher in order to prepare the world for a change and the coming of a new era. J. Gordon MELTON, *Bailey, Alice A(nne) (LaTrobe-Bateman)* = *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, ed. J. Gordon MELTON, New York, Gale Group, Vol. 1. 2001, 144-146.

<sup>15</sup> Andre L. COPE, *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010, 9-15.

<sup>16</sup> Ryan M. MOORE, *The Unmaking of the English Working Class: Deindustrialization, Reification and the Origins of Heavy Metal = Heavy Metal Music In Britain*, ed. Gerd BAYER, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, 144-147.

and power achieving side of metal music.<sup>17</sup> Also for the formation years of heavy metal the typical band-consistency is also described by Black Sabbath: vocals, guitars, bass and drums forming a four member group, wearing in many cases black or denim clothes, also bringing the long hair for male audience into fashion.

After the debut album released by Black Sabbath<sup>18</sup> the story of heavy metal started. The first other two pioneers of the genre were mentioned both for working with blues and progressive rock, but also contributed much for heavy metal: Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin.<sup>19</sup> Although not following the same path of Black Sabbath and other heavy metal groups we can say that the movement of metal music were founded by Sabbath and ornamented by the other two. The name of the genre, “*heavy metal*” started off as a pejorative attribute used by critic Lester Bangs to negatively describe the music of Black Sabbath, lending an expression from the world of 19<sup>th</sup> century warfare.<sup>20</sup> On this point we can clearly see that it is also an attribute for metal music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that the genre itself is a pariah of popular culture, which was from the birth identified as a destructive musical approach. The first five definitive albums of Black Sabbath<sup>21</sup> ignited the heavy metal scene, with noteworthy followers and companions like Scorpions from Germany, Alice Cooper and Blue Öyster Cult from the US, as well with Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin, in some songs even with Queen, making heavy metal from being a local music of Birmingham and later Britain to become a global phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> As heavy metal went from the underground almost to the mainstream it also led to the commercialization of the genre. The problem of authenticity, which is going to be a sub-topic of a later section, arose with the need of new ways to find it again. The emerging new sub-culture and underground musical tendency called *punk* became a new source of inspiration that leads our story forward to the beginning of the 1980s.

Before travelling towards the extreme metal genres it is time to present the early heavy metal textuality with an example from Black Sabbath. The eponymous record above cited contains the as well eponymous song, *Black Sabbath* below with an excerpt of the lyrics.<sup>23</sup> The clear traces of a satanic panic could be found in the song that paves the path for the later

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<sup>17</sup> Robert WALSER, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Wesleyan University Press, 1993, 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Black Sabbath, *Black Sabbath*, Vertigo, 1970a.

<sup>19</sup> Ian CHRISTE, *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal*, HarperCollins E-Books, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Ian CHRISTE, *ibid.* 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Black Sabbath, *ibid.* 1970a; *Paranoid*, Vertigo, 1970b; *Master of Reality*, Vertigo, 1971; *Vol. 4.*, Vertigo, 1972; *Sabbath, Bloody Sabbath*, Vertigo, 1973.

<sup>22</sup> Ian CHRISTE, *ibid.* 2004.

<sup>23</sup> “[...] *Big black shape with eyes of fire / Telling people their desire / Satan's sitting there, he's smiling / Watch those flames get higher and higher / Oh no, no, please God help me! [...]*” Black Sabbath, *ibid.* 1970a

development of interest in spiritual, religious and occult topics within metal music. The song itself is more like a terrifying impression on a satanic mass called black Sabbath, rather than a form of praising a process like that. With this rather short glance on the verbal dimension of metal music we depart to the academic issues represented by the genre and its culture.

## **2.2. Overview of Academic Topics and Literature on Metal Music**

### **2.2.1. Introduction: Possible Topics**

As any other cultural phenomenon thus metal music has its own academic field conducted by researchers. In the case of a subculture, especially a music based subculture, may it be local or global the history of the scene's development is essential in its study. It is true regarding metal music as well. An established history (or vertical study) may give the opportunity of a horizontal research, mainly for sociology. As sociology gives the answers for the questions of artists' and audiences' motivations (horizontal study), interest and behaviour in a certain subculture there may be place for the investigation of the aesthetics of an art (music) based subculture. The three together gives the perspective on the *subculture* itself. Current chapter's aim is to give a review on literature and specific topics interesting for the study of metal music and culture. Three main fields are to be mentioned in current sub-chapter, namely history, sociology and musicology. The other aesthetical considerations are to be transported to the next section "2.3. *Metal Music and Its Aesthetics*" as the music itself is not to be analyzed in details, thus we are to offer a slight insight to the academic research of the sonic dimensions respectively.

### **2.2.2. History of Metal Music**

As it was addressed above the history may give the first impressions to a subculture. Thus the history of metal music is a prominent topic, not only for the academic participants of its research but for the audience as well. The beginnings of the history of metal music were briefly sketched above, now we would like to give an overview on the possible directions one may approach the chronology of the genre. Literature on historical proceedings comes from two different sources: academic publications and more extensively metal journalism. Naturally rock and blues journalism are the predecessors of metal journalism, given place for early heavy metal as well. From the 1980s independent metal journalism started to develop

with the foundation of many local and global weekly or monthly papers to be distributed. The most important print ones are now: *Kerrang!* (UK, since 1981), *Metal Hammer* (UK, since 1983), *Rock Hard* (Germany, since 1983), *Terrorizer* (UK, since 1993) and *Decibel* (US, since 2004). All the enumerated ones are also available in an internet based version as well. Besides professional metal journalism the phenomenon of fanzines (“fan made magazines”) also started to spread, in most of the cases with local interest, first also in print format (with a low budget materialization), but with the conquest of the internet thematic blogs and half-professional fanzines are the greatest contestant for traditional magazines.<sup>24</sup> The thematic of the mentioned types are mainly to be up-to-date with newest recordings, local live performances, artists’ interviews, etc. that may be rich sources for different academic approaches (as it could be witnessed in Chapter 4 of current dissertation) as well.<sup>25</sup>

The topic of a chronological system to be made of metal music and all its fragmented sub-genres is not of academic origin. Metal journalism created the first top quality historical reports, in most of the cases not only arranged around musicians and bands but certain peak recordings as well. Without the claim of a whole list of books of the mentioned type we name two important authors: Ian Christie (see the repeating references to his work throughout our paper) and Joel McIver,<sup>26</sup> who contributed much for genre-history on the referred level. We may not forget the Hungarian pioneer in the history of extreme metal, Balázs Nagy, whose groundbreaking publication *Sírontúli melódiák*<sup>27</sup> is up to today the most detailed Hungarian written book on the chronology and stylistic development of extreme metal music.

The picture gets more colours with volumes on individual genres like *Choosing Death* by Albert Mudrian<sup>28</sup> on death metal or the profile-like presentation of black metal by Dayal Patterson in *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*.<sup>29</sup> Besides high quality publications, naturally some tabloid books were also published, e.g. *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* by Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind.<sup>30</sup> In the profile-driven attempt even an encyclopaedia was released by William Philips and Brian Cogan under the

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<sup>24</sup> As our topic is not the investigation of this genre of journalistic approach now we do not give place for a detailed analysis of the scene only mention some of the longest running and most important periodicals.

<sup>25</sup> We are not detailing it, but radio and television shows also were and are present in metal media, but as journalistic approaches are the most common sources for fans, thus we focused only these media types.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed career please visit his personal website: <http://www.joelmciver.co.uk/site.html> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>27</sup> NAGY Balázs, *Sírontúli melódiák: Az extrém metal három évtizede*, Budapest, Irgal, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> ALBERT MUDRIAN, *Choosing Death: The Improbable History of Death Metal and Grindcore*, Bazillion Points LLC, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> DAYAL PATTERSON, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, Port Townsend, Feral House, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> MICHAEL MOYNIHAN & DIDRIK SØDERLIND, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, Feral House, 2003.

title *Encyclopedia of Heavy Metal Music*,<sup>31</sup> focusing on the most important artists and bands with short articles. The pair of artists focused approach may be the *recording* focused version. Previously mentioned Decibel Magazine published in contribution with Albert Mudrain the volume *Precious Metal*, with in depth interviews of artists, gathered around 25 highly important metal recordings.<sup>32</sup> A library could be filled with biographical publications focusing on one single artist or band, with varying quality (e.g. on Judas Priest<sup>33</sup> or Iron Maiden,<sup>34</sup> the line of examples seems to be endless), but the deep interview with Adam Nergal Darski, frontman of Polish Behemoth written by Mark Eglinton and Krzysztof Azarewicz<sup>35</sup> gives the opportunity to the reader not only to get know the behind the scenes of a remarkable musician but also lets the personality to come closer, widening the meaning behind a musician's work, making the volume to be a special gem amongst other similar attempts. We are to note, that in almost every case of academic publishing on metal music, on some account the history of metal music is present. The amount and depth always depends on the author, thus it can occur that a paper or book on other fields (e.g. sociology, musicology, etc.) may incorporate many details in connection of metal's history. In these cases as the main aim of a research is not to present metal history but other perspectives, thus we do not list these examples here.

### 2.2.3. Sociology of Metal Music

From a scholarly perspective the sociological questions risen by metal music are quite often in the focus. Global and local problems vary in studies and complete volumes as well. Relatively late, in the beginning of the 1990s was metal subculture identified by sociology with two major publications. In 1991 Deena Weinstein published and in 2000 republished the reworked version of her *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*,<sup>36</sup> an in depth analysis of concerning all the main problems around metal music, e.g. status of artists, the audience, the origins of the genre, its history, even attempted the categorization of the lyrics. The positive scholarly

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<sup>31</sup> Note: the genre of a metal encyclopaedia because of the music's constant development is outdated in the moment of publication, thus the need emerged for an online compilation in the style of Wikipedia, that is known today as "*Encyclopedia Metallum – The Metal Archives*" (<http://www.metal-archives.com>). As this website is going to have a crucial role in the case for searching a database of lyrics, we are to give it more attention in Chapter 2.4.3. William PHILIPS & Brian COGAN, *Encyclopedia of Heavy Metal Music*, London, Greenwood Press, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Albert MUDRIAN (ed.), *Precious Metal: Decibel Presents the Stories Behind 25 Extreme Metal Masterpieces*, Da Capo Press, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Martin POPOFF, *Heavy Metal Painkillers: Judas Priest*, Toronto, ECW Press, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Paul STENNING, *Iron Maiden: 30 years of the Beast*, New Malden, Chrome Dreams, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Adam Nergal DARSKI, Mark EGLINTON, Krzysztof AZAREWICZ, Piotr WELTROWSKI, *Confession of a Heretic, The Sacred and the Profane: Behemoth and Beyond*, London, Jawbone Press, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Deena WEINSTEIN, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*, DaCapo Press, 2002.

interest is clearly shown in her work, in an endeavour to understand and systematize a then not well researched topic. The complete opposite could be experienced in the book of Jeffrey Arnett from 1996.<sup>37</sup> The monograph criticised by many throughout the years<sup>38</sup> addresses the problem of adolescent alienation and its connection to metal subculture. The attempt to understand the appeal of heavy metal music for adolescents is a key in understanding the genre itself, but the author does it from a prejudiced viewpoint: from the appearance of metal music the genre was labelled as antisocial, satanic, outrageous or destructive, that is an epidemic amongst youngsters that should be banned. This prejudice is clearly shown in the example profiles of certain participants chosen from heavy metal subculture who could fit in the preconception that heavy metal lifestyles equals a destructive, alienated and connected to crime (not to mention the low amount of interviewed participants and the lack of control group resulting in generalized statements). The research was biased both in method and in the discussion of the results.

The next major study to mention on the whole world of extreme metal (to be discussed) is the work of Keith Kahn-Harris from 2007.<sup>39</sup> In this case the focus is on the musical scene itself, its participants, mainly the musicians and the global perspectives of the music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Two articles should be cited from between the two endpoints proposed, one from 1996 and one from 2000. Bethany Bryson's research<sup>40</sup> on musical tastes and opinions about heavy metal is a classical sociological survey with statistical analysis closing on the negative reputation of heavy metal music not only working with the metal audience but with the mainstream culture surrounding it. Bettina Roccor<sup>41</sup> analyses the internal forces creating the fragmented sub-genre-rich environment of metal music compared to the external umbrella of it, asking the question who the different sub-genres identify themselves to be part of the same wider picture. On a general level gathering information from the above mentioned studies we may draw a sketch on the sociological perspectives of the scene. By the year 2000 the meaning of mass media with the wide spreading of the internet changed and became a global phenomenon. Metal music itself adapted to these

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<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Jensen ARNETT, *Metalheads – Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation*, Westview Press, Harper Collins, 1996.

<sup>38</sup> Note: Almost every article referred in our dissertation gives place for a sentence or two to criticise this work.

<sup>39</sup> Note: The great time leap does not mean the lack of any major publication on the topic but here we only aim to mention the cornerstones of this field of research. Keith KAHN-HARRIS, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, Oxford, Berg, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Bethany BRYSON, "Anything but heavy metal": *Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes*, *American Sociological Review*, 61/5, 884-899.

<sup>41</sup> Bettina ROCCOR, *Heavy Metal: Forces of Unification and Fragmentation within a Musical Subculture*, *The World of Music* 42/1, 83-94.

changes. Originally, metal music was a localized musical scene with a strict border in the means of fans and followers. In the 1970s Britain Black Sabbath emerged from the working class (“*blue collar*”) milieu, especially popular amongst the male population in their 20s and 30s. By the 2010s metal music became global: there are worldwide famous and popular artists and almost each and every corner and country of the world has its local metal scene inspired by the global and other local movements. Although the core base of metal listeners is still coming from young adults, every social layer and gender are presented, never forgetting the followers who started to be interested into metal during the ‘70s, ‘80s or ‘90s and are still loyal to the genre.

On the borderlands of metal history, sociology and even musicology exists the studies focusing on certain genres or local scenes as well. We have works on exotic metal scenes e.g. Brazilian,<sup>42</sup> Balinese,<sup>43</sup> Turkish<sup>44</sup> or even African.<sup>45</sup> The problems of local scenes, gender, masculinity, audiences’ social status are investigated in these studies alongside with identity, forming of a certain scene and their development. The study of Natalie J. Purcell on death metal<sup>46</sup> and Eileen Luhr’s investigations of American Christian metal<sup>47</sup> are also quality examples of sub-genre focused researches. Various compilation volumes exist as well that contain always some considerations of sociology, e.g. the *Heavy Metal Music in Britain* edited by Gerd Bayer.<sup>48</sup> On this point we face the problem of separating the academic fields from each other, as most of the compilations effectively compile many different topics together (from sociology through marketing, lyrics, culture, musicology, etc.).<sup>49</sup> The great variety of analyses and themes occurring in the mentioned kind of compilations are the evidence for the now developed “*metal studies*” is a dedicated interdisciplinary approach towards a radical subculture. The review of sociological literature could be continued but other prominent pieces of literature are going to be mentioned in forthcoming parts of our work, thus now we depart to the territory of musicology.

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<sup>42</sup> Idelber AVELAR, *Heavy Metal Music in Postdictatorial Brazil: Sepultura and the Coding of Nationality in Sound*, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 12/3, 2003, 329-346.

<sup>43</sup> Emma BAULCH, *The Identity Politics of the Balinese Death/Thrash Metal Scene*, *Popular Music* 22 (2003), 195-215.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre HECKER, *Turkish Metal – Music, Meaning and Morality in a Muslim Society*, Ashgate, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Kevin FELLEZS, *Black Metal Soul Music: Stone Vengeance and the Aesthetics of Race in Heavy Metal*, *Popular Music History*, 6.1/6.2, 2011, 180-197.

<sup>46</sup> Natalie J. PURCELL, *Death Metal Music: The Passion and Politics of a Subculture*, McFarland, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Eileen LUHR, *Metal Missionaries to the Nation: Christian Heavy Metal Music, „Family Values” and Youth Culture, 1984-1994*, *American Quarterly* 57 (2005), 103-128.

<sup>48</sup> Gerd BAYER (ed.), *Heavy Metal Music In Britain*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> For an example please visit the e-book site of Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures conference’s proceeding volume: <http://iipc.utu.fi/MHM/> (Accessed: 2018. 07. 04.).

#### 2.2.4. Musicology of Metal Music

The musicology of metal was first studied by Robert Walser, in his groundbreaking work from 1993: *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*,<sup>50</sup> preceded by his journal article on metal guitarists' relations to classical virtuosity.<sup>51</sup> The monograph of 1993 is a great example for an introductory research that attempts to enlighten as many as possible issues in connection of its topic, thus it balances on the borders of history, musicology and sociology, giving a full cultural picture about the scene. Nevertheless this book was published 25 years ago it is still a basic starting point for everyone interested in the academic results on heavy metal. As it is going to be cited in connection with the verbal and other aesthetical aspects of the music and its culture we now solely refer to the arguments of Walser on the nature of metal. Robert Walser argues if metal music is a performative or a studio centred genre. On one hand the performance, the concert is the real area for metal music to be witnessed. The concert is where the live music attracts all the senses with the artists on stage, sharing the experience with fellow listeners. Metal music is mostly known of its aggression driven features, what is also a trait of the live performance, although the aggression that is released during a concert is in a controlled frame with signs and symbols only receiving a meaning within the time of the performance.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand in many cases the arrangements of metal music recorded in a studio environment may not be recreated on stage in its full originality. Just to take an imaginary example, if a band has only one guitarist but decides to record in the studio many guitar tracks for a song simultaneously and the band later performs with the same only one guitarist than they will not be able to reproduce their original content. According to our opinion the truth is in between: the recording attracts the listener and the performance shows the real meaning of the recording.

As heavy and extreme metal both are regarded as popular music in the meaning of its low quality in musical professionalism thus the musicological study of the subject is on the margin. Nevertheless there are attempts that aim to understand the music and not only the subculture. Two pioneer works are to be mentioned, Andre L. Cope's endeavour was yet cited above,<sup>53</sup> that claimed to understand the musical roots of early heavy metal through the first

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<sup>50</sup> Robert WALSER, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Wesleyan University Press, 1993.

<sup>51</sup> This article was later incorporated to the monographic work of 1993. Robert WALSER, *Eruptions: Heavy Metal Appropriations and Classical Virtuosity*, *Popular Music*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1992.), 263-308.

<sup>52</sup> Karen Bettez HALNON, *Heavy Metal Carnival and Dis-Orientation: The Politics of Grotesque Realism*, *Symbolic Interaction*, 29/1, 2006, 37-39.

<sup>53</sup> Andre L. COPE, *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010.

recordings of Black Sabbath. Besides analyzing the musical environment of the emergence of heavy metal and Black Sabbath his down to the note research on the kinship between blues, rock and heavy metal is enlightening. The same can be said about the investigations spent in death metal music by Michelle Phillipov from 2012.<sup>54</sup> Death Metal maybe regarded as one of the most difficult to play genres of metal music, originating in the fast pace and constant tempo changes and the aggression projected through it. Her work focuses much on music criticism and metal journalism as well, giving another insight into a genre that was yet introduced by above cited authors.

Last but not least we would like to mention, that the musicological research on metal music reached educational levels as well, as guitar, bass guitar and drum players are able to study on a high level metal music in London, at the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance, a school dedicated to many other genres of popular music.<sup>55</sup> After presenting some academic considerations in connection with metal music, that are not core part of our research, we tend to take a closer look on the music and its culture, mainly the aesthetics, before stepping forward to the verbal dimensions.

## **2.3. Metal Music and Its Aesthetics**

### **2.3.1. Heavy and Extreme Metal: Music and Madness**

Both Robert Walser<sup>56</sup> and Deena Weinstein<sup>57</sup> argue that many appearances of metal music require a certain level of madness and/or ecstasy, both from musicians and the audience as well. Music, madness and the musician as a trio of unity as a theory is not a fresh invention, brought in by 1920s blues and later indirectly by heavy metal culture but is a time-honoured philosophical statement. Both from Continental idealism and existentialism we can find examples connected to the above mentioned feature. Arthur Schopenhauer in his opus magnum, *Die Welt als Wille und Fortstellung*, in *Book 3* on aesthetics, he assumes that amongst all arts and artists, music and the musicians are the purest subjects of will-less knowing.<sup>58</sup> Schopenhauer revolves around the question of the genius being interested in arts, architecture, literature (mainly poetics) and music, searching for certain levels of purity in

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<sup>54</sup> Michelle PHILLIPOV, *Death Metal and Music Criticism: Analysis at the Limits*, New York, Lexington Books, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.icmp.ac.uk/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>56</sup> Robert WALSER, *ibid.* 1993, 137-172.

<sup>57</sup> Deena WEINSTEIN, *ibid.* 2002, 213-217.

<sup>58</sup> Arthur SCHOPENHAUER, *A világ mint akarat és képzet*, Budapest, Osiris, 2007, 314-328.

will-less knowing, stating that the artefacts of an artist are able to channel Platonic form of an object, through the aesthetics experience. The temporality of music (supposedly lyric-less music) and its expressing nature, that may be assumed to be universal for all human beings, thus placing the musician as the greatest among geniuses.

The idea of the musical genius is accompanied by the sensuality theory of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, found in *Enten-Eller*, based on the operas of Mozart, namely *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Don Giovanni*. The three operas are regarded by Kierkegaard as a ladder of advancement representing the three levels of the musical erotic. The seductive nature of Don Juan falls only under aesthetic categories and not ethical ones,<sup>59</sup> thus making his erotic adventures to be works of art, living once again in the temporality of music. The erotic and sensual as aesthetic categories culminating in Don Giovanni in a wider picture make the musicians (not only Mozart, but on a general level all the composers, players and conductors as well) to be the players of the erotic, taking music away from the realm of the ethical. This primordial and almost ecstasy driven theory could be well paired with Friedrich Nietzsche's thoughts on the opera of his time and its relations of ancient Greek tragedy. His first book, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*<sup>60</sup> connects together the musical genius and the musical erotic. The dialectic sketched in the balance between the Apollonic and Dionysian spheres of human existence materialized in the classical Athenian/Attican tragedy is the balance of wisdom and instincts or the conscious and the unconscious. The latter is in close connection with the sensual and madness, thus making the musical genius to be an agent of the Dionysian, uncivilized, the savage.

Nietzsche finds the revitalization of the Athenian tragedy in the opera art of Wagner. The "total art work" or Gesamtkunstwerk represented by the Wagnerian opera (which has many themes coming from a mythological background) has some certain links with contemporary heavy and extreme metal performance. The yet cited section of Deena Weinstein's study<sup>61</sup> underlines our statements above, as the live concert is named to be the real arena for metal music, the experience whereas all the participants, musicians, audience and the service crew as well are dedicated to the same purpose. The Dionysian experience of the concert and its medium that in many regards is quite similar to the rites of primitive or institutionalized religions,<sup>62</sup> where the theatrical scenery, the interaction of the band with the

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<sup>59</sup> Søren KIERKEGAARD, *Vagy-vagy*, Budapest, Osiris, 1994, 82-106.

<sup>60</sup> Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *A tragédia születése, avagy görögség és pesszimizmus*, Budapest, Magvető, 1986.

<sup>61</sup> Please see note 57.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Hylland ERIKSEN, *Kis helyek, nagy témák – Bevezetés a szociálintropológiába*, Budapest, Gondolat, 2006, 283-284.

audience, the appearance of controlled aggression arises the picture of a madman, or a mad crowd for the outsider spectator. Taking a brief look on the literature gathered and with short remarks introduced in Chapter 2.2.3. in all cases we find references to the intemperate nature of a metal performance (most interesting examples is the yet criticised volume of Jeffrey Arnett, showing the clear prejudicial nature of his study only in the description of a metal concert he attended as field-research).<sup>63</sup>

Besides the performance (that is to be detailed more later) on the textual level of heavy and extreme metal music clearly deals with the question of madness. From the birth of heavy metal, the original pioneer band's second attempt of a recording yet contains a song that deals with insanity. *Paranoid*, being one of the evergreen hits describes the state of losing one's mind that leads to social isolation and a break up of a romantic relationship.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, this interpretation of madness is the depiction of the fears of a commonly mad held person, not touching the possible benefits in the state of madness. Ten years later, than ex-singer of Black Sabbath, Ozzy Osbourne returned to the problem of madness in his solo-debut with the song *Crazy Train*. That piece steps away from the depressive isolation of a madman, declaring that the one who is regarded crazy by the crowds may be only crazy in their sense, while the madman holds some certain truths, or because of the truths he or she bears is regarded crazy.<sup>65</sup>

From 1986 we cite two other songs revolving around madness. Slayer's iconic *Criminally Insane* yet by the title ties together madness and crime. Besides that the state of the crazy is presented as a result of one's choice, not just meaning a different mind status but that to be a dangerous one leading to crime.<sup>66</sup> The anxiety of one living in a mental asylum is addressed by US's Metallica in *Welcome Home (Sanitarium)*. The most important attribute to be found in the song is the will to freedom of a sanitarium resident, who is in terror of the outside world that will not understand him.<sup>67</sup> *Can I play with Madness?* from UK's Iron

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<sup>63</sup> Jeffrey Jensen ARNETT, *Metalheads – Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation*, Westview Press, Harper Collins, 1996, 7-19.

<sup>64</sup> "Finished with my woman 'cause she couldn't help me with my mind / People think I'm insane because I am frowning all the time / All day long I think of things but nothing seems to satisfy / Think I'll lose my mind if I don't find something to pacify [...]" Black Sabbath, *Paranoid*, 1970.

<sup>65</sup> "[...] Crazy, but that's how it goes / Millions of people living as foes / Maybe it's not too late / To learn how to love and forget how to hate [...]" Ozzy Osbourne, *Blizzard of Ozz*, Jet Records, 1980.

<sup>66</sup> "[...] Quarters for the criminally insane / The sentence read for life I must remain / The path I chose has led me to my grave / To try again I'd have no other way. [...]" Slayer, *Reign in Blood*, Def Jam Recroding, 1986.

<sup>67</sup> "[...] Build my fear of what's out there / And cannot breathe the open air / Whisper things into my brain / Assuring me that I'm insane [...]" Metallica, *Master of Puppets*, Elektra Records, 1986.

Maiden is the first one in our examples to question the identity of the self using madness to be a method in search for the truth.<sup>68</sup>

The American retro heavy metal band Orchid also spent the homage for the problem of madness on their 2013 recording *The Mouths of Madness* with the eponymous track. The problematic state of mind is cornered with the question of imaginary voices in one's head that only lead to deception and delusion. The cited verse<sup>69</sup> suggests that the state of madness could be fought or at least one can standard a life with it. The motif of music and insanity as two matching categories is also addressed in the song, incorporating the suffering of a mad musician who creates from his craziness art. This feature can be clearly found in two recording's titles. Southern metal band Down's 2010 live recording is titled *Diary of a Mad Band*,<sup>70</sup> paying homage not just for the short story of Nikolai Gogol, *Diary of a Madman*, but also for Ozzy Osbourne, whose second solo recording goes by the Gogol story's title.<sup>71</sup> The picture is widened by Philip Anselmo's (frontman of Down) second solo effort entitled *Choosing Mental Illness as a Virtue*.<sup>72</sup> The two "diaries" as musical recordings testify the musical recordings to be products of madness, thus bringing the equitation mark between music and madness, and more! The last recording's title even takes this thought further: being mad not just a way of creating music but can be a virtue as well.

The metal performance and recording are now could be stated to be near the state of madness. Madness, the mind's uncivilized and chaotic behaviour that is truly connected to the Dionysian aspects of life described by Nietzsche, a kind of half- or un-conscious sink into the untamed nature of the Dionysian, without the balancing help of the Apollonian, letting loose the pre-civilized, almost mythical ancient nature of mankind. Of course we should not forget that the high level consumption of alcohol and drugs in the metal scene<sup>73</sup> also connects it with the god of ritual madness. In the altered state of mind experienced by musicians both in writing, producing and performing their arts creates an arena for the instincts, a sensual and untamed garden of pleasures that mediates an ecstatic aesthetic experience.

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<sup>68</sup> "Can I play with madness? // Give me the sense to wonder, to wonder if I'm free / Give me a sense of wonder, to know I can be me / Give me the strength to hold my head up, spit back in their face / Don't need no key to unlock this door, gonna break down the walls, break out of this bad place [...]" Iron Maiden, *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son*, EMI, 1988.

<sup>69</sup> "[...] Insanity is taking hold / Poisoning your brain / Voices whisper thoughts untrue / The songs of the insane / Sadness reaching to other minds / Cracked perception shall soon unwind / Delusional reality / Seeing life through cyber optic eyes / You live through [...]" Orchid, *The Mouths of Madness*, Nuclear Blast, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Down, *Diary of a Mad Band*, Roadrunner Records, 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Ozzy Osbourne, *Diary of a Madman*, Jet Records, 1981.

<sup>72</sup> Philip H. Anselmo & The Illegals, *Choosing Mental Illness as a Virtue*, Season of Mist, 2018.

<sup>73</sup> Robert WALSER, *ibid.* 1993, 137.

### 2.3.2. The System of Sub-Genres

The origin of heavy and extreme metal, both in tendencies of music history and a philosophical framework, we should consider some aspects on the development of certain sub-genres and those system to understand the unity and fragmentation of the whole scene. The arrival of the 1980s brought new ways and difficulties for heavy metal to face. Two main directions opened up for the genre that remained relatively unified and received mediocre successes: 1) popularization; 2) radicalization. The popularized genres of heavy metal labelled by Deena Weinstein as “*Lite Metal*” gathered all commercially successful bands and movements, such as Poison, Bon Jovi and the further works of Def Leppard, later also called as stadium-rock, referring to the large audiences they could mobilize. The glam metal movement developed as a parallel to stadium-rock with the most notable US band Mötley Crüe, focusing more on the earthly side of existence and its delights.<sup>74</sup> As a reaction to the popularization of heavy metal, for the reformation of it, the movement of extreme metal was founded. Extreme metal is an umbrella term for all the genres using musical extremities within the boundaries of metal music for expression. This led to the fragmentation of the originally unified musical approach breeding a host of sub-genres. It was mentioned at the end of the previous section that the underground punk movement of the late 1970s served as a great inspiration with its compromise-free method towards music and musicality with harsh and intense tempos and in many cases low budget productions fragranced by a certain taste for the DIY “do it yourself” originality. The punk groups as Sex Pistols, The Clash or The Ramones all showed an example for metal musicians not satisfied with the current status of their genre.<sup>75</sup> In the paragraphs below we tend to give short descriptions of the most important sub-genres in an informative manner to draw the global map of metal music. The list follows a chronological order, which does not indicate, that in case of the emergence of a new sub-genre the others would perish. Thus the list below represents a system of parallelisms within the otherwise fragmented scene.

**New Wave Of British Heavy Metal (N.W.O.B.H.M.):** As we are going to see, most of the sub-genres’ names are speaking labels, meaning that the main features are represented in each one. In the regard of N.W.O.B.H.M. the interest in traditional heavy metal sound expanded by the punk’s intensity and the yet cited DIY originality refreshed the yet exhausted mother

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<sup>74</sup> Deena WEINSTEIN, *ibid.* 2002, 45-48.

<sup>75</sup> NAGY Balázs, *ibid.* 2007, 12-14.

genre. The result is a fast paced and powerful sound represented by Iron Maiden, Saxon, Motörhead and the '80s sound of Judas Priest<sup>76</sup> (a more than a decade old heavy metal band adapting to the new criteria).<sup>77</sup>

**First Wave of Black Metal (Debated):** The retrospectively named label of new, yet extreme metal bands of the 1980s, a globalized movement in contrast with the Britain based N.W.O.B.H.M. The second wave of black from the 1990s respected their intellectual and musical ideals (thus the term First Wave may be debated to be authentic or all the bands should be regarded as members of other sub-genres) in the direction now detailed.<sup>78</sup> The blackness of the first wave lies in the lyrics that revolved around actual Satanism, and inspired the name by British Venom's second LP, entitled Black Metal.<sup>79</sup> The most important bands to cite alongside Venom are Mercyful Fate from Denmark, Bathory from Sweden and Celtic Frost from Switzerland. The list of genre defining recordings could be found below.<sup>80</sup> The musical palette shows a large variety in connection with the first wave of black metal, nevertheless all bands cited above contributed in some way (lyrics, musicality, imagery, etc.) to the formation of the second wave. Other notable examples are Rotting Christ from Greece, Samael from Switzerland and Tormentor from Hungary.<sup>81</sup>

**Thrash Metal:** The British new wave and punk music inspired together bands in other directions on the other side of the Western world, on the Pacific shore. The Bay-Area of California is the scene where thrash metal was invented and reached its popularity first. The underground movement of thrash/speed metal in the US is defined by four bands: Slayer, Exodus, Metallica and Megadeth.<sup>82</sup> The big Four of California Bay-Area is mirrored with its European taste for thrash metal with the Teutonic Trio of Germany: Destruction, Kreator and

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<sup>76</sup> Notable example records: Iron Maiden, *Killers*, EMI, 1981; *Number of the Beast*, EMI, 1982.; Saxon, *Wheels of Steel*, Carrere, 1980; *Denim and Leather*, Carrere, 1981.; Motörhead, *Ace of Spades*, Bronze Records, 1980.; Judas Priest, *British Steel*, CBS, 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Robert WALSER, *ibid.* 1993, 11-12.

<sup>78</sup> Dayal PATTERSON, *ibid.* 2013, 5.

<sup>79</sup> Venom, *Black Metal*, Neat Records, 1982.

<sup>80</sup> Mercyful Fate, *Don't Break the Oath*, Roadrunner Records, 1984.; Bathory, *Bathory*, Black Mark Production, 1984.; Celtic Frost, *To Mega Therion*, Noise Records, 1985.

<sup>81</sup> Compare the connecting chapters of Dayal PATTERSON, *ibid.* 2013, 77-84, 85-92 and 93-97 respectively.

<sup>82</sup> Notable records: Slayer, *Reign in Blood*, Def Jam Records, 1986.; Metallica, *Master of Puppets*, Elektra Records, 1986.; Exodus, *Bonded by Blood*, Torrid Records, 1985.; Megadeth, *Peace Sells...but who's Buying?*, Capitol Records, 1986.

Sodom.<sup>83</sup> The low budget production and less qualified musicianship of Venom are echoing back in their music mixed with an even faster pace.<sup>84</sup>

**Death Metal:** Growing out from the thrash metal scene of the US, death metal is the third in line. Maybe the most extreme in its musicality death metal focuses on more technical, low tuned guitars extreme drumming and the signature of the genre: the growling guttural vocals. On the Atlantic Ocean's shore at Tampa Bay, Florida, the first line of death metal consists of Death, Morbid Angel and Deicide.<sup>85</sup> The name of the genre originates once again of record's title like in the case of black metal, spiced with a debate. Many similarities are shared among thrash and death metal, which makes the two to be a parallel for a certain point of development.<sup>86</sup> Thus many records like *Morbid Visions* from Brazil's Sepultura<sup>87</sup> could also be named as a definitive thrash and death metal record the same time. With the example of Sepultura it can be seen as well that death metal soon became international with bands from South America and Europe too.<sup>88</sup>

**Power Metal:** The last sub-genre of 1980s extreme metal is power metal. Although in many cases thrash metal is considered to be the *heavier* version of heavy metal, in reality power metal is the one. Lacking the punk influences, focusing more on melodies (both in guitar techniques and vocal performance) than rhythm making a commercially easier to sell music, power metal is close to "*Lite Metal*" but it is a radicalism once again, first within heavy metal than outside of it, depending greatly on the legacy of Judas Priest.<sup>89</sup> Notable acts of early power metal are Manowar, Accept, Metal Church and Helloween<sup>90</sup> amongst many others.

**Progressive Metal:** Progressive metal, which was developed alongside the extreme chapter of the 1980s, started to gain more popularity during the new millennium. Defining groups like Dream Theater, Fates Warning or Queensrÿche showed that classical virtuosity should be part

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<sup>83</sup> Notable records: Destruction *Infernal Overkill*, Steamhammer, 1985, Kreator, *Pleasure to Kill*, Noise Records, 1986, Sodom, *Obsessed by Cruelty*, Metal Blade Records, 1986.

<sup>84</sup> NAGY Balázs, *ibid.* 2007, 20-21.

<sup>85</sup> Notable record: Death, *Scream Bloody Gore*, Combat Records, 1987.; Morbid Angel, *Altars of Madness*, Earache Records, 1989.; Deicide, *Deicide*, R/C Records, 1990.

<sup>86</sup> Ian CHRISTE, *ibid.* 2004.

<sup>87</sup> Sepultura, *Morbid Visions*, Cogumelo Records, 1986.

<sup>88</sup> Notable bands from the US not counting the ones cited above: Cannibal Corpse, Suffocation. Outside US: Carcass, Dismember, Hypocrisy.

<sup>89</sup> NAGY Balázs, *ibid.* 2007, 140-146.

<sup>90</sup> Manowar, *Battle Hymns*, Liberty Records, 1982.; Accept, *Restless and Wild*, Brain Records, 1982.; Metal Church, *Metal Church*, Ground Zero Records, 1984.; Helloween, *Walls of Jericho*, Noise Records, 1985.

of metal music as well. Many groups of other genres started to develop a progressive blend into their music, such as the originally black metal band Enslaved, or the death metal band Opeth.<sup>91</sup> Once again, an extreme version appeared: Djent is started to gain popularity in our decade, with the works of Meshuggah, the inventor of the genre.<sup>92</sup>

**Swedish (Gothenburg) Melodic Death Metal:** The melodic death metal scene or “*Gothenburg death metal*” movement serves the melodic side of death metal music. The sub-genre originates once again from Britain, with the *Heartwork* album released by grindcore<sup>93</sup> pioneers Carcass.<sup>94</sup> The real expansion was reached by melodic death metal in the Swedish city of Gothenburg. The movement stressed melodic guitar techniques attached with the aggressive drumming and a slightly lighter vocal style.<sup>95</sup> The three most influential groups, At the Gates, Dark Tranquillity and In Flames<sup>96</sup> started the trend of melodic extremity in the 1990s. Melodic death metal thus became a fashionable art form spreading a long lasting impact all around Europe.

**Second Wave of Black Metal:** The tradition of the first wave is continued and brought forward first of all by the Norwegian black metal scene of the early 1990s. This era in Norway is hallmarked by the works of young bands (often starting as death metal projects later being disappointed by the mother genre) like Burzum, Darkthrone, Emperor, Enslaved, Gorgoroth, Immortal and Mayhem.<sup>97</sup> The black metal music created by the enumerated groups searched for the opposite of death metal: if death metal is characterised as a technical music, with low tuned guitars and deep guttural vocals, than black metal is a raw approach, with high tuned guitars and shrieking vocals. Also, death metal is being an “anti-image”<sup>98</sup> music with a plain performance focusing only on music, black metal is accompanied by a host of scenery features. Mostly inspired by the face paint of Mercyful Fate’s King Diamond many

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<sup>91</sup> Notable examples: Opeth, *Blackwater Park*, Music for Nations, 2001, Enslaved, *RITIR*, Nuclear Blast, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Notable example: Meshuggah, *Nothing*, Nuclear Blast, 2002.

<sup>93</sup> Grindcore is an extremity within death music itself with the fastest speed that may be achieved with short and intensive songs. The two best known pioneers of the genre are Napalm Death and Carcass.

<sup>94</sup> Carcass, *Heartwork*, Earache Records, 1993.

<sup>95</sup> Natalie J. PURCELL, *Death Metal Music: The Passion and Politics of a Subculture*, McFarland, 2012, 22.

<sup>96</sup> Notable records: At the Gates, *The Red in the Sky is Ours*, Deaf Records, 1992, Dark Tranquillity, *Skydancer*, Spinefarm Records, 1993, In Flames, *Lunar Strain*, Wrong Again Records, 1994.

<sup>97</sup> NAGY Balázs, *ibid.* 2007, 109-117. Notable records: Burzum, *Det Som Engang Var*, Cymophane Records, 1993, Darkthrone, *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, Peaceville Records, 1992, Emperor, *In The Nightside Eclipse*, Candlelight Records, 1994, Enslaved, *Frost*, Osmose Productions, 1995, Gorgoroth, *Pentagram*, Embassy Productions, 1994, Immortal, *Diabolical Fullmoon Mysticism*, Osmose Productions, 1992, Mayhem, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, Deathlike Silence Productions, 1994.

<sup>98</sup> Ian CHRISTE, *ibid.* 2004.

of the Norwegian bands started to wear black and white make-ups during live performances denoted as “*corpse paint*”. The shocking and outrageous music together with performances featuring satanic imagery is also written into the history of music for its scandals. The radical approach towards music and self expression is shadowed by hate against Christianity, resulting in the church arsons in Norway committed by young musicians between May of 1992 and November of 1995, what is a tragic and devastating impact of a subculture. The “*Helvete Circle*”<sup>99</sup> and its works are still a source for black metal musicians all around the world – fortunately only in the ways of music. Alongside the Norwegian scene the Swedish and other European black metal waves started to be established. Swedish classics, e.g. Dissection, Marduk, Watain<sup>100</sup> are accompanied by Sear Bliss from Hungary, Behemoth from Poland, Beherit from Finland, Sigh from Japan,<sup>101</sup> etc.<sup>102</sup>

**Doom Metal:** Doom Metal, as the slow extremity in metal music emphasizes long songs with sluggish structure. It can be said that doom metal originally was born alongside with heavy metal, as the early songs of Black Sabbath share many of the mentioned attributes. The tradition of doom metal because of its extreme lack of speed, that is a key feature in connection with most of the genres, maybe it can be named as the least popular of all extreme metals.<sup>103</sup> Bands like Cathedral, Trouble or Candlemass<sup>104</sup> serve the best examples to illustrate the characteristics of doom metal.

**Gothic Metal:** The dark wave and gothic rock scene of the 1970s and 1980s was still a prominent subculture that was inevitable to meet with the other subculture interested in the “*dark*”: metal music. The doom-death movement sparked the fire towards the gothic sound and the gothic qualities within metal music.<sup>105</sup> The gothic also presented the need for the feminine female within metal music (musicians as Doro Pesch represented the male-inspired femininity), searching for the beauty and the beast: the duet of harsh male and clean female

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<sup>99</sup> Musicians gathering in the Helvete (Hell in Norwegian) music store in Oslo, lead by Euronymous (Øystein Aarseth) of Mayhem. Notable members came from Burzum, Emperor and Immortal, later sentenced to prison. Dayal PATTERSON, *ibid.* 159-170.

<sup>100</sup> Dissection, *Storm of the Light's Bane*, Nuclear Blast, 1995, Marduk, *Opus Nocturne*, Osmose Productions, 1994, Watain, *Rabid Death's Curse*, Drakkar Productions, 2000.

<sup>101</sup> Sear Bliss, *Phantoms*, II Moons, 1996.; Behemoth, *Grom*, Solistitium Records, 1996.; Sigh, *Scorn Defeat*, Deathlike Silence Productions, 1993.

<sup>102</sup> The above listed are only mere examples, see Dayal PATTERSON, *ibid.* for a full detailed introduction to the genre.

<sup>103</sup> NAGY Balázs, *ibid.* 2007, 123-128.

<sup>104</sup> Notable records: Trouble, *Trouble*, Metal Blade Records, 1984, Candlemass, *Epicus Doomicus Metallicus*, Black Dragon Records, 1986, Cathedral, *The Carnival Bizarre*, Earache Records, 1995.

<sup>105</sup> Micah L. ISSITT, *Goths: A Guide to an American Subculture*, Santa Barbara, Greenwood, 2011, 17-30.

vocals. The pioneers of gothic metal, like Theatre of Tragedy from Norway, Moonspell from Portugal and Tiamat from Sweden<sup>106</sup> (alongside the “*Peaceville Three*”) used shady musical elements with synthesizers and other keyboards. Classical and symphonic music also had an impact on the gothic sound developing the symphonic metal genre best represented by Swedish Therion or Dutch Epica. The black and death metal crossovers of symphonic metal were further taken by Dimmu Borgir or Septicflesh.<sup>107</sup>

**Folk Metal:** The last but not least significant sub-genre is folk metal. As the name indicates in this case metal music is mixed with traditional folk tunes and folk instruments. The first record of the genre is the thrash metal LP of Skyclad from Britain with folk tunes incorporated.<sup>108</sup> Besides Britain the Finnish metal scene contributed much to the folk metal movement. Amorphis, one of the first bands to use Finnish mythology as an inspiration<sup>109</sup> (especially the *Kalevala*) is the typical example to represent folk metal. As in later chapters many groups and songs are gathered from the folk metal genre hereby we only state, that folk metal is both a musical and a lyrical approach: folk tunes and folk topics are presented in the garment of metal music. Many local scenes developed since the 1990s of the folk metal genre, gathering around local traditions (like in the cases of Neopagan religious movements). Thus Celtic (Irish), Viking (Norwegian, Swedish), Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) folk metal is present.<sup>110</sup> Even the Middle East produced its folk metal music, often labelled as “*oriental metal*”.<sup>111</sup>

### 2.3.3. The “Metal Code” and “Underground Ethics”

On the pages above many important features were introduced or mentioned. In the following paragraphs we attempt to give a framework of metal subculture based on the “*metal code*” and the “*underground ethics*” of the scene. Both expressions are within quotation marks as are

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<sup>106</sup> Defining examples: Theatre of Tragedy, *Theatre of Tragedy*, Massacre Records, 1995, Moonspell, *Wolfheart*, Century Media Records, 1995, Tiamat, *A Deeper Kind of Slumber*, Century Media Records, 1997.

<sup>107</sup> Classic examples: Therion, *Theli*, Nuclear Blast, 1996, Epica, *The Divine Conspiracy*, Nuclear Blast, 2007, Dimmu Borgir, *Puritanical Euphoric Misanthropy*, Nuclear Blast, 2001, Septicflesh, *Communion*, Season of Mist, 2008.

<sup>108</sup> Skyclad, *The Wayward Sons of Mother Earth*, Noise Records, 1991.

<sup>109</sup> Kimi KÄRKI, *Forging Metal: The Kalevala in the Finnish Heavy Metal Performance = Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures*, eds. Toni-Matti KARJALAINEN, Kimi KÄRKI, Helsinki, Aalto University & Turku, 2015, 131-137.

<sup>110</sup> In this case we only mention a Slavic example, as the other cultures are to be presented in Chapter 3. Arkona, *Goi, Rode, Goi!*, Napalm Records, 2009, is the typical form of Slavic folk metal.

<sup>111</sup> Examples are also skipped for the same reason as in note 147.

borrowed from acknowledged authors. The “*metal code*” or the “*code of heavy metal*” are terms used by Deena Weinstein.<sup>112</sup> Weinstein divides the core elements of metal culture into three different subcategories, namely the sonic, the visual and the verbal dimensions. As it was addressed earlier and is highly stressed by Robert Walser<sup>113</sup> the main idea and driving force in metal music is the act of rebellion against consumer/conformist society. With a parallel reading of the two cited chapters of both Weinstein and Walser we attempt to localise the rebellious attitude represented by the musicians and the audience as well.

On the sonic level a stylistic approach was detailed in the previous chapter. The very essence of heavy and extreme metal lays in its sound that is labelled in the names of the sub-genres. All the appellations are connected to somehow obscure and dark themes, blackness, death, thrashing, doom, power etc. The last mentioned one power is the other attribute that is part of all metal music. The central aim of metal is to exercise power over through music. The aggressive distorted sound and the power chord as it is detailed by Walser are the appearances of the “code of heavy metal” through sheer loudness. John Fiske, in his study on popular arts stresses two main elements: the expressions of popular arts are both excessive and obvious in their nature, serving two purposes.<sup>114</sup> Thus metal music (both heavy and extreme) is the definition of the excessive, with a sonic approach that tended not to be similar to anything else before. Naturally, as we talk about a global phenomenon, the quality of the different productions varies depending on artistic goals and financial background of a band. The problem of virtuosity and simplicity are leading us to the obvious nature of metal music. It can be said that without judging the technical efficiency of a production, the above enumerated features in case of progressive and primitive metal are present as well: there is no metal music that does not rely on power and rebellion.

The visual side, as it is the first thing introducing the music itself could be faced through the cover artwork of a recording. The problem of iconography and symbolism used by different metal bands and especially religion/mythology inspired ones may be the topic of another research, thus now we only mention it on a basic level. The artworks are to give the visual interpretation of the music or at least give the same allusions that are tended by the music to create. The different sub-genres have their own tradition in regard of cover images (as all have their tradition of musicality). Just to list a few examples from each major sub-genre we should mention Judas Priest from the era of classical heavy metal. The cover of their

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<sup>112</sup> Deena WEINSTEIN, *ibid.* 2002, 21-57.

<sup>113</sup> Robert WALSER, *ibid.* 1993, 2-3.

<sup>114</sup> John FISKE, *ibid.* 2011, 83-101.

classic recording, *British Steel*<sup>115</sup> images a razor held by a bare hand. On the razor we see the title and the band's name written, identifying the heavy metal played by Judas Priest with the sharp hardness of a steel razor, that cuts, connects to aggression, playing with the meaning of heavy metal music and the material of steel to represent British metal music.

As thrash metal is often connected with social and satanic issues alongside with war and death, the cover of German Kreator's *Pleasure to Kill*<sup>116</sup> serves an excellent example. In a blood red field we see a horned and tailed demon like figure fighting a host of undead, in this case skeletons, attacking the demon with medieval weapons. The demon crushes the undead with bare hands, representing power over death in a form of an evil entity. The destruction of the undead (or triumphing over death that is reaching for a living creature) suggests that only through evil power may one rebel over death itself. The often parody driven death metal approach is maybe the extreme of extremities, the excessive at its best. Genre name-giver Death's *Human*<sup>117</sup> depicts two dissected human bodies resembling illustrations from anatomy books. The sheer presentation of organs and the suggestion of presenting dead bodies in accordance with the title and the band's name represent the *death* in death metal.

Black metal is notorious of its interest in Satanism, as it is going to be discussed in Chapter 3.1. Amongst the often black and white cover images we can find many colourful ones as well focusing on anti-Christian imagery as it is represented by Dimmu Borgir's *In Sorte Diaboli*.<sup>118</sup> On the picture we see the figure of the Baphomet taunting the typical imagery of Christ found on icons.<sup>119</sup> Some inevitable symbols could be found as well e.g. the upside-down pentagram or Hell's fires below. To illustrate the many times fantasy literature driven power metal scene we cite the 1992 album of Blind Guardian, *Somewhere Far Beyond*,<sup>120</sup> using a typical fantasy scenery with heroes and a bard in the middle of a forest during night time, sitting around not a campfire but a magical orb, reflecting to the adventurous material to be found on the recording. Gothic/doom metal is shown here through the 1999 recording of My Dying Bride, entitled *The Light at the End of the World*,<sup>121</sup> with an angel on a cliff and a seascape down below, suggesting the gothic, shady and most of the time depressed atmosphere of the music itself. Folk metal now is illustrated with Finnish

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<sup>115</sup> Judas Priest, *British Steel*, CBS, 1980.

<sup>116</sup> Kreator, *Pleasure to Kill*, Noise Records, 1986.

<sup>117</sup> Death, *Human*, Relativity Records, 1991.

<sup>118</sup> Dimmu Borgir, *In Sorte Diaboli*, Nuclear Blast, 2007.

<sup>119</sup> Dimmu Borgir is also a typical example of a Satanic black metal band to violate the rules of „underground ethics“ a topic to be discussed below. Nevertheless the imagery of Dimmu Borgir follows the traditions of black metal thus serving a great example for present case.

<sup>120</sup> Blind Guardian, *Somewhere far Beyond*, Virgin Records, 1992.

<sup>121</sup> My Dying Bride, *The Light at the End of the World*, Peaceville Records, 1999.

Korpiklaani's *Voice of Wilderness*,<sup>122</sup> showing a typical Finnish landscape and a stylized, traditional depiction of a shaman with a drum and a drumstick in his hands, ruling the countryside around him.

The examples above shows the clear traces of all the attributes gathered previously. We have scenery of war, representations of power, rebellion, in many cases in excessive and obvious forms. The visual dimension of the metal culture does not end with the album artworks. In addition at least two other components could be named: clothing and performance scenery, as it was addressed above that the real arena of metal music is the live concert, thus both the musicians' and the audience's appearance is crucial in understanding the metal code. It should be stated that just only referring to the data above we can clearly see that the metal subculture is a scene where not only the music but all its surroundings create the elements of belonging to the local or global group of *metalheads*.

Fashion, meaning clothing and hairstyle that may vary from sub-genre to sub-genre, a rebellious approach towards it is common. The most typical direction consists of usually black and denim clothing with band labelled T-shirts, spiked bracelets, beards and army boots. The often outrageous clothing of performers is a source of inspiration for the audience. This also indicates that there are strict rules on what should be considered to be part of the metal culture and what not. Although the fashion or "*dress code*" of each sub-genre may vary, together with the behaviour on concert typical patterns can be written. As the easiest way to rebel a conformist idea is to turn it upside down or inside out, the grotesque is the key concept for us to understand the performative side of the "*metal code*".

The grotesque and the carnival in its medieval context described and analysed by Mikhail Bakhtin may be actualized. The theory<sup>123</sup> originates both the grotesque and the carnivalesque from folk humour, serving as a valve that may help for the people to let loose the steam created by everyday pressure and responsibilities in a feudal context. The "*Feast of fools*" celebrated in Europe served the purpose of laughter instead of aggression with mirroring life in an upside-down turn. The social roles are interchanged: lords became serfs and vice versa, making jokes of each other in a controlled frame. It is not a play that is witnessed; life itself became the play where audience and actors are no more distinguished, whirling together in a special time of the year for only a short period, restoring the original order afterwards. Within the carnival with playing in an upside-down world not just the social

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<sup>122</sup> Korpiklaani, *Voice of Wilderness*, Napalm Records, 2005.

<sup>123</sup> Mihail BAHTYIN, *Francois Rabelais művészete, a középkor és a reneszánsz népi kultúrája*, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2002, 11-20.

roles but all qualities and values of life are turned out in their own way. Thus attributes, things and actions that are considered to be offensive or obscene (maybe improper) become acceptable and also an object of laughter creating the grotesque to be reality for the time span of the celebration. Although the statements of Bakhtin are realized in the milieu of the Middle Ages the main purpose of the carnival should be regarded as a need for all ages and geographical places.

As the institution of the traditional carnival does not exist anymore for the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Western society there must be other channels to handle the social stress and find a different “valve” for the steam to exit. Once again according to John Fiske,<sup>124</sup> “*carnival pleasures*” are also present in our time’s society. His example to show the implicitness of the carnivalesque he analyses the American wrestling scene. Wrestling in its carnival-likeness is a comedy, a directed scene, where the male bodies fighting with each other are attributed with brute force, aggression and capability to actions that are not allowed for the common folk. The played fights within the ring however are scenery, but for the audience is reality. Thus the created atmosphere of aggression is not raging within the ring, but outside it, amongst the audience. The audience experiences the tension of the fight, cheering for one of the fighters and hating for the opposing side, not just the fighter but their fans as well. Certainly this hate is not manifested in physical atrocity amongst the audience but is let loose within the ring, building up a controlled frame of stress and aggression. It should be also pointed out that the audience is conscious of the scenery feature of wrestling; despite of this the mechanism described above is working providing them with the carnival.

Besides wrestling and many other activities of contemporary culture (e.g. football matches), the performance of heavy and extreme metal are also dealing with the carnivalesque. The 2006 study of Caren Bettez Halnon<sup>125</sup> is a product of extensive field work on a host of metal concerts searching for and analysing the grotesque and Bakhtinian attributes of different metal acts’ concerts. The frame provided by the metal concert where the mosh pit, the chanting, insults and offensive speech are all accepted, that is prohibited in the light of day, follows the pattern of liberation from truth and order and inner censors, giving the reality of liberty and freedom for the duration of the performance, along with a special sense of community and experience of collectivity. It is clear that the metal concert is built upon three pillars: the music, the lyrics and interaction with the audience (or the performative

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<sup>124</sup> Compare: John FISKE, *ibid.* 2011, 56-82.

<sup>125</sup> Karen Bettez HALNON, *Heavy Metal Carnival and Dis-alienation: The Politics of Grotesque Realism*, *Symbolic Interaction*, 29.1 (2006), 33-48.

manner). The three together creates the context where all the components separately and altogether have a meaning for the participants. Viewing either element from the outside forces us to lose the context, thus if we are to work with the lyrics it must be kept the context in mind. The proposition of Halnon on the performance may be translated into the world of lyrics. The main focal point of metal music is rebellion: this rebellious manner is expressed through all the three components mentioned above, supporting and depending on each other. It is our task now to search for the rebellious in mythology inspired lyrics that are to represent a certain shade of carnival and the grotesque in order to oppose contemporary Western culture not as scenery, but as a reality.

The “*underground ethics*” described by Dayal Patterson<sup>126</sup> of the black metal scene may be used as a universal pattern for all of metal music. Considering the proposal of Patterson the first and most important for a metal band must be authenticity. This means a certain level of respect towards the predecessors but also requires original creativity. The other factor in authenticity (or with the terminology of metal itself, to be “*true*”) is the problem of popularity. If a group reaches a level of commercial success (varies from genre to genre) altogether with a change in the musical direction towards lighter and more radio friendly sound makes a band “*sold out*”, bargaining the originality for money. This tendency can be witnessed on the level of the music industry as well. The great labels as Nuclear Blast, Century Media, Metal Blade, Napalm, Season of Mist, etc. naturally stress contemporary methods for production and distribution (e.g. digital releases, CD-s, traditional vinyls), but as part of the underground authenticity certain circles of musicians (mostly of black metal origins) still rely on the DIY methods of cassette copying, photo copied artworks and booklets, etc. In summary it can be said that the “underground-ness” of metal music varies from genre to genre with the main principle of staying true to the rebellious and nonconformist attitude of the mother scene.

According to the “*underground ethics*”, the canon in extreme metal music also consists of two elements: the bands, which are the pioneers of certain genres or worked in the progression of a certain scene, and all those bands that respect the metal code and follow the rules to be “*true*”. There is a hierarchy within the canonical bands of course, but it is not a point of interest for us now. This problem of canon in its nature is a case of music from within, but there is an external canon as well, closing on the case of mythology related metal music: what is canonical to read for a musician to write music and lyrics about, or what are

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<sup>126</sup> Dayal PATTERSON, *ibid.* 2013, 310-319.

the borders of canonical topics for an authentic metal song? Wolfgang Iser, in his book, *The Range of Interpretation* bestirs the second chapter to the processes of canonization. The chapter, entitled *The Authority of the Canon*<sup>127</sup> introduces the details via the case of the Torah and the Midrash. We do not attempt to draw a parallel between the canon of Judaism and extreme metal, but the observations of Iser might help us to understand the work of interpretation and canon together. In this meaning the musical canon of metal is an open one and is not a constant frame. We can witness the founding musical groups, which are cited by later musicians, as primary influence, but in case of every new sub-genre this canon is revised from time to time. The canon is the manifest of the direction that is dictated by metal music: power and more significantly, rebellion. Thus, the canon is the ideal of rebellion that is interpreted through the lyrics and imagery of the musicians, working as an indicator for the followers and listeners, as in the case of the Midrashic tradition for the Jewish scholars and common folk. This short introduction shows at least two main problems for us:

- 1) The problem of canon is coded in metal music on many different layers. The musical canonization of a band is throughout the performed music and mediocre or low commercial success, creating a constantly open canon.
- 2) Although the canon of metal music is a closed one with one central ideal, it is fragmented amongst the sub-genres with many different manifestations and interpretations.

The metal code and the underground ethics build up together the framework of metal music at it was promised above. The idea of rebellion, power and nonconformism are presented through all the dimensions. The opposition to the cultural majority could be achieved through the grotesque and with that through a strong fascination to the Evil. The figure of the mad musician who may have a pact with the Devil in exchange for virtuosity is the starting point for us that lead present study to the last realm of metal music: the verbal dimension.

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<sup>127</sup> Wolfgang ISER, *The Range of Interpretation*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000, 13-40.

## 2.4. The Verbal in Metal Music

### 2.4.1. Madness and Secrecy: Morbid Fascination of Evil

The title for the forthcoming subchapter is loaned from Norwegian black metal band, Carpathian Forest.<sup>128</sup> As it was prepared above the main interest in metal lyrics on a basic level is an interest in everything that is out of the boundaries of ordered cosmos: the chaos and the chaotic that is named the Evil in Christian Western Europe. The presence of evil on a general level and evil entities as host of demons or gods is a common feature in history of humanity. If we take a look onto the religions of either the Far East (e.g. Hinduism) or the Far West (e.g. Mesoamerican cultures' religious traditions) we find phenomena of evil gods and gods with creative and destructive powers as well.<sup>129</sup> We may assume that the demons of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Indian, Hindu, Buddhist etc. cultures are representations of the dualism of nature, whereas a storm may bring fertility to the land but can destroy the shelters of the inhabitants with the same effect. The theological dualism of Christianity draws many from the Iranian dualism of Zoroastrianism, Hellenic Greek-Roman thought and esoteric teachings. To understand the origin of contemporary Western esotericism's dualistic world view what alongside with New Religious Movements and Neopagan cults are the originators of mythological metal music we now take a short excursion towards the traditions of Hellenistic dualism(s).

Fate is a crucial power in classical Greek religion. We can see in early works, like the Iliad and the Odyssey that the gods are also determined by Fate.<sup>130</sup> Encountering Egyptian astrology and magic thus built the way for Hellenistic astrology that became a method for searching one's fate and other secrets of life. This so called planetary or astral pessimism may define the then globalised world of the Hellenistic and later Roman culture. This simplified path presented above builds up the road to the problem of esoteric knowledge in the ancient world. "Esoteric", adjective (from ancient Greek "ἑσωτερικός"),<sup>131</sup> means belonging to the inner circle, in an expanded sense the ones who are capable of understanding hidden knowledge. The main concept behind the esoteric and Esotericism is a secret. It is a kind of an

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<sup>128</sup> Carpathian Forest: *Morbid Fascination of Death*, Avantgarde Music, 2001.

<sup>129</sup> For a detailed introduction please see: Jeffrey Burton RUSSEL, *The Devil – Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1977, 55-122.

<sup>130</sup> Nicola Denzey LEWIS, *Cosmology and Fate in Gnosticism and Graeco-Roman Antiquity, Under Pitiless Skies*, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2013, 17-19.

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/esoteric> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

exclusive knowledge that distinct the one capable of the secret from those who are not.<sup>132</sup> In this regard all mystery cults can be understood as forms of esotericism. Besides the religious forms of esoteric contents two important Hellenistic movements also should be considered. Hermeticism and Gnosticism are two religious-philosophical schools depending on a kind of revelation that defines Truth behind the world.

Hermeticism or Hermetism takes its name of the god Hermes. Hermes in classical antiquity already has many aspects, most notably is the messenger of the Olympian gods, protector of crossroads, travellers, and last but not least the conductor of souls, to show them the way to the afterlife.<sup>133</sup> Hermes is connected with these attributes with many ties to the realm of secrets: secrets of life, death, afterlife, the will of gods. The Hellenistic cultic milieu produced the figure of Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes Thrice Great) around the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.<sup>134</sup> The texts and tracts connected to Hermes Trismegistus (*The Emerald Tablets of Hermes Trismegistus*, the *Corpus Hermeticum* including *Poimandres*, just to mention the most notable ones) describe secret wisdom and secret lore on the one and only truth about existence.<sup>135</sup> We do not have any evidence on if Hermeticism was a religion or merely a philosophical school in ancient times nevertheless it has alongside with Gnosticism a huge impact on European philosophy, and laying the foundations for the so called “Western esotericism.”

Gnosticism on the other hand shows not just the philosophical but the religious side of its existence as well. Mostly known from the anti-gnostic writings of the Church fathers and later by the Nag Hammadi founding, we have a quite ambivalent view on Gnostics. The word, “gnosis” means wisdom in Greek, in this regard a secret wisdom (just as we have seen it in case of Hermeticism). It is debated whether Gnosticism originates from Alexandrian Jewish or Christian thought, it seems clear that it had the greatest impact on the early Christian Church.<sup>136</sup> The problem of a spiritual equivalent of human existence, alongside with the primeval Anthropos has a clear platonic source,<sup>137</sup> it is not surprising that Alexandrian Jewish philosophy also contributed to its world view. The core problem of Gnosticism in a theoretical level is that the God humanity worships in many forms are not equal with the true Almighty

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<sup>132</sup> April D. DECONICK, *Crafting Gnosis: Gnostic Spirituality in the Ancient New Age = Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World, Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, eds. Kevin CORRIGAN, Tuomas RASIMUS, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2013, 298.

<sup>133</sup> KERÉNYI Károly, *Hermész, a lélekvezető*, Budapest, Európa Könyvkiadó, 1984, 53-62.

<sup>134</sup> HAMVAS Endre, *Bevezetés = Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. HAMVAS Endre, Szeged, Lectum Kiadó, 2010, 13-17.

<sup>135</sup> Gilles QUISPÉL, *Gnosticism from its Origin to the Middle Ages = The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsey JONES, New York, MacMillan Reference USA, 2005, Vol 5. 3507-3515.

<sup>136</sup> KÁKOSY László, *Fény és Káosz: A kopt gnóosztikus kódexek*, Budapest, Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1984, 67-69.

<sup>137</sup> Compare: PLATO, *Phaedo*, 73.

God, who has no name (compare the Hermetic tradition that also proposes a distant God above all).<sup>138</sup> Underneath God there are a host of angels and the evil demiurge, who pretends to be the only God. Although the different accounts describe many variations on the creation of humanity, some lines are common: the evil demiurge along with Sophia (Wisdom, in a theoretical and personified level) creates humanity that is impure because usurpers contributed to their existence, but is capable of understanding the Truth (that God is not equal, but higher and most perfect than the demiurge) using this knowledge for purification. In this regard all humanity has a spiritual mirror image in heaven what should be reached through searching for the Truth.

The implicated world view depicts for us a constant struggle between man and the demiurge: man wants to liberate himself from the bondage of the matter, while the demiurge seeks to preserve it. This dualism of dark and light, evil and good is the key point, as the victory of light in one person can only be achieved through self-knowledge and the understanding of esoteric teachings. The case of Mithras Mysteries is quite similar, as it is an initiatory, or if we like esoteric cult that teaches its “μύστης” (initiated)<sup>139</sup> that Mithras, the light fights the Bull of darkness in order to maintain life.<sup>140</sup> As it has more features of the creatio continua concept the parallel only shows the tendency, that the dualism and duality of Gnosticism is not a unique concept but also part of the Hellenic culture of the Roman era. As a brief summary we have to recognise that as Western cultural thought became dualistic it has certain prints on the literature produced by the culture itself.

Metal music is a product of Western culture. Every member has a certain alignment towards Christianity and its foundation, the Bible. This alignment may be defined in two directions: fascination or detest. The New Religious Movements and New Age phenomena contain examples of the second one, as well as in many connections metal music itself. The dualism of positivity and negativity is coded into the Western culture originating also from the structure of the Bible itself and of the surrounding cultural traditions that were introduced above. There are numerous theories in connection with the Bible, its structure and meaning coming from different sides of its study: theology, Hebrew and Greek studies, history of religion and of course of literary theory. Northrop Frye, in his essay *Symbolism in the Bible*,<sup>141</sup> stresses heavily the dualistic nature of the Bible. The second chapter, *The Shape of*

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<sup>138</sup> Gilles QUISPEL, *ibid.* 3507-3512.

<sup>139</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/mystes> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.).

<sup>140</sup> Kurt RUDOLPH, *ibid.* 6331-6332.

<sup>141</sup> Northrop FRYE, *Symbolism in the Bible* = Northrop FRYE, Jay MACPHERSON, *Biblical and Classical Myths, The Mythological Framework of Western Culture*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004, 1-270.

*the Bible*,<sup>142</sup> introduces the key concepts that are in the later pages examined more closely. The picture painted by Frye takes the Bible as a consciously structured scripture that in a compressed way contains the extremities of the world. The forces of good and evil are equally present in the text, angels, demons, devils and the duality within humanity, Jesus and Satan, Virgin Mary and the Harlot of Babylon. These are just mere examples that are the reality of the Bible, not only restricted to the Old or the New Testament, but that are available to find in both ones. Thus order and rebellion against order is encoded to the Christian world, however not on an equal level, directing towards the Truth presented by God and manifested by Jesus Christ. Nevertheless rebellion against order is also a key concept that fits into the thought of metal musicians (and the mentioned religious groups and movements).

But if metal musicians are attracted to the evil, in the mirror of the Bible, how does other religious scripture or mythological tradition contain the negative side of life? Frye gives us the answer to this question as well. In the third essay of *Anatomy of Criticism (Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths)* Frye argues about the Apocalyptic and Demonic attributes within mythological/religious literature. The positive and the negative extremities are described and illustrated with many examples from the Bible and outside of it, e.g. Greek antiquity. The positive side is labelled as the Apocalyptic in literature.<sup>143</sup> The term “*Apocalyptic*” does not refer to the end of the world from the last book of the New Testament, but to the original meaning of the word: “*Revelation*”. As Christianity is a revelatory religion, the revelations sent from the Divine to man is the key concept of Truth. Thus everything that is attached to the Divine world (the Tree of Life, God, Jesus, the Lamb of God, etc.) are part of the truth and the desired side of reality. These heavenly features represent Order, and the path to Order, to what everybody on earth are invited to. On the contrary there is the “*Demonic*” in religious literature.<sup>144</sup> The “*Demonic*” (as the term suggests) is the total opposite of the heavenly and the Apocalyptic, bearing a certain taste for irony, to present all the phenomena of reality that are out of control from civilization. The Apocalyptic is everything that is public, or accessible, the Demonic is what is hidden or inaccessible, with another word: esoteric. On this point we can see the dual objection of Christianity and Gnosticism to gather up once again. If there is a need to search for an alternative to leave Christianity behind, than the unintentional direction is faced towards the hidden and the occult. On the level of religion this opposition can be witnessed in the emergence of new secret societies and the need for exclusive and personal

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<sup>142</sup> Northrop FRYE, *ibid.* 2004, 21-30.

<sup>143</sup> Northrop FRYE, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990, 141-146.

<sup>144</sup> Northrop FRYE, *ibid.* 1990, 147-150.

knowledge about reality. The interest of metal musicians towards the world outside Christianity is the search for the alternative.

The Apocalyptic and the Demonic in this regard are presented within the frame of Western culture and Christianity. The Demonic is demonic in the mirror of Christian thought and with the authority of the Bible. If this authority is lost the weights on the scale are changed with each other than the Christian tradition becomes the Demonic and everything opposing the Apocalyptic. In a very simplified way we can say that in the eyes of a reader everything may be part of the Apocalyptic that presents the *desired* (even things that may never be achieved to grasped, like the Divine or the lost past) and everything is the Demonic that is *unwanted*. In the end of the previous section we promised to show what metal musicians read to produce mythological metal music. As it may be self-evident, they read myths. Myths, what are out of the Bible's Apocalypse, making everything desirable that is the Demonic for the Biblical tradition. This also means, that mythological metal musicians do not only read the pagan myths, but also the Bible, as the Demonic is incorporated within the Bible, creating it to be a source of inspiration as well. The Apocalyptic thus becomes Demonic and the Demonic the Apocalyptic in search for the alternative against Christianity.

This interest in the Evil, or in the alternative, the hidden, the demonic is a constant feature of Western thought. On this point we do not give an in depth introduction to the history of Western esotericism<sup>145</sup> but only highlight some key points, starting in ancient Hellenism and ending up in the textual dimension of metal music. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire until the days of Renaissance Italy the lore of ancient dualistic views seemed to be forgotten. By the work of Marsilio Ficino and his colleagues in the Florence

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<sup>145</sup> The term we are to use many times, "Western Esotericism" is one of them, what for contemporary scholarship is a problematic term. According to the traditional definition by Wouter J. Hanegraaff Esotericism originates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Eliphas Lévi and A. D. Sinnett uses it in today's meaning), thus Western Esotericism is a branch of currents from Renaissance and 19<sup>th</sup> century Occultism and New Age thought. But where is the Western in this esoteric tradition? Kenneth Granholm argues, that the term "Western" give's a certain positive shade to this tradition, according to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century dualism of Europe (Western Block vs. Eastern Block). Western civilization with its common values and quality throughout the Middle Ages and Modernity always had a certain taste for Orientalism that is present in esoteric and occult traditions (in many cases we have seen that Oriental wisdom and influences are key in forming the esoteric from Egyptian magic to Hindu and Buddhist religious practices). In this regard Western esotericism is the esoteric tradition of the West (now Europe and North America) that is not Western in its inspiration but in the geographical appearance of its followers. Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, *Esotericism = Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2006, 336-340. and Kennet GRANHOLM, *Locating the West – Problematizing the Western in Western Esotericism and Occultism = Occultism in a Global Perspective*, eds. Henrik BOGDAN, Gordan DJURDJEVIC, New York, Routledge, 2014. 17-36.

Academy and with the development of alchemy a revitalization of esotericism and mysticism begun to flourish.<sup>146</sup>

The careers of John Dee, Paracelsus and Agrippa von Nettesheim are founders of modern technology and high or classical occultism of the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>147</sup> The concept of a New Age to come and once again an interest in the dualistic world view is culminating in the life and works of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). Starting off as a shoemaker after his visions became a Lutheran theologian creating many fascinating works on the rules of nature and of the divine, most notable the *Aurora*. In the *Aurora* he describes the well known constant fight of light and dark (almost in a Gnostic way) declaring the arrival of an eschatological *enlightenment* of the believers.<sup>148</sup> Probably Boehme and his thought are one of the greatest influences on the poetry and art of William Blake.<sup>149</sup> The greatest manifest of William Blake's art, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is the perfect example to represent the dualism mentioned in connection with ancient cultures to be found in humanity's interest. The two corpuses of poems are not only unique in their intersecting communication with each other but also because of their illustrations created by Blake himself as well.<sup>150</sup> The most notable pair *The Lamb* from *Innocence* and *The Tyger* from *Experience* show the parallel and opposite nature of the two books. The ideals of innocence (that is connected to childhood) and experience (that is connected to adulthood) are two opposite sides of the same coin, namely human life and existence. The light colours of innocence are balanced with the dark shades of experience, giving an equal weight for both elements and ideas. As the Songs of Experience are connected with the darkness of existence, we may assume that the very essence of experience that is also connected with wisdom and new knowledge what is hidden from an innocent child, is an esoteric immersion to life itself. Because there is no dark without light and vice versa, thus there is no adulthood without the darkness of experience and knowledge through experience. Nevertheless we should note that the genre incorporated to the title of the

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<sup>146</sup> Antoine FAIVRE, *Hermetic Literature IV: Renaissance-Present = Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2006, 533 and Jo Elridge CARNEY, *Cosimo I De' Medici = Renaissance and Reformation 1500-1620*, ed. Jo Elridge CARNEY, London, Greenwood Press, 2000, 96-97.

<sup>147</sup> Whitney LEESON, *Agrippa von Nettesheim, Heinrich Cornelius = Renaissance and Reformation 1500-1620*, ed. Jo Elridge CARNEY, London, Greenwood Press, 2000, 6-7; Edmund M. KERN, *Paracelsus = Renaissance and Reformation 1500-1620*, ed. Jo Elridge CARNEY, London, Greenwood Press, 2000, 276-278; Karolyn KINANE, *Dee, John = Renaissance and Reformation 1500-1620*, ed. Jo Elridge CARNEY, London, Greenwood Press, 2000, 105-106.

<sup>148</sup> Andrew Weeks, *Boehme, Jacob = Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2006, 188-191.

<sup>149</sup> Aldo MAGRIS, *Gnosticism: Gnosticism from its Origins to the Middle Ages (Further Considerations) = The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsey JONES, New York, MacMillan Reference USA, 2005, Vol. 5. 3515.

<sup>150</sup> PÉTER Ágnes, *Előszó = Songs of Innocence and of Experience – Az ártatlanság és a tapasztalás dalai*, William BLAKE, Budapest, General Press Kiadó, 2006, 7-15.

volume has a rather musical connection, constantly reminding us that the musicians, who writes or sings songs is somehow connected to the untamed, not to say to the Evil in European philosophy.

The interest in the *hidden*, compared to the childish innocence of Christianity is a key feature in 19<sup>th</sup> century occultism. We do not assume that William Blake in any ways is a driving force in the development of Western Esotericism, but his views and artistic expressions show a clear connection with the *Zeitgeist* of the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century and its underground stream of occultism. This age of enlightenment started to develop during Blake's lifetime in Europe, with the dawn of rationalism, peaking in the French revolution. Although it cannot be said, that there is a direct action-reaction chain in connection with the emergence of 19<sup>th</sup> century occultism and rationalism. Thus it would be an overstatement that the highly Church-critique stance of the French revolution created a space for esoteric movement, more like the new spiritual decline lead back many thinkers to search for the higher and hidden truths of religion. The real start of secularization roots back to the late Baroque period. With the advancement of technology and natural sciences, scepticism started to arise, what called esoteric religiosity for help against the disenchanted world.<sup>151</sup> At the same time it should not be forgotten, that the age of rationalism, or the "*age of Newton*" also created a space for national romanticism. The age of Romance attempts to rebel against the only rational world of science depending on the "*night*" side of human soul: irrationalism.<sup>152</sup> It may be well illustrated by the emergence of gothic literature: the gothic also stresses that although the scientist of their time declared that everything can be known through ration – it is not true, there are still territories that cannot be understood by reason. This also means, that everything before the age of reason became a quality worth to remember: a kind of nostalgia appears towards national history<sup>153</sup> and pre-history.<sup>154</sup> In this regard gothic romanticism or romantic gothic literature also shows an interest towards the secrets and mysteries. It is presented in the great novels and poetry of this age's (Shelly, Byron, Coleridge, Schiller, Goethe, Stoker, etc.) literature, as it is in the esoteric side of philosophy.

With a bigger leap we arrive to the world of New Age Cults and New Religious Movements. Despite the many other kinds of cults and movements are present in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century for our interest Neopaganism and contemporary Occultism are

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<sup>151</sup> Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, *New Age Movement = The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsey JONES, New York, MacMillan Reference USA, 2005, Vol. 10. 6495-6500.

<sup>152</sup> SZERB Antal, *A világirodalom története*, Budapest, Magvető Kiadó, 1941, 399-401.

<sup>153</sup> Even with authors inventing national mythology, e.g. James MacPherson and the Ossian cycle.

<sup>154</sup> David PUNTER, Glennis BYRON, *The Gothic*, Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 7-11.

to be detailed here. Wicca is one of the first of Neopagan groups that achieved popularity during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also providing foundation for the newly came Neopaganistic cults. Neopaganism in this regard is an individual movement amongst New Religious Movements (NRM) and New Age cults, stressing the revival of ancient pre-Christian religions. Along with Wicca, Neopaganism was inspired by important works of anthropologists and historians of religion from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, like James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* or Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*. The many cases egalitarian and individualistic cults place in their focus the heritage of certain ancient cultures' (e.g. Celtic, Nordic, etc). As the term itself declares, these groups are "neo"-pagans, there is no direct lineage between ancient traditions and the renewed ones, and those are revised and updated in accordance to be fit for the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century followers.<sup>155</sup>

In the approach towards the ancient world two main directions could be distinguished: exclusive and eclectic. Exclusive cults declare that every follower should only revitalize their own cultural heritage, e.g. "white people" should only gather inspiration from European paganism. Eclectic thinking is encouraged by other societies that support the followers to pick from all the ancient traditions that they are interested in to satisfy their individual spiritual needs. One way or another, the importance of rite is similar in both cases. The role of rites is to build and strengthen the community, performing rituals that are to re-create a rite with the best authenticity. Rites and theory both respect nature and the cycles of nature (especially of the Moon, giving a kind of feministic approach towards egalitarianism), offering the possibility to leave urbanized civilization for the sake of nature. The worship of nature (as paganism is mostly understood as a natural religion), and the search for the divine in nature denies the monotheistic approaches, creating the opportunity of a personal experience with divine beings.<sup>156</sup>

From the perspective of current religious movements the Neopaganistic and occult traditions are the most important, as these cults support highly a renewed interest in the *Secret* and the *Past*. As during the Hellenistic period Gnosticism was the current of esoteric knowledge on the Fate and Truth of one, offering a personal spiritual journey to a pure existence and world thus serves the same purpose the mentioned movement. The arguable "spiritual New Age" of the Hellenistic age<sup>157</sup> and the present tendencies both look for the hidden besides the veil of the world what we see. In many cases the hidden truth can be found

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<sup>155</sup> Sarah M. PIKE, *Neopaganism = The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsey JONES, New York, MacMillan Reference USA, 2005, Vol. 10, 6470-6473.

<sup>156</sup> Sarah M. PIKE, *ibid.* 6470-6473.

<sup>157</sup> April D. DECONICK, *ibid.* 285-305.

in ancient texts and ancient practices that are actualized for today's society. In this regard the New Age Gnostics of Occultism and Neopagans reread and rewrite the past in search for an alternative for the ruling patriarchal system of Christianity, mixed with romantic nostalgia of the past and a rebellion against the present, satisfying their needs according to the marketplace of contemporary religiosity.

On the pages above we have seen the arch that begins in the antiquity of European culture and is constant throughout its history of the Christian culture, culminating in the religious pluralism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From the viewpoint of Christianity, the alternatives rising within Western societies are negative phenomena, thus could be named as Evil. Through Frye's thoughts we have seen that the fascination to the Demonic or to the Evil is present on the level of art and literature as well. On purpose yet we do not use the term "Satan", "Satanism" and "Devil" in this section as the clear connections to the mentioned ideas are going to receive their own analysis in Chapter 3. The contemporary interest in horror fiction and movies, as described by Noel Carrol in his book, *The Philosophy of Horror*<sup>158</sup> can be found in the thrill that may be connected to the Demonic described by Frye. As now to approach closer to popular culture and music, two instances are to be cited under the sky of fascinating evil. Aphrodite's Child, the Greek progressive rock band which first showed the genius of Vangelis released their final album in 1972, under the title *666 (The Apocalypse of John 13/18)*.<sup>159</sup> The title is a reference to the verse in the Book of Revelation describing the Beast's number.<sup>160</sup> The concept of the album presents us two layers: a circus performance of the Apocalypse and the eventual occurrence of the real apocalypse in parallel, while the two merge together in the end.<sup>161</sup> Playing the apocalypse and living it is two separate events in the album which show dualism and the fascination of evil for the audience, in a performative setting and the reality of the world's end. Playing the apocalypse has a childlike vibration, almost not taking seriously the most important event in the history of humanity, while the real destruction of the world is the concern of the matured. Hereby we see the confrontation of innocence (play) and experience (the apocalypse) colliding together, mixing, thus giving the whole of existence.

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<sup>158</sup> Noel CARROL, *The Philosophy of Horror or the Paradoxes of the Heart*, New York, Routledge, 1990, 12-23.

<sup>159</sup> Aphrodite's Child, *666 (The Apocalypse of John 13/18)*, Vertigo, 1972.

<sup>160</sup> „Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

<sup>161</sup> Henk ENGEL, *The concept book synopsis*: <http://www.vangelislyrics.com/vangelis-lyrics-collaborations/vangelis-aphrodites-child-666-the-story.htm#concept> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

The opposition of polarities could be found in the title of death/doom metal band My Dying Bride's 2004 album as well. *Songs of Darkness, Words of Light*<sup>162</sup> is the entrance for us to the problem of textuality within metal music. The album's title demands to be compared or to be inspired by the volume of William Blake. According to the official forum found on the band's website with comments of the musicians themselves<sup>163</sup> that the similarity is only of coincidence and was realised after the writing process.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless the interest of vocalist-lyricist Aaron Stainthorpe in English poetry could have been caused the unintentional inspiration by Blake's poetry. The album's title contains once again an opposition in this regard the duality of music and language. Songs, thus music is connected to darkness while words, through language to light. As metal music is a typical genre where music and lyrics work together (to be illustrated in Chapter 2.4.2.) we may understand the title as a statement on the whole of art and existence as well. The Dionysian (songs of dark) and the Apollonian (words of light), chaos and order are placed next to each other and are entwined as well, finishing the circle drawn from ancient antiquity up to modern day culture. Metal music is as much of lyrics as of guitar riffs and drum rhythms. But who does it work?

#### **2.4.2. The Place of Textuality Within Metal Music**

Some points were earlier introduced from the works of John Fiske in the chapters above, now we turn back for a moment to the problem of popular texture. A popular text pursues to be easily understood. The goal of the text is to be easily accessible to all layers of society to deliver the message that is contained within. It is quite understandable in case of e.g. an advertisement, that the short slogans only purpose is to make the receiver to buy it. In the case of a musical and especially metal lyric it is not as obvious as it looks like. First of all the realm of heavy and extreme metal works in most of the cases with distorted vocals. At first glance it may mean that the lyrics are not that important if those are sung in an incomprehensible way. On the contrary, lyrics and verbal expressions are significant that is proven by the choosing of band names and more, by the stage names of numerous musicians, etc. In other words, the distorted vocals do not drive away attention from the lyrics, but serve the other attribute of popular texts: excessiveness. Excessive may be the first impression one has when encounters metal music. Its visual, musical and verbal tendencies are saturated with

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<sup>162</sup> My Dying Bride, *Songs of Darkness, Words of Light*, Peaceville Records, 2004.

<sup>163</sup> <http://www.mydyingbride.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=594> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>164</sup> The coincidences may be expanded with that the title of the third song is *Catherine Blake*, the name of both William Blake's mother and wife.

excessive expressions: the outrageous and rebel manner, aggression and distortion. Popular texts on a general level provide excessive contents. It is the pair of the obvious: the easiest way to make something to be obvious is to overstress some phenomena, message, etc., to make it excessive and place it into the centre of focus. From these attributes above we can clearly see that metal lyrics do not bear the features of high literature. The quality represented by the material to be examined does not exceed the realm of popular texts. The aesthetical classification is restricted to the excessive and obvious explored above, thus we do not attempt to armour the material with any traits outside its realm, however we are lending concepts regarding high literature for a better understanding of it.

The propositions of Richard Shusterman give many interesting points to our subject. His proposal on the topic of “*somaesthetics*”<sup>165</sup> focuses on the possibilities to count in the somatic, the bodily perception in the case of aesthetic experience. This means, that no perception of art is independent from the corporeal dimensions of human existence. Thus what we see, hear or feel, (etc.) have a determinative function in every moment we encounter art. In his paper he lays the foundations for this scholarly approach proven the phenomenon from Greek philosophy up to Foucault. In the relation of metal music the somatic side either in case of listening to the studio recordings or participating the live concert is gathered around the aggression and the excessive. It also arises many musicological questions that are not to be spoken of in this study, only stresses for us that the sonic dimension of metal music incorporates the lyrics that has its impact not via pure perception (and not only by reading) but determined by the music itself. In *The Fine Art of Rap*<sup>166</sup> our picture on popular texts is widened. There are many parallels and differences between rap and metal music. Both originated as a local subculture from a certain social and racial layer, and later became global phenomenon, having almost the same arguments within about authenticity. The main difference is on the approach towards the musical dimension: while metal music tends to be original on every level, rap music’s MC-s (Master of Ceremony, the DJ-s) originally used already existing musical pieces altered in rhythmical samples to support and underline the rhythm of rapping itself. In metal, music and lyrics are in the foreground on an equal level, while in rap, music is in the background. Nevertheless this shows us that there are two subcultural movements with similar tendencies: the verbal dimension is in the foreground having the task to transmit a message to the audience.

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<sup>165</sup> Richard SHUSTERMAN, *Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57 (1999), 299-313.

<sup>166</sup> Richard SHUSTERMAN, *The Fine Art of Rap*, *Undermining Subjects*, 22.3 (1991), 613-632.

This implies on a theoretical level to place metal lyrics in the horizon of literature. Besides our statement on the semantic quality of the texts those are outside the realm of poetry (at least high poetry), nevertheless the question arises whether a (metal) lyrics is a read or heard text? This problem is the pair or parallel of the case above discussed if metal music is a performative or a studio genre. As it could not be decided if the live concert or the HiFi or Dolby Surround system is the real ground for the music now it also could not be separated. As a consensus we may assume that metal lyrics are obviously heard texts but on the basis of distorted vocals it is necessary in many cases for one to be able to read the lyrics in accordance to 1) fully adopt the music and its message 2) it may lead to the full experience of the metal concert, with chanting the chorus part together with the band (through encouragement by the vocalist).<sup>167</sup>

Before closing on the system of metal lyrics we introduce here the academic perspectives in connection with metal textuality as well. Up to today there is no general monograph on the lyrics of metal music but article level interest and compilation volumes are easy to find. The first detailed introduction into metal texts comes once again from Deena Weinstein's cornerstone book, but as its system is to be analysed and expanded later now we only refer to it. The article of Adam Rafalovich from 2006<sup>168</sup> by its title may not be classified to be a work of metal lyrics, but as all other aspects of this culture can be studied from various perspectives texts can be as well. The key question of Rafalovich's study is the masculine individualism presented on the level of lyrics revolving around the topics of being a broken one or being an all powerful existence. The qualitative approach focuses on selected examples, similar to our study as the corpus of metal lyrics is too big for a full and detailed analysis.

Four edited volumes are necessary be mentioned. Inter-Disciplinary Press of Oxford released two e-books under the title *Heavy Fundamentalism – Music, Metal and Politics*<sup>169</sup> and *The Metal Void – First Gatherings*,<sup>170</sup> being compilation volumes of conference papers. Taking a brief look on the tables of contents of both volumes we see that a great variety of topics are discussed. Not solely lyrical question are addressed, but specific problems of

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<sup>167</sup> On this point we are once again to stress that the statements in our dissertation are not universal. We attempt to give a basic insight with reflection to the extremities as well. Thus now we do not tend to suggest that for all metal bands and for all members of the audience the lyrics have this high level of interest.

<sup>168</sup> Adam RAFALOVICH, *Broken and Becoming God-Sized: Contemporary Metal Music and Masculine Individualism*, *Symbolic Interaction* 29/1, 19-32.

<sup>169</sup> Rosemary HILL, Karl SPRACKLEN (eds.), *Heavy Fundamentalism – Music, Metal and Politics*, Oxford, Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010.

<sup>170</sup> Niall W. R. SCOTT, Imke von HELDEN, *The Metal Void – First Gatherings*, Oxford, Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010.

aesthetics, communities, musicology, race, gender etc. Both books have their own chapters that are revolving around textual interest, including national identity, the reception of H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu "mythos" or the portrayal of war in Finnish metal music. A wider perspective is served by the conference proceeding volume of the 2015 issue of Modern Heavy Metal Conference.<sup>171</sup> The conference and thus the book<sup>172</sup> had at least four sessions/chapters (of fourteen) that are revolving around many textual points. The sessions' titles were: *Session 3: National Identity, History and Cultural Roots in Heavy Metal*; *Session 7: Race and Ethnicity in Heavy Metal*; *Session 9: Heavy Metal and Philosophy*; *Session 12: Heavy Metal, Religion and Black Symbols*. Amongst the participants we see many interdisciplinary interested scholars coming from other fields than metal studies proving the academic interest in metal music as a whole.

The first entire book dedicated to metal lyrics comes from 2011.<sup>173</sup> The edited volume has an entire chapter on myths, motives and literary pieces' reception in metal music, thus serving as a perfect example on tendencies within metal studies to approach not just the music and the culture but lyrics as well.<sup>174</sup> Prominent author from Germany, Imke von Helden yet referred in connection with Inter-Disciplinary Press' second compilation is to be mentioned separately from other scholars, as her dissertation in Scandinavian studies was published last year focusing on Norwegian cultural identity.<sup>175</sup> According to Helden as Norwegian national identity is in many ways based on Norwegian and Scandinavian mythology thus her research is also an important instance in the academic reception of mythological metal music. Her study differs from ours on the level of material: not only the verbal, but the sonic and pictorial dimension, even performances and music videos are analysed through the study, on many points matching our interest but also pointing the further directions as well.

Deena Weinstein writes about the possible categorization in two respective subchapters. In her view we may divide the lyrics of metal music into two different classes: 1) Dionysian<sup>176</sup> and 2) Chaotic.<sup>177</sup> Named after primeval forces of Greek mythology, we may

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<sup>171</sup> An annual conference, a great contribution for all „metal studies” organized by the Aalto University of Finland. The homepage of the conferences: <http://www.modernheavymetal.net/> (Retrieved 2018. 08. 01.).

<sup>172</sup> Toni-Matti KARJALAINEN, Kimi KÄRKI (eds.), *Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures*, Helsinki, Aalto University & Turku, 2015.

<sup>173</sup> Roman BARTOSCH (ed.), *Heavy Metal Studies – Band I: Lyrics und Intertextualität*, Oberhausen, Verlag Nicole Schmenk, 2011.

<sup>174</sup> The journal „*Metal Music Studies*” has also its interest in metal text only briefly referred to now. For an insight please visit the publishers site: <https://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=236/> (Retrieved: 2018. 07. 19.).

<sup>175</sup> Imke von HELDEN, *Norwegian Native Art: Cultural Identity in Norwegian Metal Music*, Zürich, LIT Verlag, 2017.

<sup>176</sup> Deena WEINSTEIN, *ibid.* 2002, 35-38.

also name the two classes as “*earthly*” or “*corporeal*” (Dionysian) and “*spiritual*” (Chaotic). Once again we see a dualistic differentiation of a phenomenon, hooking us back to some original concepts. The Dionysian category consists of lyrics describing and praising earthly and carnal delights, like gambling, alcohol consumption, free love and drug usage. Maybe one of the best examples could be the famous song of Motörhead “*The Ace of Spades*”<sup>178</sup> that shows us the lack of interest towards the meaning of life only pursuing the “*carpe diem*”, to enjoy the moment. As the study is not working with texts of this category we do not attempt to create a detailed sub-categorization. However the Chaotic type should be differentiated. Everything is part of the Chaotic that is on the spiritual side of life. In this regard the categorization is almost endless, and each category may gather around a core topic. Thus the problem of love, death, suicide, afterlife, origins, national history, romanticism, literature, arts, religion, and mythology can create separate and individual or mixed subcategories. In Chapter 3 we are going to get a deeper insight to the world of mythology and religion inspired lyrics taking a look on the rhetoric and the way how these questions inspired artists to incorporate them in their music. Hereby we serve some fine examples to represent the Chaotic in extreme metal.

The legendary album of Slayer cited above show us the aggressive and highly critical manner towards institutionized religion in the song *Jesus Saves*.<sup>179</sup> The song turns its focus towards the unreal foundations of Christianity which requires from the band to highlight those with once again an ironic pacing towards devil worship. Cannibal Corpse shows us the main textual inventory of death metal with inhuman scenes resembling the horror movies of the 1980s in *Edible Autopsy*<sup>180</sup> on their debut record. The grotesque interest in horror and gore are the main components of death metal that paves the path for the genre to focus more on song writing and less on the lyrics, using those only to be a match for the brutal music. As My Dying Bride is going to be presented in Chapter 3 now the example to show the lyrical side of doom metal is *Solitude* from Candlemass.<sup>181</sup> The impending doom closing on every person

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<sup>177</sup> Deena WEINSTEIN, *ibid.* 2002, 38-43.

<sup>178</sup> “[...] *You know I'm born to lose, and gambling's for fools / But that's the way I like it baby, I don't wanna live forever / And don't forget the Joker.* [...]” Motörhead, *The Ace of Spades*, Bronze Records, 1980.

<sup>179</sup> “[...] *For all respect you cannot lust / In an invisible man you place your trust / Indirect dependency / Eternal attempt of amnesty / He will decide who lives and who dies / Depopulate satanas rise / You will be an accessory / Irreverence and blasphemy* [...]” Slayer, *ibid.* 1986.

<sup>180</sup> “[...] *Guts and blood, bones are broken as they eat your pancreas. / Human liver, for their dinner or maybe soup with eyes. / Cause of death, still unknown, gnawing meat from your bones. / Bone saw binding in your skull, brains are oozing, a human stump.* [...]” Cannibal Corpse, *Eaten Back to Life*, Metal Blade Records, 1990.

<sup>181</sup> “*I'm sitting here alone in darkness / waiting to be free, / Lonely and forlorn I'm crying / I long for my time to come / death means just life / Please let me die in solitude* [...]” Candlemass, *Epicus Doomicus Metallicus*, Black Dragon Records, 1986.

and on the speaker itself, the facing of death and the final moments' ultimate solitude is thematised in the song, clearly matching with the slow movement of the music, making doom metal to be a genre where musicality and textuality meet with each other.

Norway's Mayhem takes us closer to the religion and ancient culture inspired pieces detailed in the next chapter. *Pagan Fears*<sup>182</sup> could be divided into three sections. The first five lines make it clear, that the paganism incorporated in the title is mentioned in a historical notion, creating a gap between present day and the ancient paganism (and its horrific connotations) that is now not part of reality. The second part is the forthcoming four lines giving a specialised description of paganism: the era of superstition (the word used has a highly pejorative, almost degrading meaning). The repeated middle part ("*The past is alive*") and the following is an actualizing turn that stresses the haunting presence of ancient horrors. The message is obvious: the pagan fears (the fear of demons and evil forces) is not just a myth but is a reality for present day as well. The composition is excessive: the depiction of history and the past is through pictures of death and decay, echoing the quality of the feared things as well. The Demonic side of literature is present throughout the whole text, and the above highlighted middle part is in the centre of the musical effect, emphasized by rhythm and vocal manners both. The pagan past attributed with a grotesque and horrific taste is in the focus of interest within the song that invokes one more question: why is the detestable is the object of fascination within extreme metal? From the paragraph above we are to face the method chosen for the whole study: as the material is quite wide and uses the inventory of popular texture we restrict our work to the content-analysis of the lyrics, highlighting the most important attributes of each presented piece.

The textuality of gothic metal is close in topics to doom metal, as it is found the song *Opium* of Moonspell.<sup>183</sup> The consumption of opium as an earthly delight is shown to us with a highly erotic vibe towards the addiction of the drug. The song is in between the later to introduce categories of Dionysian and Chaotic writing in metal music, as the feelings raised by the drug are part of *carpe diem* movement within metal music with a strong reference to the darker side of it: whether the addiction is of one's own decision or of the drug's

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<sup>182</sup> „*The bloody history from the past / Deceased humans now forgotten / An age of legends and fear / A time now so distant / Less numbered as they were their lives / So primitive and pagan / Superstitions were a part of the life / So unprotected in the dark nights / Pagan fears / The past is alive / The past is alive / Woeful people with pale faces / Staring obsessed at the moon / Some memories will never go away / And they will forever be here*” Mayhem, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, Deathlike Silence Productions, 1994.

<sup>183</sup> “[...] *Opium, desire or will? / Inspiration bound from an elegant seed / Subversion, through smoke I foresee / Erotic motions of lesser gods in ecstasy // Opium, bring me forth another dream / Spawn worlds of flesh and wrath, / little jewels of atrocity / Opium, I sleep in debauchery / And burn with you / when you burn in Me [...]*” Moonspell, *Irreligious*, Century Media Records, 1996.

undeniable prison. Thus the song not only reflects to the pleasure of opium but to the dangers of it as well.

In this chapter above we have seen examples of the Chaotic side from Black Sabbath, Cannibal Corpse, Candlemass, Mayhem and Slayer, also some from the Dionysian, like Motörhead above, with the mixture of the two of the song from Moonspell. This shows that the interest in the two extremities of thought (earthly and spiritual) are deeply rooting in metal music's aesthetics throughout its history, not lacking the balancing attempt on the border of the two. Of course these categories are drawn in a retrospective manner thus no metal chooses to follow one of each path, rather than these are the primordial attributes of metal music, clearly outlining the connection between wild musicality and untamed textual topics.

From the examples above we can see that there are many different approaches towards the essence, quality and importance of lyrics within metal music. Before we elaborate this question further a bit, let us present the song *Alma Mater* from Portuguese Moonspell once again. The cited verses<sup>184</sup> are a self reference towards language and especially mother tongue. We see that there is a Portuguese band singing in English on the problem if can be language really understood? Mother tongue is named as a mystery and the nourishing mother as the title states. The doubt in communication does not mean not to speak. The last line's question opens the gates for all listeners to think about the concepts in the song. Language, literature and texture on a general level become through this one example an issue for metal listeners and musicians as well. Although metal music is now a globalised phenomenon with English as a lingua franca used by many other forms of popular culture we should not forget that many regional scenes use their own language for creating metal music. Current dissertation focuses only (with some important exceptions) on English metal lyrics as it is the common tongue for the world wide scene.

Although we praised on the pages above the textuality of metal music we cannot forget the tendencies against lyrics within the metal scene. As it was illustrated with Cannibal Corpse's example death metal music is a typical genre where lyrics do not have a serious importance. The too excessive horror and brutal scenes depicted in death metal texts are only serving the music itself what is also brutal and technical. Thus in this case we see that lyrics are submitted to the aim of the music. We have no clear example for an extremity that

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<sup>184</sup> "Mother Tongue speaks to Me / In the strangest ways I've ever seen / I know that she sees in Me / Her proudest child, her purest breed // She speaks to Me in colours / That I can't really understand / I only know that they are ours / And to those I'll proudly bend // For I am your only child / And you my dearest mystery / From an ancient throne I defy the world / To kneel before the Power within. // For I am your only child / And you my dearest mystery / World can't you see it? / Am I alone in my belief? [...]" Moonspell, *Wolfheart*, Century Media Records, 1995.

supports the idea of the lyrics are more important than the music, as in this case poetry or other forms of literature could suite better for such an artist. The other extremity however exists. There are numerous metal bands that do not tend to use any lyrics or vocals in their music. A brief collection of examples could be found on the site of Metal Storm online magazine.<sup>185</sup> Instrumental metal bands yet cannot separate themselves completely from the verbal, as they give name to their bands, titles to the albums and songs, giving preliminary directions for their listeners. As there is no metal band 100% stressing lyrics (even lacking music)<sup>186</sup> there is no band lacking any of the verbal dimensions. One last unique example is to be mentioned in enumerating the tendencies towards lyrics. Norway's Gorgoroth is one of the most important bands of second wave black metal in a Satanist approach. Despite their often offensive and outrageous stage performances and satanic cover artworks the band never publishes the lyrics of their song. As they play black metal their lyrics are incomprehensible through listening only the album and song titles enable us to get some insight to the Evil worshipping imagery of the band. This special manner towards the verbal can be connected clearly with the ideas of madness, the Dionysian in culture and with the balance within the polarities. The music of Gorgoroth is not purely music but is not defined completely by texture the sound is driving, the whole of the music and not the sum of its elements. As a sententious summary we can declare that lyrics have a real high importance within metal music, not exceeding the importance of music but serving together, side-by-side in many cases, which is to be analysed on the field of mythology in the next great chapter.

### 2.4.3. On the Sources

The last topic to touch only by a short glance is the question of the *sources* of heavy and extreme metal lyrics, namely where and how can we access metal lyrics? As we could get used to it during this rather long introduction hereby we have once again a twofold, almost *polarized* answer for the question. For one who is interested in metal lyrics manifest and virtual possibilities are available. With the wide spreading of internet and internet piracy of music the need emerged for those who illegally download music to establish databases on the internet to get access to the artworks, lyrics etc. not possessed through digital copies. Manifest

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<sup>185</sup> [http://www.metalstorm.net/users/list.php?list\\_id=596](http://www.metalstorm.net/users/list.php?list_id=596) (Retrieved 2018. 08. 01.).

<sup>186</sup> There are examples of some bands' vocalists-lyricist publishing their lyrics as a book without music. E.g. Niklas KVARFORTH, *When Prozac No Longer Helps*, Shining Legions, 2012; collecting the lyrics of Swedish black metal band Shining's vocalist in original Swedish and in English translations as well.

musical recordings (cassettes, CDs, LPs) usually include the front and back cover artwork, the disc and a booklet attached to the front cover.

The booklet is the container of all the information the band felt necessary to include in connection with the recording, e.g. the crew who helped the recording process, the name of the studio, discographical data (like distributor, time of distribution, format, etc.), the list of band members who worked on the records (with their responsibilities as well, e.g. instrument played, contribution to song or lyrics writing) and last but not least the lyrics themselves. Besides the music the artwork and the booklet is the greatest arena for a metal band to express their artistic approaches for the listeners outside the concert venue. With some selected examples we would like to illustrate how can a booklet differentiate the interpretation of a musical recording. We have many simple examples with some band photos and the lyrics together, like in the case of Fear Factory's *Demanufacture*,<sup>187</sup> where the lyrics are written in a flowing form, with “/” indicating the ends of each line in a verse. Marduk's *Rom 5:12*<sup>188</sup> advances forward with rich decorations and many illustrations in a medieval manner strengthening the death worshipping allusion referring to the internal mechanisms of the record itself. The 2008 album of Týr<sup>189</sup> is sung entirely in the mother tongue of the band: Faroese Danish. Stressing the importance of the lyrics all the songs' lyrics are presented in Faroese Danish and on the opposite page in English as well.

The peak of complexity of a booklet can be witnessed on yet cited album of Norwegian Dimmu Borgir, *In Sorte Diaboli*.<sup>190</sup> The record is a concept album of a medieval priest who becomes aware of the failure and lies of Christianity, sinking to the occult sciences and finding the real truth. The rather esoteric setting is a typical example of occult/anti-Christian metal music, in this case in a symphonic black metal manner. The booklet not only contains the yet described information but also is formulated as a pseudo-scripture, as a found text from the times when the priest lived. The protagonist of the story writes his testimony on his findings and publishes ciphered spells, namely the lyrics. The cipher is a mirror writing, turned upside down. To make the lyrics accessible a small mirror is attached to the booklet to help the listeners read it, giving the aura of secrecy and occult initiation.

In cases of physical inaccessibility of lyrics (e.g. not all the records are distributed physically worldwide not to forget piracy as well) one may search the internet, the websites of the bands or databases. The most important web database of information on any metal records

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<sup>187</sup> Fear Factory, *Demanufacture*, Roadrunner Records, 1995.

<sup>188</sup> Marduk, *Rom 5:12*, Blood Dawn Productions, 2007.

<sup>189</sup> Týr, *Land*, Napalm Records, 2008.

<sup>190</sup> Dimmu Borgir, *ibid.* 2007.

is the free access “*Encyclopedia Metallum – The Metal Archives*”<sup>191</sup> what is a user edited encyclopaedia of metal music. Its biggest advantage is that it is the greatest archive of metal bands and information on metal recordings. As users are free to edit it as Wikipedia, thus it has the possibility of inaccuracy making. Nevertheless it is a great starting point for anyone who wants to explore the almost impenetrable variety of metal genres and bands.

#### 2.4.4. Partial Summary

On the previous pages many different aspects of metal music and its surrounding territories were gathered; let us spend some lines to summarize the current state of our study. The religious-social milieu of the 1960s and 1970s with the dawn of the “*Age of Aquarius*” paved many new paths for the different currents of (popular) culture in Western societies. The emergence of New Religious Movements with a certain shade of revivalism of ancient traditions (Neopaganism, Gnosticism, and occultism) sparked the search for alternatives to replace the current Christian order. This rebellious manner towards Christianity is labelled as a spiritual movement that is to be achieved individually by one’s own will. This spiritual “new age” and rebellion brought up the notion of resistance in other parts of culture, like in the case of the birth of metal music. Although the origin of metal music has many other socio-cultural elements we can say that the era of religious and cultural heterogeneity favoured the creation of a wild and new way of popular music. The foundations of metal music are built around this independent, freedom and liberty charmed pursue and the search for power (over the self). Not just the music but the (sub)culture is built around these principles, in clothing, manners and performance the attempt to rebel is the key.

Metal music and lyrics, and especially mythological lyrics tend to rebel against the Christian values, thus their rhetoric side should be examined in our further pages to show the topics that are inspirational, the myths that are the sources, and the way how metal musicians re-write or for-write the ancient texts to make them fit for their aim and purpose. We have described, that the sources are part of high literature and of course ancient religious literature, but the lyrics written of them are part of the popular culture. In this regard our question is that, what kind of myths inspire metal musicians, and what are the possibilities of their own interpretation of a certain ancient story that is coded back in their musical lyrics.

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<sup>191</sup> <https://www.metal-archives.com/> (Retrieved 2018. 08. 01.)

### 3. The Reception of Biblical and Mythological Topics in the Lyrics of Extreme Metal Music

#### 3.1. Satanism and Christianity or What does the Devil have to do with the Devil's Music?

##### 3.1.1. Introduction: What is "Satanism", what are "Satanisms"?

The concept of Satanism is not necessarily a religious belief and a system of rites. Two main trends can be distinguished: the "rational" and the "esoteric" Satanism.<sup>192</sup> Both trends are attributed with leaving and despising the "herd".<sup>193</sup> These are elitist, outsider trends in both cases with Satan in the centre. In case of the first trend ("rational" Satanism) Satan is not a divine entity, more like an abstract concept symbolising the resistance against mass culture, it is an atheist approach refusing the values of contemporary society. The second trend ("esoteric" Satanism) shows more traces of religious and institutional phenomena, with societies like *Church of Satan* or *Temple of Set*. These societies are rooting in the Anti-Christian<sup>194</sup> philosophy of Anton Szandor LaVey, originating from the second half of the '60s. It is important to see that besides there are cultic versions of Satanism, the members of the cults never call their practices and thoughts as religion. The concept of "religion" contains Christianity, Islam, Judaism etc. what are corrupting in their view the meaning of religion, therefore Satanism should not be called as one.<sup>195</sup> Besides LaVey the great magus of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Aleister Crowley and his magical system called "*Thelema*"<sup>196</sup> is the most popular source of esoteric Satanism, showing also many traces of religion.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Asbjørn DYRENDAL, *Devilish Consumption: Popular Culture in Satanic Socialization*, *Numen* 55 (2008), 78-80.

<sup>193</sup> The „herd” are the members of mass society who follow the Christian world-view without questioning it. Compare: Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *The Antichrist*, The Project Gutenberg, 2006, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19322/19322-h/19322-h.htm> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>194</sup> Besides anti-Christianity it also means the depiction of the negative mirror image of Christianity.

<sup>195</sup> It is not accidental that the cultic version is called „esoteric” and not „religious” Satanism. The meaning of the word “esoteric” promises something deeper and higher than ordinary religions also indicating a higher level of mental and spiritual capability.

<sup>196</sup> Occult system based on ceremonial magic giving the foundations to LaVey's Satanism. One of the central motifs is the praising of free will, also can be found in the theory of the Church of Satan. Thelema is not Satanic in its original meaning, inspired more by Eastern mysticism like Kabbalah. Compare: J. Gordon MELTON, *Crowley, Aleister = Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology I*, ed. J. Gordon MELTON, New York, Gale, 2001, 361.

<sup>197</sup> J. Gordon MELTON, *Ceremonial Magic = Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology I*, ed. J. Gordon MELTON, New York, Gale, 2001, 265-266.

Both trends are the enemies of mass culture,<sup>198</sup> somehow building up a kind of anti-consuming society. The ideal of the “*satanic*” could be found in chosen products of mass media, creating personal “*reading lists*”<sup>199</sup> giving guidance for the Satanists. Although many common elements could be found in these lists, this method also gives place for personal taste.<sup>200</sup> Satanist metal music is not the only bastion for Satanism but the ideals of it are parallel with the principles cited above (leaving the herd, the *real* approach to existence, etc.). Focusing on either trend (rationalist/esoteric) there is no tight bond between the societies, only a kind of taste-pattern that connects them. It can be said that it is one of the typical schemes for New Religious Movements and New Age cults. The meaning of “Anti Christianity” is to turn away from the norms and values of society in an elitist way, turning towards the personal world, stressing one’s own interest. In case the thoughts of the herd are oppressive and limited (or thought to be), than the only way to freedom is rebellion and absolute denial.

### **3.1.2. The Road to Mythological Metal Music or How and When did (Anti-)Religion Penetrate Heavy Music?**

From the very beginning of metal music the genre is always accused of Devil worship and Satanism. This accusation is both an inherited attribute and a consciously built up image from within. The indirect inheritance comes from at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the famous play of Goethe: *Faust*<sup>201</sup> was released and played in theatres: the problem of one selling its own soul to Satan in exchange for fame and knowledge once again became a topic in modern society. The topic of original virtuosity or the phenomenon of the genius is meaningless in this pattern, in all cases stating that extraordinary skill or knowledge is not achievable by work and learning, only through a pact with the Evil forces. This pattern was almost a hundred years later taken and actualized in the blues milieu of the 1930s, in the Southern part of the United States. The most famous example of this accusation was Robert Johnson; one of the bests of the Mississippi Delta blues guitarists. His rather short life (1911-1938) and especially

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<sup>198</sup> Mass media and popular culture are also meaning the contemporary system of beliefs and thoughts in Western societies, what are created in this regard by Christianity, controlling the people for centuries.

<sup>199</sup> Books, movies, music, anything could be part of these reading lists.

<sup>200</sup> Asbjørn DYRENDAL, *Devilish Consumption: Popular Culture in Satanic Socialization*, *Numen* 55 (2008), 85-89.

<sup>201</sup> Johann Wolfgang von GOETHE, *Faust*, Cotta’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Tübingen, 1832.

grandiose works let the impression described above, making Robert Johnson the first person in popular music's history to be a Satanist or Satan inspired musician.<sup>202</sup>

We mentioned earlier that the Louisiana and Mississippi blues tradition served as a direct ascendant to rock and roll, and later psychedelic rock and heavy metal music. In this regard the label, that rock and heavy music is Satanist, is coded in from the birth of the genre. Nevertheless the musicians themselves also chose the way of rebellion against Christianity and the Church thus serving well the label. But it should be noted that just because a popular musical movement is labelled in some way it is not determined to follow the path paved by the attribute. The era when metal music was formed is the peak time for New Religious Movements and New Age Cults, thus in all regards and sides of culture the alternatives that are opposing Christianity are present. Thus, metal music what chose the way to be a rebellious form of music also happened to catch up with the anti-Christian tendencies of its time. Although to have a brighter picture we should recall that the greatest British rock bands, Rolling Stones and the Beatles both produced lyrics that are offensive from a Christian point of view.

From the moment of the famous “*Jesus statement*” of John Lennon and the release of the Revolver LP with the song Eleanor Rigby<sup>203</sup> on it, the Beatles became one of the pariah musical groups for religious circles. The criticism against the Church and emptied religiosity that serves as the topic of the song<sup>204</sup> was born before the 1968 events and the real boom of New Age tendencies but show clearly the results of secularization and a transition from Christianity to search for alternatives. In this regard of course the Beatles obviously should not be described or categorized as Satanist musicians, but their critical manner towards institutionalized religion (and especially Christianity) is present for a really wide and numerous audiences. The almost objective critical view of the Beatles may be compared to the ironic piece played by the Rolling Stones. *Sympathy for the Devil* that was released in 1968<sup>205</sup> chooses a different tone. The excerpt cited<sup>206</sup> show the manner: the speaker of the

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<sup>202</sup> Helen FARLEY, *ibid.* 74-76.

<sup>203</sup> “[...] *Father McKenzie writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear / No one comes near / Look at him working, darning his socks in the night when there's nobody there / What does he care? // [...] Eleanor Rigby died in the church and was buried along with her name / Nobody came / Father McKenzie wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave / No one was saved // [...]*” The Beatles, *Revolver*, Parlophone, 1966.

<sup>204</sup> VÉKÁSSY Lili, *Psalm, Mantra, Rock and Roll. The Beatles' Lyrics and the World Religions = “Hiszek, hogy megértsem!”*, GÉR András László, JENEI Péter, ZILA Gábor, L'Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest, 2015, 362-363.

<sup>205</sup> The Rolling Stones, *Beggars Banquet*, Decca Records, 1968.

<sup>206</sup> “*Please allow me to introduce myself / I'm a man of wealth and taste / I've been around for a long, long year / Stole many a man's soul and faith // And I was 'round when Jesus Christ / Had his moment of doubt and pain / Made damn sure that Pilate / Washed his hands and sealed his fate // [...]*” The Rolling Stones, *ibid.* 1968.

lyric takes the role of the Devil and enumerates the deeds done by him. This enumeration serves as a way for the speaker to introduce himself playing a guessing game with the listener to give hints about his true identity. The word “*Devil*” is presented only in the title and only once calls himself by the name Lucifer. This personification of the Evil is a reference to the rebellious world view of the Rolling Stones and also is an ironical, almost satirical representation of the devilish musician. The reference to the stealing of souls and to the wealth and taste that the Devil owns, stresses these stereotypes, creating music from the pejorative attribute that aims to lessen the popularity of rock music.

The psychedelic and progressive rock music of the Beatles and the hard rock of the Rolling Stones made its impact on many musical groups encouraging the critical manner towards the cultural majority. On the eve before the birth of heavy metal the bands Coven and Black Widow also contributed much and received cultic reputation for later musicians. The 1969 album of Coven, *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls*<sup>207</sup> also refers to the commonplaces that are gathered around modern day witchcraft along with the artwork that depicts stereotypical “Satanist” imagery and the name of the band as well. The lyrics present occult and satanic topics, once again referring to the problem of a pact with the Devil. The song, *Pact with Lucifer* offers the story of not an artist or a musician who sold his or her soul to Satan for skill and knowledge but of an ordinary farmer with the grim ending of a high price to pay with his son’s life to the Evil to even the debt. The occult approach started with Coven is continued with the high influence LP of Black Widow entitled *Sacrifice*.<sup>208</sup> The example chosen is *Come to the Sabbath*,<sup>209</sup> what is an invitation of all to a black mass or a Satanic Sabbath where the invocation of Evil forces is to happen. The first verse summarizes the New Age ideal described above: an individual who is in pursue to achieve higher knowledge with secret rites. The chanting and many times repeated invitation to the Sabbath, where everything mentioned above is possible gives a ritual vibe to the song, making it an excessive and obvious example of the critical manner towards cultural majority quite fashionable in the end of the 1960 and beginning of the 1970s.

The examples above are both from the mainstream and the underground as well, representing quite similar approaches towards Christianity either being directly critical (the Beatles), ironic about the accusations of the Church (the Rolling Stones), or openly touching occult and Satanist topics in their lyrics (Coven, Black Widow). These bands have done many

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<sup>207</sup> Coven, *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls*, Mercury, 1969.

<sup>208</sup> Black Widow, *Sacrifice*, CBS Records, 1970.

<sup>209</sup> „*Help me in my search for knowledge / I must learn the secret art / Who dares to help me raise the one / Whose very name sears my heart // [...]*” Black Widow, *ibid.* 1969.

to contribute to the formation of heavy metal music on its basics of lyrics. Black Sabbath on their self titled debut record also show many influence of the New Age and its themes. The band's name itself refers the witches' ritual congregation. Although early Black Sabbath touched the topics of Satanism and occultism on an open level, with a certain taste for scenery and imagery on stage and on the artworks of releases (especially the debut with the inverted cross),<sup>210</sup> their later work distanced itself from the early days extremity. Nevertheless the seeds sown by early Black Sabbath and the darker side of progressive and psychedelic rock (along with the occult interest of Led Zeppelin) indirectly resulted in the extreme metal movement of the 1980s. Only one example is highlighted now from the N.W.O.B.H.M. tradition, from its flagship, Iron Maiden. The 1982 song, *The Number of the Beast*<sup>211</sup> that refers to the Book of Revelation of the New Testament and uses Satanic imagery in the lyrics. The song itself is a depiction of a black Sabbath once again with invocation of evil forces, clearly attempting to catch the rebellious tide of metal music and not to represent the individual belief of the musicians. With *The Number of the Beast* and the first wave of black metal of the 1980s Satanism became a core topic for underground metal music.<sup>212</sup>

Although the black metal movement had its own section to be defined, there are some interesting points that should be highlighted as most of the Satanist material of metal music originates from the mentioned genre. The name is derived from a colour: as all perception is subjective and indescribable only one phenomenon can be sure, the lack of colours or black (it also could be said that black is not a real colour, it is only real in the absence of light and colours). This way black metal is the embodiment of epistemological nihilism, denying the world called reality of truth. It works against the transcendent (religion, God, Church, etc.) as that threatens the discovered limits of subjectivity.<sup>213</sup> With this characteristic black metal is the manifested resistance against the cultural majority. Human and inhuman (e.g. Nature) is not divided strictly, moreover are connected to each other giving a slight taste of disgust against humanity as well.<sup>214</sup> Thus the elitism experienced in connection with Satanism is once again present, compounded with its clear and declared personal attribute.<sup>215</sup> The question is not what considered black metal by the masses, but what do "I" think it is. This rebellion is

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<sup>210</sup> Helen FARLEY, *ibid.* 80.

<sup>211</sup> Iron Maiden, *Number of the Beast*, EMI, 1982.

<sup>212</sup> It should be noted, that satanic topics are not that common before the dawn of extreme metal.

<sup>213</sup> Jesse MCWILLIAMS, *Dark epistemology: An assessment of philosophical trends in the black metal music of Mayhem*, *Metal Music Studies* 1 (2015), 28-31.

<sup>214</sup> Earlier we have seen the disgust against the „herd“ what is also manifested here.

<sup>215</sup> Adam Nergal DARSKI, Mark EGLINTON, Krzysztof AZAREWICZ, Piotr WELTROWSKI, *Confession of a Heretic, The Sacred and the Profane: Behemoth and Beyond*, London, Jawbone Press, 2015, 35-56. and Marilyn WATELET, *Black Metal, Belgium* (TV-Documentary, '48), 1998

the perfect scene to wage war against the known order of the world, becoming an inseparable companion of black metal. This companionship draws the path for black metal: the lyrics are against the Christian truth (and the current Western thought) and system.

### 3.1.3. Satanist Metal Music

The examination of the Satanist (black) metal scene should follow a path starting from the outside and then approaching to the inside. Without pursuing the ideal of gathering all bands together for an enumeration, let it stand hereby a list of some noteworthy Satanic band names: Behemoth<sup>216</sup> (PL), Beherit („Satan” in Syriac, FIN), Blaze of Perdition (PL), Denial of God (DK), Djevel („Devil” in Norwegian, N) Dødsengel („Angel of Death” in Norwegian, N), Gehenna (N), Hellhammer (SUI), Hellsaw (AT), Impaled Nazarene (FIN), Inquisition (COL), Rotting Christ (GR), Samael<sup>217</sup> (SUI), Satanic Warmaster (FIN).

Similar patterns can be found in the case of stage names of musicians. Typical examples are the following: Hellhammer (Mayhem, drums), Infernus (Gorgoroth, guitars), King ov Hell (ex-Gorgoroth, God Seed, bass), Hellcommander Nattefrost (Carpathian Forest, vocals), AntiChristian (Tsjuder, drums), Inferno (Behemoth, drums), Legion (ex-Marduk, vocals), Black Jesus (Beherit, bass), Armagedda (Immortal, drums), Blasphemer (Mayhem, guitars). Comparing band and stage names these external names serve as the self-definition of Satanist black metal.<sup>218</sup> Among the names there are references to demons (Legion), to Hell (Hellhammer, Hellcommander Nattefrost, King ov Hell, Infernus, Gehenna), to Satan itself (Beherit, Black Jesus, Djevel), even to the denial of Christian truths (Rotting Christ, Denial of God, Blasphemer, AntiChristian). It is obvious that the names and word usage is derived from the vocabulary of the Judeo-Christian tradition – as what kind of vocabulary should Satanism use if not the one it attempts to deny?

The next step is to examine some album titles. From 1996 three records should be mentioned: *Antichrist* of Gorgoroth, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas* of Mayhem, and *Heaven Shall Burn... When We Are Gathered* by Marduk. Gorgoroth, mentioned in the first place usually uses explicit reference to the Satanic when it comes to give names to their records, other examples are the following: *Under the Sign of Hell* (1997); *Incipit Satan* (2000);

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<sup>216</sup> The terrestrial pair of Leviathan, *Book of Job* 40, 19.

<sup>217</sup> The doubtful figure of Talmudic lore, also a positive and negative, Satanic figure.

<sup>218</sup> The chapter focuses mainly on black metal but it should not be forgotten that other genres work with Satanic imagery as well, using the same patterns as black metal (inspired by black metal).

*Twilight of the Idols – In Conspiracy with Satan* (2000).<sup>219</sup> Another great and typical example could be the one of Austria's Belphegor with a strong sexual reference: *Lucifer Incestus* (2003), or the one of Rotting Christ placing the Evil to be the object of holiness, *Sanctus Diavolos* (2004). Among the above referred Polish Behemoth's records could be great examples found like *Satanica* (1999), *The Apostasy* (2007) and *The Satanist* (2014). These records and bands listed above are part of black metal's more popular sphere, some of the real underground should be mentioned too to get a wider picture: two albums of Norway's Tsjuder, *Kill for Satan* (2002) and *Legion Helvete* (Legion Hell, 2011) are noteworthy records. Album titles follow one of a kind trend like band and stage names. Examining these expressions a curved mirror is placed in front of Christianity, turning it upside down, showing an explicitly militant behaviour to attempt destroying it. As it could be soon seen, the most inner layer, the lyrics follow a very similar pattern. Through time and space six different countries' bands are showing us how to write a Satanic text for metal music.

The first two examples represent the first wave of black metal, both coming from 1984. The first pioneer of the later hallmarked black metal sound, Sweden's Bathory released their debut album the mentioned year, producing the milestone song *In Conspiracy with Satan*.<sup>220</sup> The cited first verse presents for us the "archetypical" Satanist approach: not just turns to Satan instead of God but denies the truth that is represented by Christianity. Not just denies the truth but predicts the fall of Christianity and Christ himself. The decision that is stated (the allegiance to Hell) is in a past tense indicating that the speaker is not on the threshold of rebellion but now is a rebel against the mentioned values even undertaking the foreseen wrath and fury that must be called upon him for his disobedience.

*Don't Break the Oath* of Mercyful Fate comes from the second LP of the band, called *The Oath*.<sup>221</sup> The title itself show a serious commitment to somebody or something: it is revealed soon that Lucifer, the Bringer of Light is placed in the centre, to whom the oath is sworn by the speaker. The cited section of the song turns many Christian ideals upside down: Jesus becomes the deceiver and Lucifer the Lord. The choice of words is like a prayer, the closing "Amen" formula strengthening this impression. The earlier promised processes begin on this point, during the earlier period of black metal: showing and inverted world, where

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<sup>219</sup> For the remaining records see the chapter of Gorgoroth at Metal Archives, <http://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Gorgoroth/770> (2017. 12. 01.)

<sup>220</sup> "The lies of Christ will lose / the ways of hell I chose / I drink the floating blood / defy the fury of God // [...]" Bathory, *Bathory*, Black Mark Productions, 1984.

<sup>221</sup> „By the symbol of the creator, I swear henceforth to be / A faithful servant of his most puissant arch-angel The Prince Lucifer / Whom the creator designated as his regent / And Lord of this world. Amen // I deny Jesus Christ, the deceiver / And I abjure the Christian faith / Holding in contempt all of it's works [...]" Mercyful Fate, *Don't Break the Oath*, Roadrunner Records, 1984.

truth is represented by the phenomena earlier declared as evil and vice versa. The next item was released in 1993, during the flourishing of Norwegian black metal. From the song *To Walk the Infernal Fields* by Darkthrone (*Under a Funeral Moon*, 1993) are here some typical lines.<sup>222</sup> The receipt is very alike in the case of Mercyful Fate: loyalty sworn to the Evil, using his help to fight the Enemy. In this case the lyrics are more violent and aggressive; the speaker regards himself as a weapon, not fearing demonic possession. The most important are the first two lines “*I am your disciple / and therefore my own*” indicating, that following the teachings of Satan means following one’s own free will. On this point we can meet strongly LaVeyian concepts boosted with the militant imagery of the following lines.

Staying in Norway, from 2003 comes *It’s Darker than You Think* of Carpathian Forest.<sup>223</sup> The section written in the notes refuses all universal values mediated by Christianity. Hate and violence are the main topics, spreading the message of the Evil. The stance of the speaker is of importance: clearly the internal world is depicted here, the speaker focuses on his own thoughts, ignoring collective ideals as a servant of Satan, transmitting strong misanthropy.

The Greek Rotting Christ addresses more the audience not only declaring their own statements. The first verse of *Serve in Heaven* (2004) is cited here<sup>224</sup> to ask questions about what is more worthy? The premise is apparently that if somebody gives one’s own life to the service of Satan then in the afterlife it is going to be rewarded as a lord in Hell. The four short lines present four statements in contrast the first always referring to Christianity, the second to the free ones (regarded free by the Satanists, corrupted by Christians). The first statements are always on some kind of oppression, the second ones are liberated from the preceding (depicting the Satanist ideal).

Turning to Sweden’s Marduk, *Rom 5:12* stands in front of us from 2007, representing the problem of death and sin in the light of the Biblical reference. The peak point of the album

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<sup>222</sup> „[...] *I am your disciple / and therefore my own / Your weapon I will be / with the demons that possess me / We'll ride the seven sins of death / that takes me to katharsis // The sign of your horns / is my dearest vision / They impale all holy and weak [...]*” Darkthrone, *Under a Funeral Moon*, Peaceville Records, 1993.

<sup>223</sup> „[...] *I am the bringer of hate / Evil reigns supreme on earth / Defenders of the blackest faith / Which strengthen my inner glow / Mind expanding inner journey / From a grim and bitter soul / Misanthropic violent hellblast / It's darker than you think...[...]*” Carpathian Forest, *Defending the Throne of Evil*, Season of Mist, 2003.

<sup>224</sup> „[...] *Serve in Heaven or rule in Hell / Serve your instincts or reveal the sense / Inhale the fear or spit the distress / Blind on tear or behold the revenge [...]*” Rotting Christ, *Sanctus Diavolos*, Century Media Records, 2004.

is *Accuser/Opposer*,<sup>225</sup> here cited only in a few lines, nevertheless rich in information for our topic. Two everyday practices are presented in the lyrics: eating and drinking, the indispensable sustaining of life. If the Biblical narrative is our starting point, then the sin of Adam and Eve can come in mind as eating, and the Last Supper (the symbolical drinking of Jesus's blood) as drinking. In the text of Marduk we see that in both cases some kind of negative concept is consumed: eats from *Death* and drinks from *Hell* to cleanse himself of God. Once again we encounter the Christian symbolism and iconography turned inside out, literally depicting the "Anti-Christian" exit from Western thought.

The 2007 album of Dimmu Borgir, *In Sorte Diaboli* was introduced in Chapter 2.4.3. in connection with the sources of our materials. The album artwork was detailed and in harmony with the lyrics the search for inner awakening and a higher truth than it is presented by society is the topic of the concept. The Laveyan Satanist approach of one's escape from the *herd's* mediocre ignorance is thematized within the record, with a background story of a medieval monk who becomes aware of the real Truth that Christianity is a lie and only the Devil may give real wisdom. The album's title, *By the Choice of the Devil* also indicates this approach and is best represented by the second song, *The Chosen Legacy*.<sup>226</sup> A legacy chosen is a rebellion against the original heritage of one, the denial of roots. This denial is full of promises, a New Age to rise and sins to be turned to virtue. Typical Satanist rhetoric can be found where Christian truth becomes a Lie and Satan's devices to be the tools of not salvation but of real life. Despite the anti-religious manner traces of religious devotion could be found, as the statements of the speaker are part of a confession, but this belief or faith is towards free will and not the enslavement of free minds by Christianity. Despite the band's ambivalent evaluation this concept album holds high importance for our topic.

German Moredhel's 2010 debut (*Satanik Endsieg*, Satanik Final Victory) album serves the next song, *Victory March of the Black Phalanx* with quite short lyrics but long title.<sup>227</sup> Militant imagery is not lacking from the record. The beginning shows the trail to the later conflict: the choice of life path determines the fight against the ones choosing the other direction. Collective expressions, plural forms are used in the text declaring that the denial of

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<sup>225</sup> „[...] *Accuser, accuser, exhaustless fountain of poison divine, i ate of death to cleanse my flesh of god, to make me thy entrance to the veins of the world [...]I drank of hell, to cleanse my soul of god, to reach the light on which thou dwellest [...]*” Marduk, *Rom 5:12*, Blooddawn Productions, 2007.

<sup>226</sup> “[...] *For my sins / I will ask no forgiveness / For my sins / They are not to forgive // So never speak of me quietly / Stand by my confession / I voice your rebellion / Against the traitor of the world // I am the first creature of this Kingdom / I will be The One / To outlive His time / With the triumph of free will*” Dimmu Borgir, *ibid.* 2007.

<sup>227</sup> „*Every path a life is taken / Thousand spears shatter ground / by blood oath to satan bound / we deny the existence of the light / we hail the night*” Moredhel, *Satanik Endsieg*, Misanthropic Art Productions, 2010.

light, praising of the night and alliance with Satan are the only way to victory. The question of victory is a mystery as it is not stated what does it mean to achieve victory and what is the reward for the soldier of the Black Phalanx. As not final victory but the fight itself gives dynamics for the fellowship with Satan.

The last example was released in 2014 by Polish Behemoth. The song *Messe Noire* (French for Black Mass) is a long and complex piece in regard of lyrics, with an excerpt to illustrate.<sup>228</sup> The first three lines are a clear declaration as the speaker is a believer of Satan and the Antichrist coming from the former. The last verse works with typical clichés, with images very similar seen earlier. The topic of war is mentioned here, the victory over the prophets/soldiers/believers of Light creating Hell on Earth. Two important expressions could be found here: 1) Satan is going to be the lord of alive and dead as well 2) it is going to be a world without end. With this two features Satan can replace God, cancelling the second coming of Jesus, persisting Satan on his throne. Other visionary images are crawling in the not cited sections of the song finishing with the “*Amen*” formula once again, giving the impression that together with the typical beginning and the whole song it is the Satanist version of the Christian elementary “*Apostles Creed*” prayer.

### **3.1.3.1. Short Excursion: The Case of “Ritual Black Metal” and Occult Rock**

During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a new movement arose around the world. The nostalgic feelings towards the past evoked once again the tradition of psychedelic rock that was presented in this chapter through Coven and Black Widow. The musicality and lyrical approach of the genre is similar to the code dictated by the mentioned ‘70s bands: besides a less distorted sound and usage of flutes many bands chose to be female fronted. The genre could be called psychedelic rock, and as a great proportion of bands follow the occultism inspired lyrical tradition of the ‘70s it also could be called “occult rock”. The genre has members that are not following this path, like Blues Pills (SE) or Kadavar (DEU), for our interest the bands that should be mentioned are The Devil’s Blood (NLD), Ghost (SE), Blood Ceremony (CDN), Jess and the Ancient Ones (FIN), Jex Thoth (US), Luciferian Light Orchestra (SE) etc. The most famous ones are The Devil’s Blood that is now split and Ghost, representing two sides of the same approach once again. To present the contrast let us cite and

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<sup>228</sup> „I believe in Satan / Who rend both heavens and earth / And in the Antichrist [...] // Who shall crucify the last prophets / have them wilt on splintered stems? / Who shall churn hells across the earth / And reascend to seat himself... / At the left hand ov Satan / Be gaoler ov the living / ...And ov the dead / As it was in the beginning / Now and shall ever be / ...World without end / Amen” Behemoth, *The Satanist*, Nuclear Blast Records, 2014.

examine two excerpts of the mentioned groups' work. *Christ or Cocaine* is the sixth song of the album,<sup>229</sup> presenting the speaker to be on a road towards a satanic revelation using inverted pictures to illustrate, with a certain doubt in the propriety of her deeds. The doubt is presented in a duality of Christ and cocaine that also suggests for us that the real decision is about pursuing the interest of God or of the self (earthly delight of drug consumption). The last verse addresses the listener to think about one's own Fate, offering the occult knowledge towards the Truth that is within Hell. The clear Laveyian thought of pursuing the self's needs and interest instead of serving and being part of the herd could be traced in the citation.

The song of Ghost, *Ritual* is from the band's debut album.<sup>230</sup> The bands performing imagery is an inversion of Christian ritual/liturgical clothing presenting the singer as a black pope, the musicians as black monks. In the reflection of the excessive imagery and the rather soft, rock music they present creates an atmosphere of irony, indicating that the lyrics should be read in this manner. The cited lines also show for us, that the formulas are inspired more of irony and outrageousness and less from fundamental Church criticism. The first verse below with the line "*Recite now from the text*" placed in a ritualistic part underlines the ironical sense together with the second verse's also too excessive pictures. Nevertheless the tendency shown by Ghost may be called unique, the approach of The Devil's Blood is more common. The occult and Satanist attributes of the new psychedelic rock movement also make it possible for the genre to be part of the extreme metal community and our study. More, many musicians consider this music to be a true form inspired by the heroic age of occult music, in cases labelled as "*ritual black metal*" deriving the name from the lyrical approach.<sup>231</sup> This is the first instance in our study when a musical genre is labelled after the textual side of it, but not the last. As a summary about occult rock we can state that the genre may sound less aggressive and violent as black metal, the lyrical contents make it equal with the harsh cousins of modern extreme metal.

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<sup>229</sup> "[...] *I see a tunnel at the end of the light / And it's driving me insane / Just tell me If I'm wrong or I'm right / And if it's Christ or cocaine // [...] Do you think you're a sinner or a saint? / Do you even think you could see? / Or would you rather step into my Church / And go to Hell with me.*" The Devil's Blood, *The Time of No Time For Ever More*, VÁN Records, 2009.

<sup>230</sup> "[...] <<Our fallen angel vexed / Was banished from the sky / Recite now from the text / Pray for all to die>> // [...] *This chapel of ritual / Smells of dead human sacrifices / From the altar bed / On this night of ritual / Invoking our master / To procreate the unholy bastard // [...]*" Ghost, *Opus Eponymous*, Rise Above Records, 2010.

<sup>231</sup> Kennet GRANHOLM, *Ritual Black Metal. Popular Music as Occult Meditation and Practice*, *Correspondences* 1.1 (2013), 5-33.

### 3.1.4. The Case of Christian Metal or What are the Differences and Similarities?

In the previous sections we have seen, according to the basic stance, there is the world what is limited in the thought of metal musicians, and it is necessary to rebel against limitations. In this last section we will see the case when one rebels against rebellion. The following pages are going to show how mirror images are standing in front of each other what is a central motif in the works of Northrop Frye. According to his researches cited in chapter 2.3<sup>232</sup> it is clear that the Bible itself (the Old and the New Testament as well) is structured by oppositions, like the Church and the bride of Christ against the Harlot of Babylon, alike the angels and demons, Michael archangel and the Dragon. The oppositions enumerated together make the picture clear or serve as a counterweight for each other. In this regard Satanist metal music demands some kind of reaction from the Christian side. The reaction is called *Christian* or *white metal*.

Thus like a counter offensive or answer to the anti-Christian metal music a new movement was developed namely the Christian pole of metal. The Christian heavy and extreme metal scene was founded which is in a constant fight for its *raison d'être* – as however it is a commonplace metal music is “*the music of the Devil*”. Than how can work a metal music from Christianity? It is important to declare that besides it is a religious kind of music its success is not limited to the Christian community. Like modern crusaders fighting against the forces of Evil their goal is to call the religious and secular audiences as well.<sup>233</sup>

Regarding the worldview of Christian musicians' music can really affect young people's behaviour and belief, therefore many of them joined the metal movement, reaching its peak during the middle of the '80s and the '90s. The musical inventory of white metal show no difference of the secular/Satanist metal genre, as metal like a “form” is given (as the sub-genre were the canvas) while the “content”, or the verbal expressions (the figures painted on the canvas) give place for the Christian message.<sup>234</sup>

Band names like Holy Blood, Knights of the New Temple, Demon Hunter, Stryper, Bride, Elgibbor, Leviticus, Deuteronomium and Jerusalem are speaking for themselves. There

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<sup>232</sup> Northrop FRYE, Jay MACPHERSON, *Biblical and Classical Myths, The Mythological Framework of the Western Culture*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004, 21-30.

<sup>233</sup> As regarding Satanist metal music and white metal too it is necessary to be reminded that the articles of faith are not obligatory to be known by the listeners to be a fan of a certain band.

<sup>234</sup> Eileen LUHR, *Metal Missionaries to the Nation: Christian Heavy Metal Music, „Family Values” and Youth Culture, 1984-1994*, *American Quarterly* 57 (2005), 114-120.

are even militant Christian band names like Demon Hunter or Elgibbor (“Hero of God”), referring to principal texts (Deuteronomium, Leviticus), and in the case of Bride a unique name is presented referring to the Church as bride of Christ (the Groom). Numerous album titles also work with the militant imagery like *Hammer of God* by Mortification or *To Hell with the Devil* by Stryper. As a comparison let here stand a short chart to illustrate the similarities between black and white.

<b>Satanist titles</b>	<b>Christian titles</b>
Darkthrone – <i>Under a Funeral Moon</i>	Holy Blood – <i>Shining Sun</i>
Immortal – <i>Diabolical Fullmoon Mysticism</i>	Stryper – <i>To Hell With The Devil</i>
Behemoth – <i>The Apostasy</i>	Bride – <i>Live To Die</i>
Rotting Christ – <i>Non Serviam</i>	Deuteronomium – <i>The Amen</i>
Belphegor – <i>Lucifer Incestus</i>	Mortification – <i>The Hammer Of God</i>

Table 1.: The comparison of Satanist and Christian metal recording titles

Album titles could be structured in pairs, showing the two sides of a topic, like in the case of *Under a Funeral Moon* and *Shining Sun*, or *Non Serviam* and *The Amen* showing rebellion and obedience on the two extremes.

As white metal cannot exist without the black (this is an interesting point: without Christianity Satanism cannot exist as well) therefore the two sides should be regarded as two sides of the coin. Album titles and band names were cited it is also appropriate to oppose lyrics of the same or similar topic.

<b>Darkthrone – To Walk the Infernal Fields</b>	<b>Frost Like Ashes – A Cruel Verse<sup>235</sup></b>
<p>“[...] I am your disciple and therefore my own Your weapon I will be with the demons that possess me We'll ride the seven sins of death that takes me to catharsis [...]”</p>	<p>“[...] Open your ears, listen well When you're destroyed, you will feel Hell It will be better for Gomorrah Than for you on that Day! [...]”</p>

Table 2.: The comparison of lyrics I.

<sup>235</sup> Frost Like Ashes, *Tophet*, Psycho Acoustix, 2005.

The Darkthrone citation was examined above. The same militant approach and verbal inventory is presented in the lyrics of US's Frost Like Ashes also preparing to destroy the enemy, intensifying the destruction to the farthest (referring to Sodom and Gomorrah).

<b>Marduk – Accuser/Opposer</b>	<b>Deuteronomium: Christ Addict<sup>236</sup></b>
<p><i>“[...] I drank of hell, to cleanse my soul of god, to reach the light on which thou dwellest [...]”</i></p>	<p><i>“[...] Wash me clean Fill my heart Wash me clean From sin apart I'm Christ addict [...]"</i></p>

Table 3.: The comparison of lyrics II.

What was to sink in Hell for Marduk that is “*Christ addiction*” for Deuteronomium. Given is a negative phenomenon (drug addiction) which can be turned into the positive opposite if Christ is the object of addiction.

<b>Mercyful Fate – The Oath</b>	<b>Stryper – Soldiers Under Command<sup>237</sup></b>
<p><i>“[...] By the symbol of the creator, I swear henceforth to be A faithful servant of his most puissant arch- angel The Prince Lucifer Whom the creator designated as his regent And Lord of this world. Amen [...]"</i></p>	<p><i>“[...] We are the soldiers under God's command We hold His two-edged sword within our hands We're not ashamed to stand up for what's right We win without sin, it's not by our might And we're fighting all the sin And the good book -- it says we'll win! [...]"</i></p>

Table 4.: The comparison of lyrics III.

<sup>236</sup> Deuteronomium, *Here to Stay*, Little Rose Productions, 1999.

<sup>237</sup> Stryper, *Soldiers Under Command*, Enigma, 1985.

The two texts cited above is another great example to illustrate the similarities between the two fighting sides. The speaker of Mercyful Fate is in total devotion to the Evil, while the speaker of Stryper wages new war against the Evil and its forces, like Champions of Christ (Athleta Christi), also referring to their superior powers what leads to victory. The rhetoric is the same on both sides only changing the pole of each concept and idea. This draws a pattern for us that describes the basic mechanisms of metal lyrics. Rebellion is the main problem; it is comprehensible why it is called “*the music of rebellion*”. The only remaining question is what to rebel against? It does not matter what kind of metal text is in our view it is always a result of some kind of internal struggle. In the further chapters the topic is going to be that what new viewpoints this internal struggle can add to the reception of certain ancient myths and legends.

Turning back for a while to rebellion it also must be stated that the rebellion of Christian bands is a rebellion *against* rebellion. With their actions these bands fight for the respect of rules and regulations, creating a bleached version of the original ideal, once again questioning their own *raison d’être*. The opinion of the Church on black and white metal music does not belong to our topic as in the centre of interest are products of mass culture. Altogether reviewing the white metal texts above it does not seem that the bands work together with the Church on their art.

### **3.1.5. Partial Summary: The Place of Satanism within Mythological Metal**

Although the title of our study states that the primary interest of research are going to be metal lyrics that tend to deal with mythological traditions and texts, until this point we have only seen anti-religious and religious kind of approaches. In the first section of current chapter we have seen that the gateway to spirituality in metal music is through the New Age rebellion against institutionalized religion and especially Christianity. The lyrics that are labelled Satanist should be regarded this way: the open references to the evil forces of Christianity create the hallmark but the name does not necessarily require from a musician to be a rational or esoteric Satanist in the meaning of religiosity. As it may be clear now, and could be underlined by examples<sup>238</sup> the usage of Satanist imagery or the denial of Christianity is a tool to rebel against cultural majority.

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<sup>238</sup> Compare the case of Marduk from the study of Charlotte Naylor Davis. Charlotte Naylor DAVIS, *When Marduk Read Romans: Biblical Texts as Hermeneutic in Heavy Metal, Heavy Metal as Biblical Exegesis = Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures*, eds. Toni-Matti KARJALAINEN, Kimi KÄRKI, Helsinki, Aalto University & Turku, 2015, 474-482.

The principle of our selection is not to represent all the classics of Satanist metal music, merely to illustrate with typical examples what are the accessories of the genre. The canon of Satanist and mythological metal is a problem that was cited above, thus influential and less influential but “*true*” bands are equally listed. Many more examples could be enumerated and in a musical sense many important bands are missed, the goal was only to show a geographically and chronologically wide variety from a really great cauldron of material to represent the mechanisms. Because of the big amount of material the lyrics are only cited in fragments and are examined on this point focusing on the core inventory and method. In Chapter 4 the picture should be widened to draw the patterns and possibilities that can be found in mythological metal music. After the emergence of Satanist rock and metal music the door was opened to search for other alternative religious traditions and mythologies for inspiration for the metal community. Now we step towards the myths of the Ancient Middle East.

## **3.2. The Ancient Middle East or Myths of Euphrates, Tigris, Nile and Jordan**

### **3.2.1. Ancient Mesopotamia**

#### **3.2.1.1. General Introduction**

As all the following cultures and mythologies the Sumerian-Akkadian culture also has scholarly literature that would be able to fill libraries with. Because of this we only attempt to give a general introduction to the key concepts, as during the later sections, where we work with the lyrics, all other topics that are related are going to be discussed. The focus would close on three topics: the pantheon of Mesopotamian religion, the Babylonian creation epic (The Enûma Eliš) and the questions of demonology. The history of ancient Mesopotamia the most important attribute is fragmentation until the Old Persian (Achaemenid) conquest of the Middle East (539 BC). During the dated 3000 years of its ancient history only temporary powers could unite the area (or major parts of it) for short periods.<sup>239</sup>

The residents of Mesopotamia followed polytheistic religions, where almost all important cities had a patron god, like Inanna for Uruk, Nanna for Ur, Enki for Eridu, Marduk for Babylon or Aššur for Aššur and so on. Together the deities formed the so-called Mesopotamian pantheon, with functional responsibilities for each part of everyday and divine life (e.g. waters, fertility, birth, harvest, sowing, death). In their figures the Sumerian and Semitic elements melt together according to the great variety of ethnic groups that resided in Mesopotamia.<sup>240</sup> In the table below there is a short register of bands that decided to choose a Mesopotamian god or goddess to be the name giver of their musical efforts, what would be noted below.

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<sup>239</sup> Notable examples could be the Akkadian dynasty, the Old Babylonian empire, Neoassyrian or Neobabylonian empires. A. Leo OPPENHEIM, *Az ókori Mezopotámia*, Budapest, Gondolat 1982, 198-217.

<sup>240</sup> A. Leo OPPENHEIM, *ibid.* 1982, 219-258.

Name of band/musician	Origin/Year of Formation	Genre	Mythological reference
Absu	United States/1991	thrash/black metal	The god Absu
Astarte	Greece/1997	black metal	The goddess Astarte
Ea	United States/2005	funeral doom metal	The god Ea/Enki
Ereshkigal	Mexico/1994	black metal	The goddess Ereshkigal
Inanna	Chile/2000	death metal	The goddess Inanna
Schammasch	Switzerland/2009	black metal	The god Shammash
Marduk	Sweden/1990	black metal	The god Marduk
Nergal	Poland (member of Behemoth)/1991	blackened death metal	The god Nergal
Sarpanitum	United States/2003	death metal	The goddess Sarpanitum
Tiamat	Sweden/1989	gothic metal	The beast Tiamat

Table 5.: Mesopotamian religion inspired band names

In the table above we can see that a great variety of geographical origin is presented in the band names that are inspired by the Mesopotamian pantheon(s). Following the alphabetic sequence the first one is the black/thrash metal band coming from the US, called Absu. Absu was a deity, who is going to have a greater role in our next section, member of the primeval forces, representing the waters below that are surrounding Earth, one of the first principles participating in creation.<sup>241</sup> The band itself is one of the oldest black metal bands of the US and also provided inspiration for the development of present study, as they define their music as “*mythological occult metal*”.<sup>242</sup> The second one, Astarte is a little bit out of our interest, as the goddess Astarte is of Western-Semitic origin (Syria-Phoenicia),<sup>243</sup> with attributes of fertility, love and occasionally war.<sup>244</sup> Although not a Mesopotamian goddess, she shares many features with the goddess Ishtar, thus the group is included in our study. The melodic black metal played by the band bears the marks of its Southern European origin, with occult

<sup>241</sup> JENSEN, *apsû-Apsû = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol. 1*, eds. Erich EBELING, Bruno MEISSNER, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1928, 122-124.

<sup>242</sup> Compare with the title of the 2005 compilation CD of the band: Absu, *Mythological Occult Metal 1991-2001*, Osmose, 2005.

<sup>243</sup> Erich EBELING, *Aštar(tu) = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol. 1*, eds. Erich EBELING, Bruno MEISSNER, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1928, 304.

<sup>244</sup> Corinne BONNET, Herbert NIEHR, *Religionen in der Umwelt des Alten Testaments II. Phönizer, Punier, Aramäer*, Stuttgart, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2010, 78-82.

and mythological topics amongst the lyrics. In accordance to the violent female traits of the goddess, the membership of the 2014 split band was all female, forming a trio unique in the extreme metal scene.

The Sumerian Enki interpreted to the Akkadian Ea is also one of the oldest gods of creation, a Father figure later attached to magic and divination,<sup>245</sup> inspiring a funeral doom metal band from the United States to take its name from. The lyrical program of the band/project closes to Oriental studies, but from an aesthetical point of view, because of the chosen genre, it is quite a difficulty to evaluate the product.<sup>246</sup> The second goddess mentioned is inviting us to the Underworld of Mesopotamia. Ereshkigal, the Mistress of the Dead, daughter of the Moon god Nanna, who is responsible for all human beings to be accepted into the Underworld after their death. The dead souls then live a shade like existence in her realm, what is not like the concept of Hell for the sinners (although all know descriptions are quite negative about it), taking the shape of a city in an anthropomorphic sense.<sup>247</sup> This goddess, with an atmosphere of horror and darkness devotes her name to a Norwegian like black metal band from Mexico (again a quite unique approach within the extreme metal scene).

The Sumerian Inanna is the goddess of fertility, love and in cases war (just like Astarte)<sup>248</sup> in this instance used by an all male death metal band from Chile as inspiration, stressing the warlike attributes of the goddess.<sup>249</sup> Out next station is Northern Europe, Sweden, where the band, Marduk was formed in 1990. Marduk in mythology is the patron god of Babylon with an important role in the Babylonian creation epic, the Enûma Eliš.<sup>250</sup> Without his work neither the world nor humankind could have been born. The black metal band is one of the most extreme black bands of contemporary metal music, who may have chosen Marduk's name because Marduk is the personification of the cultural power that was able to destroy the First Temple of Israel.<sup>251</sup> His consort, Sarpanitum<sup>252</sup> is also represented, by a death metal band dealing with Mesopotamian topics in their lyrics.

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<sup>245</sup> Erich EBELING, *Enki (Ea) = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol. 2/2*, eds. Erich EBELING, Bruno MEISSNER, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1928, 376.

<sup>246</sup> Funeral doom metal is the slowest genre of extreme metal deriving its name from grim ambience of a funeral.

<sup>247</sup> Gwendolyn LEICK, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, London, Routledge, 1991, 55-57.

<sup>248</sup> Corinne BONNET, Herbert NIEHR, *ibid.* 2010, 78-82.

<sup>249</sup> U. SEIDL, *Inanna/Ištar = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol 5*, eds. Ernst WIEDER, Wolfram VON SONDERN, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1976-1980, 74-89.

<sup>250</sup> A. KAMMENHUBER, *Marduk = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol. 7*, ed. Dietz Otto EDZARD, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1987-1990, 370-372.

<sup>251</sup> Gwendolyn LEICK, *ibid.* 1991, 149-150. In this feature we should see the anti-religious approach and not an anti-semitic opinion.

<sup>252</sup> Brigitte GRONEBERG, *Die Götter des Zweistromlandes*, Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 2004, 103.

Shamash the Sun god<sup>253</sup> is the inspirator of a black metal band coming from Switzerland, writing their name in the German transliteration of the gods name (Schammasch). Nergal, the consort of Ereshkigal is the King of the Underworld, a quite composite god in nature. In his personality the personification of the Noon Sun, war and King of the Underworld is alloyed. Among his myths we can find the story how he became King in the Underworld: originally his figure did not have any connection to the realm of the dead, but his inappropriate behaviour ended accidentally in love with Ereshkigal, thus crowning him to be King.<sup>254</sup> The singer-songwriter and guitarist of Polish band Behemoth, Adam Darski chose Nergal as a stage name, later adopting as a real part of his name.<sup>255</sup> The third main persona of the *Enûma Eliš* (besides Absu and Marduk) is the cosmic beast, Tiamat. Tiamat is a Swedish band with the outstanding debut *Sumerian Cry*<sup>256</sup> later evolving from death metal to a psychedelic version of gothic metal music. The great cosmic and evil dragon, Tiamat is the consort of Absu and the enemy of Marduk, leading to a war between resulting in the dismemberment of Tiamat by Marduk for the world to be built up from her limbs and body parts.<sup>257</sup>

From the enumeration above we can clearly see that violent gods and goddesses are chosen as inspiration, either dwelling in the Underworld or one that are part of the cosmic war of creation. Different parts of the globe are inspired on the level of names, now we approach closer to the myths themselves first of all evoking the many times referred Babylonian creation epic, the *Enûma Eliš*.

### 3.2.1.2. Enûma Eliš

“When on high [...]”<sup>258</sup> begins the famous Babylonian creation epic to tell us how the world was built what we see around ourselves. On the following pages we would like to give a basic introduction to the plot, persona and main topics of the *Enûma Eliš*. This introduction is based on the English translation provided by the *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* cited above as well,

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<sup>253</sup> Gwendolyn LEICK, *ibid.* 1991, 147-148.

<sup>254</sup> F. A. WIGGERMANN, *Nergal = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol 9*. ed. Dietz Otto EDZARD, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1987-1990, 220-221.

<sup>255</sup> Compare his autobiographical interview book: Adam Nergal DARSKI, Mark EGLINTON, Krzysztof AZAREWICZ, Piotr WELTROWSKI, *Confession of a Heretic, The Sacred and the Profane: Behemoth and beyond*, London, Jawbone Press, 2014.

<sup>256</sup> Tiamat, *Sumerian Cry*, CMFT Productions, 1990.

<sup>257</sup> Compare: E. A. SPEISER (transl.), *The Creation Epic = Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. PRITCHARD, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969, 60-72.

<sup>258</sup> E. A. SPEISER *ibid.* 1969, 60.

followed by the content examination of four different lyrical pieces: *Blood of Kingu* by Polish Vader,<sup>259</sup> *Blood of Kingu* by Swedish Therion,<sup>260</sup> *Rebirth of the Nemesis* by Israeli Melechesh<sup>261</sup> and *Enûma Eliš* by Greek Rotting Christ.<sup>262</sup>

In the first act of creation two elements, sweet water and salt water, Absu and Tiamat were given. The two procreated the first generation of gods, like Anshar, Ea, Anu and Marduk amongst many other. The noise made by the young gods disturbed Absu who decided to wipe out the original creation, nevertheless on this point Tiamat tried to calm down his consort and make him not to do such a fatal deed. Upon hearing of the intentions of Absu the leader of the young gods, Ea decided to act first: as soon as he had the possibility killed Absu and dragged his body down below the ground to use him as residence in the Underworld (this is the place where the hero Marduk was born as well). Tiamat, upon the outrage is furious like never before and creates a host of monsters making his own son Kingu to be the leader of the army. The “*Tablets of Destiny*” that were created before are hung in the neck of Kingu to represent that Tiamat is the only Mistress with power in the world. The army of monsters is challenged by the younger gods but are afraid to sacrifice their own lives: a call for a hero to stand up.

Marduk undertook the responsibility to fight the monsters and Tiamat. His sight sees through everything, knows the thoughts of his enemies, creating a sudden confusion among the ranks of Kingu. In the end Marduk destroys them all, and dismembers Tiamat to build the world from his body parts. According to the new order the world consist of the grounds we see, the Absu, the Underworld and the Upper World, where the gods reside. After setting up the dwellings for the gods he creates the animals, stars, the Sun and the Moon. In the last part of the process he creates humanity from the blood of now dead Kingu, who (humans) receive the task to worship the gods.<sup>263</sup>

Mythological topics is not a speciality for Polish death metal band Vader, but their 1995 record, *De Profundis* is the first example to touch the issue of the *Enûma Eliš*, with the third track entitled Blood of Kingu. The title of the song is a clear reference to the last mentioned episode of the myth: the creation of humanity from the blood of Kingu. The first chorus and second verse are cited below<sup>264</sup> that show us a quite frightening picture of

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<sup>259</sup> Vader, *De Profundis*, Croon Records, 1995.

<sup>260</sup> Therion, *Sirius B*, Nuclear Blast Records, 2004.

<sup>261</sup> Melechesh, *Emissaries*, Osmose Productions, 2006.

<sup>262</sup> Rotting Christ, *Theogonia*, Seasons of Mist Records, 2007.

<sup>263</sup> E. A. SPEISER *ibid.* 1969, 60-72.

<sup>264</sup> „[...] *We - from the blood of the dead / We're burning with fury and hate / Bloody vengeance still growing in us / Waiting for mighty lords who'll rise again // Secular war / Among the giants of universe / And race of man created in hate / Lead your thoughts beyond the time / And wake up the ancestry of your entity [...]*” Vader, *ibid.* 1995.

humanity's spiritual alignment based upon fury and hate. Both the chorus and the verse refers to the origin of humanity that was proposed by the title in advance, although the name of Kingu is not mentioned within the body of the song. A bloodthirsty, vengeful passion is presented in the song against the ones who killed the Father of humanity – in this regard the evil Kingu. The choice of words (*secular war* referring to a religious text) indicates for us that the opposition that is present within the myth (Marduk vs. Tiamat and her army respectively) is changed to the opposition of religion and anti-religion, clearly supporting the later. The song on a whole hastens an inner awakening of humanity to search for the origin and remember the deed that was inflicted before our creation.

The second example, with the same title but from 2004 is a symphonic metal piece produced by one of the most monumental musical groups of the 21<sup>st</sup> century extreme metal scene: Therion. The grandiose song supported by orchestra, solo singing and chorus uses a quite familiar approach as Vader. The core question of the song is<sup>265</sup> if ever a human being searched for its own roots and origin? We also receive the answer: in our veins the blood of the demon,<sup>266</sup> Kingu is to be found. The inventory of the myth (the Tablets of Fate, the beast army of Kingu, the war of the gods) are listed placing the mentioned struggle from the outside world into the depths of the human spirit. The inner awakening pursued by Vader can be found here as well but not to support a violent approach towards the outside world, but to understand the dual nature of humanity, where a demonic power and a godly creation is presented and may struggle. The macrocosmic war of Marduk and Kingu thus is translated into a war in the microcosm. Also the picture of the myth are actualized in a metaphorical frame supporting the pursue for one to take the responsibility of their own lives. In the second part of the song the inner war is placed once again into the outside with a menacing closing picture on the return of the ancient demon, suggesting that the spiritual warfare is not ended after a person is capable of recognizing their own place in the world.

One of the first ever black metal bands of Israel, Melechesh has the greatest reputation. The oriental black/thrash metal played by the band makes its music a curiosity

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<sup>265</sup> "Collect the blood of Kingu from the great old sea / And arrogate the primeval waters / Inside your veins the power of the demon flow / Have you ever searched for your descent? // Gaze into your soul, we are the children of the ancient ones / On the thin facade we are the kindred of the benign gods // Take up and read the table of your destiny / They hang around the neck of Kingu / Prepare the war between gods deep inside your soul / You are th one to fight in this war! [...]" Therion, *ibid.* 2004.

<sup>266</sup> Calling Kingu a demon from an academic prespective might seem like a mistake, but from a rhetorical-poetic point of view it also stresses the raging nature of the human soul. Compare: K. RADNER, *Qingu = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol 10*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2007, 178-179.

within the metal scene as well. Their vision inspired by the *Enûma Eliš*<sup>267</sup> follows the dualistic directions offered above. This negative rethinking of the myth, which aims the release of demonic powers, gives us the impression of a prophecy what leads to the complete rewriting of the creation epic. The consequences are not listed nor the possibilities to avoid those. The first verse prepares to this prophecy speaking of the Salt Water People and the Typhoon of Uruk, both referring to the dragon like Tiamat.<sup>268</sup> The second verse brings us closer to her, introducing her host and army to the listener, followed by the prophecy itself as Tiamat is to return with another Greek reference to Nemesis depicting the vengeful goddess.<sup>269</sup> The fourth verse contains both the destructive and creative attributes of the heroine. As a chant like refrain the rewriting of the *Enûma Eliš* is present throughout the song, also cancelling the concept that the destiny of the world is written on the Tablets of Fate. Just before the closure Tiamat is labelled as the queen of the universe, bringing back the old polytheism of Mesopotamia (obviously declining the Christian monotheism). The song contains elements of nostalgia towards the past and an awaiting of the future as well. The main topic of the lyrics is the figure of Tiamat (as was Kingu for the two songs above), never “citing” the original myth but describing her role for a listener who is familiar with the epic. The song may seem to be not consequent regarding the categorization of Tiamat: she is both labelled as demon and goddess fusing together the furious nature of the former and power of the later.

The last piece relevant for present section is the simply entitled *Enuma Elish* song of Greek Rotting Christ. Taking a closer look on the excerpt<sup>270</sup> we can see that the whole creation epic is cited in a compressed way. The first lines (not cited) give a list about the main elements and gods of the earliest times, following the lineage of the Babylonian tradition starting with Absu and Tiamat. Unlike the above examined songs this one focuses on the creation after the cosmic warfare between Kingu and Marduk, dissolving Chaos and giving place to the lights on the sky (Sun and Moon), the animals, and everything that makes the

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<sup>267</sup> As the song has a quite long composition no excerpt is to be cited here. The whole lyrics can be found under the following link: <https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Melechesh/Emissaries/131481> Melechesh, *ibid.* 2006. (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>268</sup> Compare: B. ALSTER, *Tiamat = Dictionary of Deities and Daemons*, ed. Karel VAN DER TOORN, Leiden, Brill, 1999, 867-869.

<sup>269</sup> Michael JORDAN, *Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses*, New York, Facts on File Inc. 2004, 217.

<sup>270</sup> “[...] *And the earth has been done and the life has just begun / and the formless void and darkness outdone / And the water has been done and the sky raised up / separating the water the genesis goes on / And the greater light has been done and the lesser light spun / to rule the day and night together with the stars / And the living creatures has been done / and the sea monsters have born / and everything that moves with which the waters swarm / She made the Worm the Dragon / The Female Monster the Great Lion / The Mad Dog the Man Scorpion / The Howling Storm [...]*” Rotting Christ, *ibid.* 2007.

world alive placing it in the middle of the song. The second part of the excerpt focuses on the demonic army of Tiamat, not giving the full catalogue of the myth but stressing the fiercest ones. Once again we witness the duality of creation and existence as not only the ordered elements of the world are collected but the enemies of the order, the army of Chaos is listed as well to give the full picture. The text of Rotting Christ could be categorized as a quasi mythographical piece, as the attempt of actualization that was witnessed above cannot be found nor the nostalgic feelings suggested by Melechesh. The four songs above show us in the first place that a certain myth has many readings in regard of the metal musicians who are inspired by it. This is not the place for us now to gather the consequences of the different approaches but of chapter 4, thus now we move towards the next topic in the section focusing on Mesopotamia: the tradition in demonology.

### 3.2.1.3. Mesopotamian Demonology

The question of demonology is a prominent topic in almost all known culture's mythology and religious thought. Most of the time demons are considered as evil entities, at least in the European and Middle Eastern religions. The word used in English language, "*demon*" comes from the ancient Greek word "*daimon*", what originally did not have the negative connotation as today it has. The Greek "*daimon*" is a spiritual entity that can be also the personal "*guardian angel*" of one's self. Later in early Christian times, the demons became the enemies of Christ and the Christians, as the servants of Satan. In this regard demonology during the Middle Ages became the study and classification of demons, describing the court of Satan and their roles in their war against God.<sup>271</sup>

The roots of Mesopotamian demonology come from the religious thought of the Sumerians, and the later Akkadian layers brought many from their predecessors.<sup>272</sup> Originally both good and evil spiritual entities were regarded as demons. There is no specific word for "*demon*", these beings are attached to the world of gods but they present obviously a lower level of divine existence. The good ones can be described as the personal gods of one (like shedu and lamassu, as "*guardian angels*"); the evil ones – of course – have a more wide terminology and characteristics, forming a diverse group of devils and ghouls. The evil demons, like ghosts of the restless dead (etimmu), the personal army of a god (like the Seven

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<sup>271</sup> Walter STEPHENS, *Demons: An Overview* = *The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, eds. Lindsey JONES, New York, MacMillan Reference USA, 2005, 2275-2281.

<sup>272</sup> Jeremy BLACK, Anthony GREEN, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia – An Illustrated Dictionary*, London, The British Museum Press, 1998, 63.

Ills of Nergal, the Messengers of Anu), or lurkers of desolated, uncivilized places (utukku or gallu) are always a threat for humankind.<sup>273</sup> They can be the instrument of a god to punish sins or causes of sickness both mental and physical.<sup>274</sup> As the demons are also divine entities, also have cultic needs (like sacrifice and rites), but because of their lesser state compared to gods, they do not have any kind of cult so the demons have to fulfill their needs by taking it by force from humanity.<sup>275</sup> In this regard they mean a constant threat to the people of Mesopotamia what brings in various techniques to avoid them, including Apothropaic figurines and magic. Magic, having both white and black types in Mesopotamia, is also an important topic understanding the world of demons. It seems from apothropaic rite tablets and magical healing texts that demons could be used also by black magicians and witches to be ordered to attack and make one sick.<sup>276</sup>

The first example to be under our focus is the song *Sumerian Daemon* by Greek Septicflesh.<sup>277</sup> We only cite the first and the last verse, at is has the most numerous references to Mesopotamia.<sup>278</sup> In its terminology the first verse refers to Sumerian the last one to Akkadian, namely Babylonian term in connection with myths and gods. In the former we see a clear geographical placing of the forthcoming lines also referring to the hallmark building of Mesopotamia, the ziqqurat and the also famous depiction of lions and serpents in Babylon. The setting offers a kind of waiting for a prophecy to be fulfilled. The two middle verses draw up a science fiction style scenery giving an impression that pseudoscientific paleoastronautic<sup>279</sup> studies also have an impact in the means of inspiration. The last verse switches terminology to Akkadian brining back the now familiar gods Tiamat and Marduk into the picture. The two gods now represented by their main warlike attributes, uniting the two within the speaker, who seems to become a daemon. In this regard the daemon is attached to gods (as the army of Tiamat and the *Seven Ills of Nergal* are demons of not their own, but

<sup>273</sup> F. A. WIGGERMANN, *ibid.* 1987-1990, 215-223, especially 219-221.

<sup>274</sup> Erich EBELING, *Dämonen = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol. 2/1*, eds. Erich EBELING, Bruno MEISSNER, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1928, 107-113.

<sup>275</sup> Not to mention some special ones like the Lamaštu and Pazuzu pair, both having an evil side, while Pazuzu also has a protective aspect. Nils P. HEEBEL, *Evil Against Evil. The Demon Pazuzu*, SMSR 77 (2011/2), 357-368.

<sup>276</sup> For a more detailed introduction to magic and witchcraft see: Walter FARBER, *Witchcraft, Magid and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia = Civilizations of the Ancient Near East Vol 3*, ed. Jack M. SASSON, New York, MacMillan Library Reference, 1995, 1895-1909.

<sup>277</sup> Septic Flesh, *Sumerian Daemons*, Hammerheart Recods, 2003.

<sup>278</sup> "On the land between the rivers / where lions fly and serpents rule / I cross the road to the ziggurat / as darkness hides the moon / I came to seek the advice of Inanna / The goddess of love and war but the path is unclear / like the words of a Seer from the movement of the dunes [...] // [...] My veins are black from the blood of Tiamat / My eyes are wide like the wheels of space and time / My will is strong like a blow from Marduk's sword / I am no human now because I choose to know" Septic Flesh, *ibid.* 2003.

<sup>279</sup> The pseudoscience that states that the artefacts of ancient civilizations have obvious traces of extra terrestrial life, like the gods and goddesses of Egypt and Mesopotamia really are aliens from outer space.

part of the court of a deity) or at least borrows his powers from them. In the end the real purpose of this process is revealed: the inhuman power and a kind of mixture with the divine is the way for one to receive higher knowledge (the well known motive of New Age cults) transforming the person into something else, clearly with a positive and definitely not negative connotation of the demon.

In *Deluge of Delusional Dreams*<sup>280</sup> by Melechesh, the spheres of the skies are waging war against each other in an infernal vision. The text of the song is divided into two separate parts, also detached in the musical structure of the music. *Act I – Cast tempest from the East* introduces us once again in a wartime situation. The demon army of Anu, the Seven messengers or Seven Ills are attached to the god Adad. Adad is situated like the aggressor against the divine world of Gods, stressing his furious personality, what is often presented by the tempests. His army is described, enlisted are the members of the army of Anu. As Adad is the one who attacks against the Gods, armed by a group of fierce demons, he is introduced to us like the Chief Rebel God (Angel) whose only goal is to destroy the cities of humanity and fight against the rulers of the world. In the battle itself we cannot see Adad among the fighters, more like his companions, the “*Seven Winds*” (as they are called in the song) duel against the god Sin, who seems to be the true champion of the stellar sphere. Among the many aspects of the god Sin, in connection with this imaginary war against Adad, the Moon God is the champion of the gods, regarding his functions in divinity and divine judgment during night time. On the zenith of the first act, the seven demons are charging, and the counter attack is prepared by the defenders. In *Act II – Enlil’s Retaliation* the three sons of Enlil, the triad of Sin, Nergal and Ninazu (both two later sharing war god aspects) repel the enemy attack, only leaving the promise of their return. The demons of Anu are tools in a war between gods in the sky. Their role is clear and loyal to the lore of ancient Mesopotamia: messengers and soldiers are they, connected to one god. The scenery is more like a new invention, bringing together different kinds of God, who have some kind of connection to war or the truth, enlarging the corpus of mythical battles of the Middle East, with the metaphors of a great storm running over humanity, what could be only repelled by the finest of the divine realms.

*Pazuzu*<sup>281</sup> by yet cited Polish Behemoth is an energy filled monument for the two most famous demons of Mesopotamia, Pazuzu and Lamaštu. Although only Pazuzu is mentioned in

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<sup>280</sup> The lyrics are to be found once again online: <https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Melechesh/Emissaries/131481> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.) Melechesh, *ibid.* 2006.

<sup>281</sup> Behemoth, *The Apostasy*, Regain Records, 2007.

the title, his enemy is only mentioned in the text itself. The speciality of the song is that not only Mesopotamian but Egyptian elements are also present within, but as for our case now only the Mesopotamian ones are interesting we focus only those. The demon Pazuzu, has a dual nature (as many familiar creatures): on one hand he is the lord of winds, with the power to unleash pestilence and decay to the land, on the other hand the protector of women in labour, and as this one the enemy of the jealous demon Lamaštu.<sup>282</sup> Their struggle is real in every case a child is born. This feature is less present in the text, but the physiology of the enemy is mentioned (“[...] *Slay the Reptile! [...]*”)<sup>283</sup> as her snake like form is the most important, as well as her ancestry from the god Anu ([...] *Daughter of Anu, slain [...]*”).<sup>284</sup> The Satanist-occultist approach represented by Behemoth connected with the above mentioned, the first line of the fifth verse also gets a new meaning (“[...] *Unveil the primal chaos within Thyself [...]*”).<sup>285</sup> It is not clear who is the addressee of this command, either the Lamaštu or the listener is it, it creates a new tension within the song. These tensions are intensified until the last verse where the storm like features of Pazuzu is mentioned. The realistic and picturesque composition about the howling desert storm enhances the mystical mythological traces of the text. The Egyptian and Mesopotamian mixture and opposition within also has a distant message: the periodical disagreement and wars between the two geographical bodies is mapped in the text giving a historical and mythological framework for a spiritual war once again.

The last song to be mentioned is *The Ghouls of Nineveh*, from the album *The Epigenesis* by Melechesh once again.<sup>286</sup> As we experienced earlier, the Middle East is not only represented in the lyrics of Melechesh by the world of Ancient Mesopotamia, but also by the evil natured entities of Islam. Once again, the ghouls, *devils*<sup>287</sup> are associated in the examined song, in this case also introducing a new kind of theology. The *Lord of Haunts*, appearing as the new God for the persons, for who drink an esoteric drink (maybe the drink of truth) comes with ghouls from Nineveh. Nineveh once again can be associated with the Neo-Assyrian empire, but as we find a Lord in the text connected to the city, the real god is not

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<sup>282</sup> F. A. WIGGERMANN, *Pazuzu = Reallexikon der Assyriologie Vol 10*. ed. Dietz Otto EDZARD, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 372-381.

<sup>283</sup> Behemoth, *ibid.* 2007.

<sup>284</sup> Behemoth, *ibid.* 2007.

<sup>285</sup> Behemoth, *ibid.* 2007.

<sup>286</sup> "Giants of Nineveh, seeds of the truth / Set the insects to their kingdoms / Vanquishers, seekers of (the) unreal / Sons of spirits' ideas [...] Triangles of fire / Triangles of fire / Devinate the clandestined djinns / As we consume the esoteric drink // Axioms of the super norm / Submit to the Lord of haunts / Sky watchers, triangles of fire and Udug Khul" Melechesh. *The Epigenesis*. Nuclear Blast, 2010.

<sup>287</sup> Compare: Walter STEPHENS, *ibid.* 2005, 2275-2281.

Ishtar in this case. The terms, ghouls, udug-khul and the Lord of Haunts drive our gaze in this case again towards the god of the Underworld, Nergal. As Nergal is often associated with fire his realm with the desert, pulling together all the references of the song, we can find a call for the believers to turn to Nergal, who is the supreme ruler of the universe. His demons represent now the angels of this theology, what is not directed to the world beneath ours, but to somewhere above. Sky watching persons appear in the lyrics, what suggests, that the Nergal of this song is not the king beneath, but the divine son of the skies, showing one other aspect of the god.<sup>288</sup>

### 3.2.2. Ancient Egypt

#### 3.2.2.1. General Introduction

The world of Egypt<sup>289</sup> both for today's and for the ancient days' men embodied mysticism, mystery and magic. The gift of the Nile with its special culture has many differences compared to the yet known Sumerian-Akkadian civilization and to be introduced Old Testament thought. The economical situation of the country is still determined by the river, which implied a mode of life that made it possible for an ancient high civilization to emerge. On the level of history, fragmentation and decentralization are also specific for ancient Egypt. During the longest periods of unification the rule of a single person was present, in the hands of the pharaoh, who was celebrated and was worshiped as the son of the Sun(god).<sup>290</sup> Prosperous and declining periods, local warlords and the strengthening power of priest also give a unique colour for the history of Egypt. Besides the worship of pharaohs we can state that also a classic polytheistic pantheon is present in land of the Nile, with their key and quite special attribute of being anthropomorphic figures with heads of different animals, creating a kind of zoomorphic-human hybrid iconography.

For our cause it is unfortunate that the world of gods seems quite static, as only a few myths remained for our time, thus mythological more or less could be restored from hymns and reliefs, but still motionless. Their functions and attributes although could be clearly restored from the sacred art tradition of temple complexes and the mentioned written

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<sup>288</sup> Jeremy BLACK, Anthony GREEN, *ibid.* 1998, 136.

<sup>289</sup> In this section we refer to the preellenic era of Egypt, the classical culture of the country (ca. 3100-332 BC).

<sup>290</sup> KÁKOSY László, *Az ókori Egyiptom története és kultúrája*, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2002, 229-241.

sources.<sup>291</sup> Besides the regionally significant gods the divine lineage of the pharaoh is important together with the constant development on the beliefs about the Underworld. The latter is only mentioned now as a glance, as soon we are going to get a deeper insight of it through the lyrics to be examined. The first station in the case of Egypt is the same as Mesopotamia: the members of the pantheon and their impact on band names, then comes the Underworld and in the last section considers the aspects of the Amarna reform. The table below lists for us once again some example bands inspired by Egyptian mythology and culture.

<b>Name of band/musician</b>	<b>Origin/ Year of Formation</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Mythological reference</b>
Amarna Sky	Brazil/2006	doom metal	The city of Tell-el-Amarna
Anubis	Germany/1995	gothic metal	The god Anubis
Apophis	Germany/1990	death metal	The serpent Apophis
Coffin Texts	USA/1994	death metal	The corpus of the Coffin Texts
Hathor	Spain/1985	heavy/thrash metal	The goddess Hathor
Horus	Germany/1983	heavy metal	The god Horus
Isis	USA/1997	post metal	The goddess Isis
Nile	USA/1993	death metal	The river Nile
Seth	Greece (Singer of Septicflesh)/1991	death metal	The god Seth

Table 6.: Egyptian religion inspired band names

From the table above we can see that there may be noticed a different approach towards the choosing of band names than in the case of Mesopotamia. The band names listed in the Mesopotamian section are all derived from the members of the pantheon, in the case of Egypt we can find references to deities, geographical names a literary corpus as well. In the alphabetic order, the first is a unique example in this regard. Amarna Sky originates from Brazil, a rather special place for a band to consider Egyptian imagery. The doom metal they play is mixed with industrial influences, even reaching the success of having Karl Sanders

<sup>291</sup> KÁKOSY László, *ibid.* 2002, 288-309.

from legendary Nile to play for their debut album *Rising Heresy*.<sup>292</sup> As their reference to the religious reform of Akhenaten is to be analyzed later now we settle for only to mention the band. The jackal headed god Anubis is responsible for protecting the gates of the Underworld. Not just protects the gates but participates in the decision to choose if a soul is appropriate for entering or not.<sup>293</sup> Besides these he is also responsible to be present or actively participate in the rites of the dead and funeral.<sup>294</sup> And of course not to forget that Anubis is an inspiration for a gothic metal band from Germany.

Apophis (or Apep) is the fiercest enemy of the Egyptian order of the World, a serpent that attempts every night to chase and swallow the Sun. His figure is a composite one, the origin is not clear, one thing is sure: serpents usually are positive actors in Egyptian mythology, although as every phenomena has its negative counterpart maybe Apophis represents these features.<sup>295</sup> The band that has chosen Apophis as a patron is once again German, playing death metal with an interest in Egyptian religion. The first group from the US to deal with is The Coffin Texts, with a death metal music interested in our topic just as the previous one. The Coffin Texts derives its name from a corpus of ritual texts called as the band itself. These scriptures are a collection of funerary spells that were written on coffins, canopic chests, mummy masks etc. mostly during the period of the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2050-1800 BC).

In Spain, 1985, a heavy/thrash metal band decided to use the name of the goddess Hathor for their musical endeavours. Hathor is one of the many-sided deities of Egyptian mythology. She is the Golden Mistress, who aids women in labour, such as one also assists the universe in its rebirth and has responsibilities towards the dead. She is connected to the sky and stars as well, identified with Venus.<sup>296</sup> Her family relations are also composite; we can observe her as the mother of the creator Sun god, or consort or daughter of the mentioned one.<sup>297</sup> The band cited does not work with Egyptian themes in their music, the mystical milieu of Hathor maybe enough for inspiration as a musical group's name. Horus, the most famous

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<sup>292</sup> Amarna Sky, *Rising Heresy*, Anubis Music, 2006.

<sup>293</sup> Brigitte ALTENMÜLLER, *Anubis = Lexikon der Ägyptologie Vol 1*, ed. Erika FEUCHT, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1975, kol. 327-330.

<sup>294</sup> Ian SHAW & Paul NICHOLSON, *The British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 2002, 34-35.

<sup>295</sup> Erik HORNUNG, Alexander BADAWY, *Apophis = Lexikon der Ägyptologie Vol 1*, ed. Erika FEUCHT, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1975, kol. 350. and Geraldine PINCH, *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*, Santa Barbara, ABC-CLIO Inc, 2002, 106-107.

<sup>296</sup> Geraldine PINCH *ibid.* 2002, 137-139.

<sup>297</sup> Pat REMLER, *Egyptian Mythology A-Z*, New York, Facts on File, 2006, 83-86.

of the Egyptian pantheon, the falcon headed Sun god, the embodiment of kingship,<sup>298</sup> the member of the Heliopolis Ennead and hero of the myths of Osiris<sup>299</sup> inspired the same way as Hathor a band in Germany to play heavy metal.

We can meet another mother goddess in the list besides Hathor: Isis, the goddess, who later became as the central figure of a mystery cult, the loyal consort of Osiris<sup>300</sup> found “followers” in the US manifested as musicians. Although the altruistic mother and devoted wife is important in Egypt, she achieved her fame during the Roman period with the development of her mystery cult and its spreading all around the empire.<sup>301</sup> The band Isis could achieve long term success as well with a post metal/post hardcore mixture of music, with a split in the end of 2010.

The second geographically determined band is the technical death metal legend Nile from the US. One of the emblematic and most “*Egyptologist*” band should we consider with the legacy of Nile, whose singer/guitarist/songwriter, the yet cited Karl Sanders from the birth of the band until today only deals with Egyptian and Middle Eastern topics. The band that is 24 years old this year, on their 8 LPs worked with Assyrian, Hittite, Arabian and Egyptian topics besides some interest in the mythical world of Howard Philips Lovecraft. In its musicality Nile only use a handful of elements from the Middle East, thus Karl Sanders presents in his solo project that the folk music of the mentioned area is also close to his artistic territory. The last example to mention on this palette is the bassist/singer of yet introduced Greek band, Septicflesh. Born Spiros Antoniou, working with the pseudonym Seth Siro Anton chosen the god of destruction and the desert.<sup>302</sup>

The enumeration above clearly show for us, that the Egyptian religious milieu not just with its pantheon is interesting for metal musicians but the connected phenomena of geography and ritual corpuses are also bear the mysticism of the land of the Nile to be a force of inspiration. Our journey from the world above continues to the world below.

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<sup>298</sup> R. I. RUBINSTEJN, *Hórusz = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 451-452.

<sup>299</sup> John G. GRIFFITHS, *Osiris = Lexikon der Ägyptologie Vol 4*, ed. Rosemarie DRENKHAHN, Otto Harrassowitz, 1982, kol. 626-627, and Herman TE VELDE, *Horus und Seth = Lexikon der Ägyptologie Vol 3*, ed. Rosemarie DRENKHAHN, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1980, kol. 25-27.

<sup>300</sup> Her figure is quite composite as well, for further information see: R. I. RUBINSTEJN, *Ízisz = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 453-454.

<sup>301</sup> Geraldine PINCH *ibid.* 2002, 149-151.

<sup>302</sup> For more information see: Herman TE VELDE, *Seth = Lexikon der Ägyptologie Vol 5*, ed. Christine MEYER, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1984, kol. 908-911.

### 3.2.2.2. Impressions of the Underworld

The descriptions of the Underworld during the almost three millennia of ancient Egypt show us a really diverse picture. We cannot state that there is a constant image of the Underworld and afterlife, although many features are connected to each other creating an interesting puzzle. This puzzle is not to be discussed here in a general introduction; our aim now is to collect metal lyrics that touch the segments of this image and in a retrospective manner we are going to restore what we can learn about the Egyptian Underworld this way.

The German underground band Apophis gives us the first example to take a glance into the Underworld. The debut album *Gateway to the Underworld* contains the song *Apophis – Hostile Forms* that introduces us not a topic of the fate of the dead, but the journey of the Sun Ark during the night in the realm below. The second verse is a compressed summary of the situation: the Sun Ark enters the Underworld in the night and the guardians of it (Ra or Seth) are fighting the evil Apep who attempts to destroy it.<sup>303</sup> In this regard we can say that as the Apep snake is a manifestation of all that is evil, the complete opposite of the Sun god Ra. The pursue that is presented by Apophis during the Underworld journey of the Sun Ark is also a key feature in maintaining the order of the universe,<sup>304</sup> what is well represented in the lyrics of Apophis too. The song ends with the invocation of the enemy declaring that his powers are worthless against the Sun Ark (*“You can't prevent the rise and fall of the sun.”*)<sup>305</sup> thus praising the merits of the Sun god(s).<sup>306</sup>

The first piece from above mentioned *“Egyptologist” Nile* is considering the funerary rite known as *“Opening of the Mouth”* with the same title.<sup>307</sup> The funerary ritual cited is the most important of all ceremonies connected to the burial of a mummy preparing the body of the dead for the life in the Netherworld. The ceremony contains many mythological references connected to the myth of Osiris and focused on the heroic deeds of Horus in a pursue to revive the dismembered body of his father and take revenge on Seth, the main deceiver of the story. The peak point of the rite is after the ceremonial offerings the symbolic opening of the mouth and eyes of the mummy to be able to see and speak in the afterlife, with

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<sup>303</sup> “[...] *He resists the barque of sunlight / to prevent the sun god from his daily ramble. / A warrior combats him; / the blood of the snake dyes the heaven blood red. [...]*” Apophis, *Gateway to the Underworld*, Independent, 1993.

<sup>304</sup> Jan ASSMANN, *Sonnengott = Lexikon Lexikon der Ägyptologie Vol 5*, ed. Christine MEYER, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrasowitz, 1984, kol. 1087-1090.

<sup>305</sup> Apophis, *Gateway to the Underworld*, Independent, 1993.

<sup>306</sup> During the day Ra travels ont he Sun Ark, during the night Atum with the assistance of Seth. Jan ASSMANN, *ibid.* 1984. kol. 1087-1090.

<sup>307</sup> Nile, *Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka*, Relapse Records, 1998.

the so called adze like iron tool that may be associated with Seth as well.<sup>308</sup> The song follows this mentioned last section from after the offerings. The first verse and another excerpt are cited below.<sup>309</sup> We are focusing only on these short portions of the text as the other parts of it are brighten the picture that is drawn in the referred parts. The first verse follows the content of the incantations of the opening mentioning the adze, while the second citation gives the command to the dead to revive in the afterlife. The song as a whole pretends to be the musical manifestation of the ancient rite itself. If we remember that the genre where Nile works is the (technical) death metal scene then it also can be said, that if a genre is named after its musical connotations, thus Nile achieves the goal: the deadly music of the band is poured with lyrics dealing with the realm of the dead. The manner how Rotting Christ worked with the *Enûma Eliš* is echoed back in this song as well: it does not actualize or rewrite the original sujet but revives it with an interest in the ancient world for the listeners of our age.

The third song is from Nile again, entitled *The Burning Pits of the Duat*.<sup>310</sup> This song introduces us with another concept of the Underworld, namely the Duat, what in certain versions is the place where the Sun Ark journeys during night time struggling with the Apophis serpent. The main source for the geography and description of the Duat is to be found in the corpus of the *Am-Duat* that serves as an inspiration for the song of Nile. The key features are introduced through the lyrics.<sup>311</sup> The song that contains five verses is spoken by a tormented soul residing in the Duat. We know of him that he is hung upside down and is forced to consume feces and is chained close to inextinguishable flames together with masses of the slaughtered. This infernal scenery is paused for a minute by listing the tormented one's deeds of the past that maybe the cause for his sentence to be burned in the Duat. A short citation is brought about the dismemberment of the soul and its shadows (that is also a key component of existence) leading back to the confession of the introduced soul that yet wishes perishing instead of its current state stressing it with different variations of the same need. This pursue may seem like not to be understood easily at first glance, but if we compare the picture cited above it may be clear that the "ka" soul's anguish is on a large scale that it may not be endurable on a long term. Eternal perishing would bring only relief with the blazing flames coming back in the last lines.

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<sup>308</sup> Pat REMLER, *ibid.* 2006, 157-158.

<sup>309</sup> "I split open your Eyes for you / I open your mouth for you / With the Adze of Iron / Which split open the mouths of the Gods / The Iron which issueth from Set [...] Gather your limbs Together / Throw off the Earth from your Flesh [...]" Nile, *ibid.* 1998.

<sup>310</sup> Nile, *Annihilation of the Wicked*, Relapse Records, 2005.

<sup>311</sup> Erik HORNING, *Amduat = Lexikon der Ägyptologie Vol 1*, ed. Erika FEUCHT, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1975, kol. 184-188.

The song is inspired by the XI<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Am-Duat*: the torments and punishments mentioned in the lyrics could be found in the mentioned section of the corpus.<sup>312</sup> These are not the sentence for the sins and deeds of an everyday person, it is not a hell to be avoided by the living but the place to collect the enemies of Osiris and the pharaoh after falling on the battlefield. We can see a list of torments stressing dismemberment and burning by fire, presenting that the death in battle is not the real fate of the enemy but eternal abuse. The sentenced one speaking in the song with its musical accessories gives us a fine illustration from the other side: not from the judges who sent him there but from the sentenced almost serving as the modern counter-vision of the *Am-Duat*.

With the last one we return for a short section to the figure of the god Anubis. The yet cited Greek Septicflesh's song of the god's name<sup>313</sup> touches some other concepts that were referred to above. The guardian of the mummified dead and necropolises<sup>314</sup> is present at the "*Hall of the Two Truths*" during the ceremony of the weighing of the heart. He does the ritual together with the crocodile headed goddess with the body of a hippopotamus called Ammut.<sup>315</sup> The ritual consists of placing the heart of the dead person (which contains all thought and deed that possessed the dead during its lifetime) on the *Scale of Truth* to decide whether the person is worthy for afterlife or not. In the opposite pan of the scale the *Feather of Truth* is placed as a counterweight, thus the heart must be lighter than the feather to be proven worthy for the afterlife. If it is so Anubis breathes life to the mummy who receives eternal life.

This scene is revitalized in the song Anubis. From its structure it is clear soon that we have two actors in the plot: the god and the soul on the *Scale of Truth*. In the first verse the god introduces himself, mentioning his attributes of the jackal pointing out the most important: his smelling (or his sensitivity of truth) is so precise that no one can hide from it or deceive it. The second verse is a call to the soul to leave the body and stand before the tribunal. We also have a short reference to the golden mask hoards of Egypt. As a next step the guardian of the Underworld introduces us the conditions of entrance: only the brave may enter, and it is also necessary to prove that one is worthy. The scaling itself is shown as well, changing the concept of the heart to the soul of the dead. Besides these the god warns that after passing the scaling the powers of Chaos must be struggled before reaching the afterlife.

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<sup>312</sup> Compare: *Am-Duat = Sacred Texts*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/bat/bat14.htm> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>313</sup> Septicflesh, *Communion*, Season of Mist, 2008.

<sup>314</sup> R. I. RUBINSTEJN, *Anubisz = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 446.

<sup>315</sup> Brigitte ALTENMÜLLER, *ibid.* 1975, kol. 328. and Pat REMLER, *ibid.* 2006, 11.

The fifth and sixth short verses the soul waiting for judgement speaks sending a short prayer to the god explaining the lightness of himself comparing it to be like a feather, clearly referring to the tools of the ancient myth. In the second part of the prayer begs the god not to leave the soul to decay. For a short moment we have the opportunity to live the tension and struggle of the soul waiting for Anubis's sentence. In the seventh verse Anubis speaks again enumerating his traits and lineage of being the gods' chosen one, the guardian and judge of the dead. As a closure the tormented soul speaks to the god once more begging for mercy. The lyrics formulates quite clearly about the scene using a dialogue kind of form what is stressed in the music itself with the harsh vocals of Anubis and the clear ones of the dead's soul. We may call this a full scale interpretation of the rite that contains all important elements for a restoration attempt.

The songs mentioned above are dealing with different sides of the Netherworld ideas of ancient Egypt as it was promised. From the texts we can say, like a puzzle many aspects are represented to give a wider picture. Thus we know from the texts, that the Underworld is a place of fighting between the Sun and the evil serpent, the mummified dead must be prepared ritually to be able to live the afterlife, there are segments that resemble the Christian concept of hell and of course there are god(s) who are responsible for the existence within the land of the dead. As the Egyptian concepts of the Underworld are a really rich source to think about we can see that this variety is manifested through the different (death) metal acts of the last decades.

### **3.2.2.3. The Amarna Reform**

The last inspiring religious phenomenon of ancient Egypt is the reform of Akhenaten of the Amarna period. We must consider a full scale religious reform that affected the culture, art and politics besides religion. The tenth pharaoh of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty called Amenhotep IV reigned during the age of the New Kingdom (1355-1337 BC). The main goal of his reform was to emerge the worship of Aten/Aton, the god of the disk of the Sun instead of Amen/Amun aiming to destroy the political power of the Amen priesthood.<sup>316</sup> Devoting himself in to Aten also chose a new name that of what he is more known: Akhenaten. The Amarna-realism that was a direct effect of his endeavours separates his period from all before and after. The approach that in the beginning was more like a henoteistic/monolatric

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<sup>316</sup> KÁKOSY László, *ibid.* 2002, 141-143.

movement later became a monotheistic religion repressing the worship of all gods but Aten (even recarving the name of Amen to Aten on reliefs).<sup>317</sup> The grandiose new capital city built by the pharaoh (Ahet-Aten, today know as Tell el-Amarna) and the religious reform because of its extremities did not survive far after the death of its founder. Of the early death of his successor (Tutankhaten, later Tutankhamen) and during the reign of Horemheb the restoration of the old cults begun with attempting to erase the Amarna period from memory (destroying the name of Akhenaten on reliefs, destroying his sculptures, etc.).<sup>318</sup> The Amarna reform is clearly viewed as heresy from the polytheistic point of view in Egypt, now we are going to focus on the reception of an ancient heretic in a modern environment.

The first song to be mentioned is from underground power metal band Bay Leaf of Germany. Their 2003 album is dedicated to the memory of the Amarna period, entitled *The son of the Sun*. The 8<sup>th</sup> song, called *Triumph or Defeat* is chosen for examination.<sup>319</sup> The approach presented towards the reforms of Akhenaten is shown to be of an antagonistic nature. On the surface the first two lines suggest that the dictatorship of Aten is broken and the order of Amen is back<sup>320</sup> but the brutal pictures after indicate that this triumph and joy only present one side of the coin: the opinion and triumph of the recovering Amen priesthood. As from historical accounts it may seem that the transition after the death of Akhenaten and his son was a natural and divine restoration of the old ways the group highlights that the interest beyond both movements (Aten and Amen) had their violent steps towards power, and the aftermath of the rebellion was bloodshed and mayhem. In the third verse this almost ironic opposition is placed in front of each other<sup>321</sup> with the silencing of the enemy the people got back their freedom by oppressing others. However this freedom is not attributed with full sense of security it is better for the reigning class. The last verse's last four lines<sup>322</sup> makes it obvious if it was not for the listener: from one perspective the destruction of the Aten-faith is a triumph as old order is restored, with a high toll of death, from the other side it is a defeat with the same price. In the end it does not matter what it is called, the bloody rampage of religious transition is the main phenomenon that is pointed out by the texts.

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<sup>317</sup> KÁKOSY László, *ibid.* 2002, 143-151.

<sup>318</sup> KÁKOSY László, *ibid.* 2002, 151-157.

<sup>319</sup> Bay Leaf, *The Son of the Sun*, Independent, 2003.

<sup>320</sup> „Joy in the streets, the people did win / Amen is back again [...]” Bay Leaf, *ibid.* 2003.

<sup>321</sup> “[...] Common graves line the streets / Candles, a sign of solidarity / But when will we forget what they bore / Like all the millions before / Aten is dead, Amen is back / Freedom is in everyone's mouth / But our fear, it seems to stay / Insecurity drives us all the way [...]” Bay Leaf, *ibid.* 2003.

<sup>322</sup> “[...] A world full of violence / We decide if good or bad / We turn the night into the day / Whether triumph or defeat we say” Bay Leaf, *ibid.* 2003.

The second mentioning of Swedish Therion is entitling their work about Akhenaten as the epithet of pharaohs introduced in the case of Bay Leaf: *Son of the Sun*. The stance towards the reform of Akhenaten is neutral with an objective, historicising attempt. We are informed that in ancient days a pharaoh worshipped the Sun above all the important gods that is called hybris, the Greek term for arrogance against the gods' will.<sup>323</sup> But what are the features of his arrogance? He founded monotheism, creating a false light upon himself. The chorus gives a warning to the pharaoh to be careful about casting away the gods as they may make him fall from grace, as it happened. After that we get a wider picture about the Egypt of his time with the weeping Sphinx and the trembling pyramids that are portents of the apostasy of their ruler. As the pharaoh is not only the king of Egypt he is the maintainer of divine order and harmony,<sup>324</sup> thus if he leaves the path paved before he also frightens the world to fall in chaos. Not only grief and disappointment are present but a certain fear of chaos as well. The second part of the song changes direction and tries to understand the motif of the pharaoh that is caused by madness,<sup>325</sup> and the duty of his followers is to defeat the religious abomination. If the enumerated are not enough the arrival of Apep is also predicted. The attack of the frightening enemy and the aberration of the pharaoh are connected with each other, and between them the texts show us the people of Egypt united in a struggle to rebel against Akhenaten and restore the old ways. It is a desperate historical situation (what may be actualized once again) that is escalated within the lyrics, stressed with the grandiose musical tools used.

Nile is cited the last time during our study. Their 2005 song from the yet cited *Annihilation of the Wicked* comes the piece entitled *Cast Down the Heretic*.<sup>326</sup> From the side of musicality it can be said that current title is the most aggressive one, followed by lyrics filled with disgust and hate.<sup>327</sup> An unknown speaker or group of speakers formulate a curse, or chain of curses against the reform movement of Akhenaten. The long text that consists of 58 lines is an enumeration of ill wishes and curses guided and systematized by the cited lines that also helps us to understand what the lyrics is really about. This one is a quite composite one, compared to other texts it has the highest amount of mythological references within, as all curses are connected with a god, goddess, demon or other divine entity that are to punish the

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<sup>323</sup> "[...] *The gods would punish the hybris of Pharaoh / He wrapped himself in false sunshine/ He was the founding father of the only God / But he provoked a fit of rage [...]*" Therion, *ibid.* 2004.

<sup>324</sup> Geraldine PINCH, *ibid.* 2002, 85-88.

<sup>325</sup> "[...] *Visions of madness led the Pharaoh astray [...]*" Therion, *ibid.* 2004.

<sup>326</sup> Nile, *ibid.* 2005.

<sup>327</sup> "*Blasphemer, Heretic, Defiler of the Sacred Ones [...]* *The Great Company of Gods Gather in Retribution / They Hath Passed Judgement upon Thee / They Cast Down Your Heresy / They Spit Upon Thee and Thy Rebellion / And Turn Their Back upon Thee [...]* *Thy City Amarna Lays in Ruin [...]*" Nile, *ibid.* 2005.

heretic pharaoh. The choice of word “*heretic*” and “*heresy*” is an anachronistic term in the context of ancient Egypt, nevertheless the concept behind it, that one god is chosen over the whole pantheon should be considered as a negative act not just in the means of priesthood and politics but for the everyday people as well. All the mythological references are not to be examined one by one, as searching for the connection between a mentioned god and a particular act of defilement would not give a brighter picture. Although all the references gather around the humiliation, destruction and forsaking of the memory and all deeds of the pharaoh, who is never mentioned by the name in the text only about the main epithets give us some points: the name of Amarna, blasphemer, heretic, rebellion, all pointing towards the hated figure. This hate presents the retrospective opinion led by the Amen priesthood after the restoration of the old faith and breakdown of the reform. If we would like to place it in an imaginary context we could say that during the reign of Horemheb the official statements of the state about the religious movement of Akhenaten could be the same, defiling a monotheism for the sake of old polytheism (just like defiling Christianity for the revival of ancient paganism).

The last song considering present topic (*Akhenaton, the 9th Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty*) is from Greek Nightfall’s 2013 album, *Cassiopeia*. As it is a shorter one the whole lyrics are cited.<sup>328</sup> The first two verses localise the situation of the song giving the date of the titular pharaoh’s reign connected (or opposed) to the emergence of Christianity. This opposition also shows us that if Christianity is identified with monotheism than 1300 years before Akhenaten should be as well regarded this way. The worship of Aten by the pharaoh is articulated clearly with a fast paced turn into the praising of his endeavours, even cursing the old ways of polytheism and world order. This kind of approach is rather unique in its means as all other revitalizations of the topic showed a manner that is more or less negative towards the monotheistic reform movement of Akhenaten and are more fond of the polytheistic, “*original*” order of religion. This polytheism is labelled as a weakness by the speaker of the text, clearly propagating the new era of the brightest star. This rather short text also helps us to do a short summary, as many different methods were cited above to understand the problem of the Amarna period. As the reform fell shortly after the death of the reformer and the official memory of the pharaoh is negative, often hateful the covers of Therion and Nile

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<sup>328</sup> "Thirteen hundred years before Christ's emerge / There was a pharaoh once raised his hands // Towards to the sky to his sole single god / Aton was is name, Akhenaton his man // Die old world / His greatness comes forth // One above the rest / Followers all be blessed // A man reckoned the weakness of his time / Profoundly stepped in to the revise the prime // Ruler called the brightest star in the skies / Glorious sun released his rays and shined" Nightfall, *Cassiopeia*, Metal Blade Records, 2013.

follow this line. Nightfall presents the opinion about the changes from the perspective of a follower of Akhenaten or of one who considers monotheism to be the peak of religious advancement. Bay Leaf could be placed between the two focusing on the suffering caused by the two transitions, especially the re-arrangement of the old rites.

### **3.2.3. The World of the Old Testament**

#### **3.2.3.1. General Introduction**

The last topic to touch in our chapter gathered around the world of the Ancient Middle East is the Old Testament. It could be a really hard introduction to write here as the structure, history, poetry, social and cultural context of the Hebrew Old Testament each has its own rich literature. As the Bible and the Old Testament within are the foundations of European Christian culture we cannot say that the stories found in it are ancient mythological and religious scriptures that have no actuality for today's people but are a curiosity. Although for our cause we only regard the scriptures of the Old Testament as works of high literature that bear all the features as the Egyptian, Mesopotamian and forward to cite other cultures' ancient myths without denying its impact and importance for Western society. In Chapter 2.3. we had some remarks about the Bible from the viewpoint of literary theory. In this section without forgetting those points in each case of reception we are going to focus more on the religious and historical context before the birth of Christ. On the pages below four topics and six instances of reception are going to be spoken of. We are going to follow the structure of the Old Testament, thus the sequence is the following:

- 1) The Flood (1 album)
- 2) The Tower of Babel (2 songs)
- 3) The Exodus (1 album)
- 4) Paganism in the Old Testament (2 songs)

Because of the monotheistic system of the Old Testament the well known gods and their names inspiring musical bands' name choice section is missing but as it can be seen above we are going to have more stories highlighted for examination. Let us know close to the first topic: the cataclysm of the *Flood* from the book of Genesis.

### 3.2.3.2. The Flood

The story of the *Flood* that starts with the 7<sup>th</sup> verse of Genesis chapter 6 could be called as the second creation epic within the Old Testament. The cataclysm<sup>329</sup> mentioned and presented in the Genesis is not a unique sujet, we can find its parallels in Mesopotamia, in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* or *Atra-Hasis Epic*, or in the Greek mythology. It may be called as a general topic for mythologies of the European culture, with the central issue of God or the gods are disappointed with their own creation and decide to destroy it with only a few true human left alive.<sup>330</sup> The structure of the story is lead by the decisive decision of God:

- 1) The decision to destroy the world
- 2) The promise to never repeat this act

The figure and words of God should be observed in the introduction of the story as besides his fury many other emotions are mixed as well: the wickedness of man (that appears to be a problem of the mentioned generation without detailing the sins) makes him angry but sad as well as he is to eradicate life.<sup>331</sup>

From the pool of wickedness one man and his family emerges: “*These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*”<sup>332</sup> There is one true man on earth, protected by God’s will to save him and his family, thus commands him to build the Ark and enumerate the animals to rescue them from his wrath coming upon the sinners. On this point we meet the categorization of pure and impure animals. Noah does everything as the Lord commanded him, and when the windows of the heavens’ opened up and for forty days and forty nights rain poured upon the ground and devoured all life. In the end when Noah and his family are saved and the water lessened God made a covenant with his chosen one, incorporating his promise never to repeat his act of destruction. We have two important consequences of this story: first we can see that the creator and good intended God can be furious and destructive, and also a portent of the arrival of Jesus Christ, who is the saviour of the people. With his crucifixion and the washing away of all sin God really do not have a reason to destroy the world again.<sup>333</sup> During later theological development the story is in many cases cited or reinterpreted and is shown now to

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<sup>329</sup> Katakylsmos (Greek) = Flood. Compare: Jack P. LEWIS, *Flood = The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel FREEDMAN, Logos Library Systems, 1995-1999 (CD version).

<sup>330</sup> Claus WESTERMANN, *Genesis*, London, T&T Clark International, 1987, 51.

<sup>331</sup> Gen 6:6

<sup>332</sup> Gen 6:9

<sup>333</sup> Claus WESTERMANN, *ibid.* 1987, 66-67.

be a source of inspiration for a metal musical group actualizing and translating its meaning for today's society.

Orphaned Land, originating from Israel, the kibbutz of Petah-Tikva released their groundbreaking concept album in 2004, entitled *Mabool – The Story of Three Sons of Seven*.<sup>334</sup> The band works with a mixture of progressive, death, doom and Middle Eastern folk metal creating their own definition of the term “*oriental metal*”. Besides the folk tunes and instruments (like bouzouki) incorporated their lyrical programme also revolves around their homeland and its religious milieu attributed with hate and hostility between Abrahamic religions, mainly Islam and Judaism. Their opinion about the situation of the Levant and Israel is manifested in all their works and especially in the *Mabool* (Hebrew for Flood) record. As all the songs are part of the same sequence it is now time to take a closer look on a whole corpus of a musical record.<sup>335</sup>

The first song, the opening of the epic entitled *Birth of the Three (The Unification)* is one of the most enigmatic but informative pieces on the LP. The song can be named as a musical *ars poetica* regarding the whole record. Its plot contains the split of a divine unit that has something to do with the Flood in the following. We hear of a seventh descendant (who is Noah in the Biblical narrative, but here we lack his name) who is split into three. These three persons or “*concepts*” have their own unique form and symbols. The first one is a Snake, with the symbol of David's Star, the second one is an Eagle with a triangle and a crescent and the last one is a Lion who is wise and has the cross as a hallmark. The Snake could be identified with the Nehusthan, the brass snake nailed by Moses upon the command of God to save his people from the venomous bites of real snakes.<sup>336</sup> The crescent and the sword summons the images of Islam to our minds and especially the Jihad, while the triangle may refer to the ethical triangle of Islam,<sup>337</sup> while the Lion and the cross represent Christianity and Jesus. The split of the unity of these three concepts declares a vision of religious ecumenism that states that all three Abrahamic religions come from the same root thus there should be no difference between them, and more, they could be stronger together. We also have some references to Job and Jesus but the composition is led towards the Flood.

The second song, *Ocean Land* can be interpreted as a prophetic message. If the first song was a prelude then this is the introduction. It is not the voice of God to Noah that is

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<sup>334</sup> Orphaned Land, *Mabool – The Story of Three Sons of Seven*, Century Media Records, 2004.

<sup>335</sup> For the complete lyrics please visit: [https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Orphaned\\_Land/Mabool\\_-\\_The\\_Story\\_of\\_the\\_Three\\_Sons\\_of\\_Seven/32762](https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Orphaned_Land/Mabool_-_The_Story_of_the_Three_Sons_of_Seven/32762) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>336</sup> Num 21:8-9

<sup>337</sup> <http://www.islamicity.com/Articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0510-2830> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

interpreted<sup>338</sup> but another glance on the fate of humanity: a great rain will come that will erase humankind. The visions listed by the song give a picturesque impact of the coming storm, comparing the world after to a mass grave that is under the ocean. The voice of desperation can be heard in the song along with the accepting of the task by the Three.<sup>339</sup> The thread of the Biblical story is started in the third song, *The Kiss of Babylon (The Sins)* listing the sins committed by humanity. It is revealed that humankind is in a dark night, where sons and fathers kill each other, sin is upon sin what deserves punishment. The Three introduced above appear here as the executives of God's command. We also find some references to stories that are mentioned in the Old Testament before and after the flood, like the fall to sin of the first men, represented by the venomous kiss of the snake (not the same as the hero, but a representation of Satan like in Genesis 1) or the murder of Abel by Cain, and the rise of Babylon that should be connected to the Babel's tower episode (according to popular interpretation that states that Babel is equal with Babylon).<sup>340</sup> The song is closed with a Hebrew verse that incarnates the desire of the ones who were banished from the Holy Land, making Jerusalem being the real object of want. In this lyric we can see that the Old Testament is used by the band as a whole, as a full reality not dealing with the problem of the canonization process, creating a clear resemblance to the many myth variants of other cultures, where contradictory events may occur in different versions of a certain myth.

The fourth piece, *A'salk* breaks in musicality and language the process of the preceding. It is an acoustic piece with the Hebrew singing of Shlomit Levi in an Eastern manner, not continuing the story. It is a begging prayer that draws from authentic source: using the poetry of Rabbi Shalom Shabazi.<sup>341</sup> In our context it is a prayer for God's mercy said by the Three. *Halo Dies (The Wrath of God)* introduces the real wrath of God that was only mentioned and prophesized earlier. Its prelude is a citation from the Old Testament<sup>342</sup> listing the sins once again. Then we hear God himself to speak (with distorted, death metal style vocals) to determine to destroy humanity with fire, and release all pain and anguish to humanity that may occur during one's life. The death of men is compared to the death of Abel, making it that the natural disaster to come is of will (by fire and water) and not of chance. The Three is presented again as the hand of God, who follow His will. After this the text changes its viewpoint declaring the will of God to be righteous. The fall of Adam and

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<sup>338</sup> Compare: Gen 6:13

<sup>339</sup> The three protagonists (Snake, Eagle, Lion) are going to be called as the Three for an easier identification on the further pages.

<sup>340</sup> This topic is to be described in details in the next section.

<sup>341</sup> <http://www.metal-archives.com/release.php?id=32762> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>342</sup> Gen 6:11

Eve and the example of Job are mentioned intensifying the situation. The last verse is once again a citation of the Old Testament creating a frame for the piece, stressing the sins again.<sup>343</sup>

*A Call to Awake (The Quest)* is the title of the continuing chapter in what the Three starts the journey to warn the people that God is furious and why He is as. They call the world to repent their sins and their astray faith (the worship of pagan gods). They speak through prophets who are not taken into account by the people. In the mirror of the five first pieces this song can be named as the first section after the rather long introduction (that has the dramatic effect of stressing the cause of the Flood from all sides possible), where the Three acts first time. The righteous judgement of God is presented here once again, and the attempts of the Three to make the people onto repentance as they are not celebrate death but to save their lives.

With a big leap in the original story we find ourselves at the building of the Ark with the seventh song of the same title. Besides the repeated wrath of God we find the instructions to build the Ark by an unnamed person. One of the Three speaks as well accepting the task from the Lord and fulfills it. The song should be split to two major parts what are divided in performance and language as well. The first and longer part is performed by a choir and a solo singer in turns, its language is in Latin containing citations from the Vulgata. This long verse is an individual piece within that cites many parts of the Vulgata but not in the original sequence, nevertheless containing the most important information.<sup>344</sup> The list in order is: Gen 6:12, 6:14, 6:11, 6:19 that are in some cases not full verse only short portions important for the rhetoric of the album. 6:12 cites the corruption of the world, 6:14 is of the parameters of the Ark, 6:11 mentions perdition and 6:19 is of the command to collect the animals. The picture is enhanced if we recollect that a Jewish band uses the ancient form of the Western Christian Bible. The second section is the shorter one, where Kobi Farhi the lead singer uses English once again. This part can be counted as an answer to the previous one, where an unknown person accepts God as his Lord. According to the consequent structure of the album, and the lack of Noah's name throughout the record, we may assume that as the Snake is the spokesman of the Three than it is his hymn to God. It is clear that this part reinterprets the 4<sup>th</sup> verse of the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Psalms.<sup>345</sup>

The eight piece, *Norra el Norra*, takes a break again in the sequence of the story, used as prayer by the speaker for shelter from God. The Egyptian folk tune is in Hebrew and can be

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<sup>343</sup> Gen 6:5-6

<sup>344</sup> Compare the listed verses of the Vulgata.

<sup>345</sup> Psalms 23:4: „*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*”

regarded in a pair with the previous one, as that one opened up the way to Christianity, its tunes open the way to the Islam with the same gesture. Without lyrics only with music created is the atmosphere of the ninth song *The Calm Before the Flood* leading to the tenth piece, *Mabool (The Flood)*. This rather long lyric contains Biblical citations, mainly only the detailing of the cataclysm itself. The sin of Eve is mentioned alongside with Rome what was the primary enemy of early Christianity. The concrete and picturesque narrative also gives advices for the ones surviving and repopulating earth. The most important amongst the advices is to find true faith and to create a Heaven on earth by peace. We find three citations to enhance the tension of the song<sup>346</sup> that are on the Flood, its coming and on the lex talionis.

This is not the end of the story of course, in a nine minute long epic (*The Storm Still Rages Inside*) the desperation and thrill of the Ark's passengers are detailed. A picture is painted about the rampage of the storm, with a prayer from the inside of the Ark. We have a short reference to Jonas as well, comparing his desperation in the belly of the beast to the feelings of the surviving ones. In the end the choir functioning as the choir of Angels in heaven ask God to help his sons below closing the story with the last, instrumental song *Rainbow (The Resurrection)* only mentioning in the title the resolution of the narrative. We can see from the pages above and the whole concept of the album that this personal reinterpretation of the Flood that stresses the sinfulness of the people the most. The mysterious Three embody the three Abrahamic religions always underlining their unity<sup>347</sup> with common acts and speaking. This actualized Flood narrative is a message for the peoples of the mentioned religions to unite and not fight each other as with this act of peace a greater catastrophe may be driven away.<sup>348</sup>

### 3.2.3.3. The Tower of Babel

The word by word interpretation of Genesis 11:1-9 is nothing about but the conceited nature of humanity and its consequences, and about the origin of languages on the world. Modern Biblical scholarship although has a more detailed picture about the story. According to scientific common sense we must understand the *Tower of Babel* as a single structure that is

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<sup>346</sup> Gen 6:17, 7:11, 9:6

<sup>347</sup> For a more detailed examination correlated with an interview with one of the members of the band please see our work of 2012: FEJES János, KÖSZEGHY Miklós, *Rajtunk a Vízözön? Egy ősi történet modern funkcióban*, Egyháztörténeti Közlemények 2012/1, 25-45.

<sup>348</sup> For a full review on the lyrical programme of the band please see our work of 2012: FEJES János, *Vallásközi Párbeszéd a (metal)zene nyelvén = „Vidimus enim stellam eius...”* ed. SZÁVAY László, L'Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest, 2011, 100-108.

to be found in Babylon (Bab-ili in its original form), the great main sanctuary ziqqurat of Marduk, the Étemenanki.<sup>349</sup> This theory has some problematic points although. The word used for the tower in the Old Testament, *migdal* is a totally secular word not containing any reference to a temple while the term ziqqurat has a clearly sacral connotation in the Akkadian culture. Besides this the *migdal* is mentioned with the term „*īr*”, meaning city thus the building may be a fortified structure or settlement rather than a sanctuary.<sup>350</sup> Furthermore, the building material is not the same in the case of the Étemenanki and the Babel Tower. The Biblical account speaks of burned bricks, while the mentioned ziqquratu only partially contains the said material. After a closer examination of the Akkadian and ancient Hebrew texts we may assume that the Babel Tower is a reference to the new capital city of Sarrukin II., one of the greatest kings of the Neoassyrian Empire, called Dur-Sarrukin. Thus the story besides serving as the origin myth of languages is also a propaganda text against the Assyrian power.

The yet cited album of Greek Septicflesh, *Communion* is mentioned once again to show an instance of reception. The song entitled *Babel's Gate*<sup>351</sup> consists of five verses with the first one giving us the starting situation,<sup>352</sup> with a summary of the context. On its composition we can say that it is a direct message towards the listener, listing the reasons of confusion that torments humanity (the existence of different languages). From the title we can see that it is a personal interpretation of the topic. In this regard we can see that the Tower of Babel is not a tower by its manifestation that reaches the sky but a kind of a dimensional gate, that may open the way up to God thus giving the opportunity to make God fall and step in his place. This power is articulated that men want to gain to be alike God himself, but this power can be ruled by only one person: its originator, the Lord. The mysterious reference in the middle to the golden statue with a sword in its hand is not a mythological reference, more like a common symbol: the golden statue shines power, its form is of a human, and the sword may mean the aggressive attempt to take power by force.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Compare: Frank Anthony SPINA: *Babel = The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel FREEDMAN, Logos Library Systems, 1995-1999 (CD version).

<sup>350</sup> KŐSZEGHY Miklós, *Bábel tornya Asszíriában?* Teológiai Szemle, 1991, 345.

<sup>351</sup> Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>352</sup> "You build a tower / A giant mountain / Opened a God's gate / To reach the heavens / Only power / Rules this star gate / You make a statue / A golden idol / Holding his sword high / It will be placed up / Only power / Rules this star gate / All want the power / Now all divided [...]" Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>353</sup> The rules of interpretation (our process of reading) may allow us to find a parallel: this golden statue is alike like the Golden Calf of the Exodus that is connected with worship of idols. Compare: Exodus 32:1-35.

The following two, shorter verses give us details of the confusion caused:<sup>354</sup> it is like blindness and scorching fire that introduces torment and panic amongst humanity. Language becomes a bothering phenomenon that becomes a tool of destruction rather than construction. In the following we meet the stressing of the yet spoken. The repeated expressions of the third verse<sup>355</sup> intensify the tension of the text, highlighting in the closure that all of the great work is in vain. The fourth and fifth verses contain repetitions. The musical tone and the pulsation of the lyric illustrate the ambience of the original story and the imaginary situation of the first men to experience the confusion. As we have seen in the case of the Biblical story there is propaganda beyond the text creating a mystical vibe by calling the tower a dimensional or star gate.

The 2014 song of Irish Primordial is our second instance of reception in connection with the Tower of Babel story. The song, *Babel's Tower*<sup>356</sup> is a melancholic piece, a sorrow over misunderstanding.<sup>357</sup> The first, second and fourth verses are cited. The first one realizes the immediate consequences over the confusion of languages: a terrible silence, where there is no point in communication. The second and third verses can be seen as parallel or opposite concepts. In the second one a single person is confessing his sins over a lie of speaking a language and preaching unreal things. The third one shows the resolution of realising the lie and false preaching. Instead of a single person now the speaker is the voice of many more. The saints (pure ones) and sinners (impure ones) are mentioned both times together as people who have a different language that is not understandable by the speaker. In this instance of reception we can see the torment of a person who realises the impossibility of communication on any level, using the symbol of Babel's Tower that is a universal attribute of confusion for Western culture. In this reading of the Biblical story that has of course a universal meaning as well is widened for the struggle of modern man fighting with alienation. The music of Primordial is always critic towards Western society's customs and norms but the Bible's rich literary inventory is suitable to process a secular message from a secular band to express an opinion and depression.

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<sup>354</sup> "[...] You speak your words loud / And cannot hear / What the others try to say / Blind confusion Tongues now slay / Words are burning [...]" Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>355</sup> „[...]Babel's gate / Humans reign / Babel's gate / Sky is on flames / Babel's gate / All in vain? / Babel's gate / Nothing same [...]" Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>356</sup> Primordial, *Where Greater Men have Fallen*, Metal Blade Records, 2014.

<sup>357</sup> "In terrible silence you stood at the world's end / And crawled into the sun / Blinded by the signal fires / That seared your heart / And the seething tongues of the lies we became // I sat in Babel's tower / And judged the world / Said I spoke the language / Of saints and sinners / But preached the world was flat / And slipped between the cracks / [...] / We sat in Babel's tower / And fought over the world / I never spoke the language / Of your saints and sinners / Of men nor beast / Who roamed this flat earth [...]" Primordial, *ibid.* 2014.

### 3.2.3.4. The Exodus

Similar to the section dealing with the Flood now we also work with one band and one LP whereas we attempt to give a cross-section of it. According to Old Testament historiography one of the cornerstones is leaving of Egypt, the wandering in the desert, the Exodus. After the age of Patriarchs, the residing era in Egypt starting with the story of Joseph, is ended with the act of exiting the land of the Nile, what is to place in time is a great difficulty. According to certain theories the time of the Exodus should be placed to the reign of Ramses II (1291-1224 BC) that is proven by the great constructions of his age and the ordinations against the “*habiru*” slaves.<sup>358</sup> Of course we should not forget that the identification of the *habiru* with the ancestors of the Hebrew people is a problematic point. From a historical point of view we may not call the Old Testament as an authentic source as it is filled with toposes from all around the ancient Middle East, starting from the birth of Moses all along to the Plagues of Egypt.<sup>359</sup> The sequence of the Ten Plagues is one of the most mysterious portions of the Old Testament; we have hosts of scientific and religious theories on their interpretation.<sup>360</sup>

Our musical heroes similar to Orphaned Land come from Israel. The progressive metal act called Amaseffer was founded in Tel-Aviv in 2004. The aim of their current musical programme is to interpret the Exodus, starting with their up to today only LP *Slaves for Life*,<sup>361</sup> ending its narrative with the Ten Plagues.<sup>362</sup> The album that contains ten songs divides the story for nine chapters. After the first, ambience creating piece called *Sorrow*, the song *Slaves for Life* introduces the listener to the starting point of the story. The place and time is given in the first verse<sup>363</sup> revealing the Hebrew’s enslavement in the second one, referring to that the pharaoh does not know the sons of Joseph, making the friendly tie between the state and the Hebrews to be cut off. In the further sections the burden of slave labour is presented with the cries of the people, illustrated with Hebrew portions of the Old Testament.<sup>364</sup> In the closure we meet the fear of the pharaoh who is frightened by the growth of the numbers of his slaves. The slaves receive a vision like promise of the liberation.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Cyrus H. GORDON, Gary A. RENDSBURG, *A Biblia és az ókori Közel-Kelet*, Debrecen, Gold Book, 2006, 144-145. In the dating of the Exodus today’s critical biblical studies is quite careful.

<sup>359</sup> J. Maxwell MILLER, John H. HAYES, *Az ókori Izrael és Júda története*, Piliscsaba, PPKE BTK, 2003, 59-60, and Cyrus H. GORDON, Gary A. RENDSBURG, *ibid.* 2006, 145.

<sup>360</sup> For more see: Cyrus H. GORDON, Gary A. RENDSBURG, *ibid.* 2006, 147.

<sup>361</sup> Amaseffer, *Slaves for Life*, InsideOut Music, 2008.

<sup>362</sup> Exodus 1:1-13:14.

<sup>363</sup> For the whole material please visit: [https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Amaseffer/Exodus\\_-\\_Slaves\\_for\\_Life/199836](https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Amaseffer/Exodus_-_Slaves_for_Life/199836) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>364</sup> From the citation of these Hebrew sections we abide.

<sup>365</sup> It is quite interesting that the text operates with the „*messiah*” term.

*Birth of Deliverance* continues the narrative, dealing with the birth of Moses.<sup>366</sup> The Hebrew citations make the story to flow, where we have reference to the decrees against Hebrews on the slaughter of newborn sons and the escape of Moses. In the English sections the mother who is afraid of his son is speaking who would sacrifice herself for the child as well. We have a citation from Deuteronomy too<sup>367</sup> which depict Moses, and from Numeri,<sup>368</sup> which speaks of his connection with God. The Hebrew sections organize the song while the English ones illustrate the imaginary feelings and thoughts of the actors giving a more personal insight to the story.

The song called *Midian* is on the act of murder by Moses and his exile to the land of Midian.<sup>369</sup> In this case Moses himself speaks in the lyrics. The text starts as a speculation, looking for his own origin, listing the pain of the Hebrews as well. It is to speak of that Moses knows his importance in the narrative and with this thought kills the Egyptian. A rather long section examines his thoughts about his bestial deed, and the Biblical section where he has a debate with his own kin is missing.<sup>370</sup> The story is paused by the Egyptian guards who notice that Moses is the one they are looking for, who then decides to escape into the night, what is a moment that is not present in the Biblical text. The fifth cong, *Zipporah* introduces us the love of Moses with the daughter of Jethro.<sup>371</sup> The song is presented as a dialogue between Moses and Zipporah, where the previous one speaks English, while the later one Hebrew. The last verse turns back to the inner struggles of Moses depicting his desperation.

*The Burning Bush* is beginning with a Hebrew verse depicting the meeting between Moses and the angel of God that function once again as a driving force as before.<sup>372</sup> The self-investigation and desperation of Moses here reaches its peak point, that is presented as an inner monologue and in a dialogue with the angel. The order of God to Moses is with the citation of Exodus 3:10 what is accepted by the hero. The seventh one, *Wooden Staff* is the only piece that is in Hebrew in its entirety. Its text is the musical interpretation of the medieval prayer called *Adon Olam*, which praises God.<sup>373</sup> According to the title it is the portion of Exodus 4:1-5 that is refers to, asking to God for the support of his people. The next one, *Return to Egypt* is once again without lyrics only to depict musically the return. The peak point of the album is the *Ten Plagues* that is beginning with Psalms 78:49, on the ten

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<sup>366</sup> Exodus 1:22-2:3

<sup>367</sup> Deuteronomy 34:10-12.

<sup>368</sup> Numeri 6:25

<sup>369</sup> Exodus 2:10-15.

<sup>370</sup> Compare: Exodus 2:13-14.

<sup>371</sup> This section only appears in one verse in the Old Testament: Exodus 2:25

<sup>372</sup> Exodus 3:2,4,10

<sup>373</sup> *Adon Olam*, [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/adon\\_olam.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/adon_olam.html) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

disasters.<sup>374</sup> The song is divided to ten verses, where we witness the debate of Aaron, Moses and the pharaoh (two brothers are referred in the text who may be identified with Aaron and Moses). All the plagues are appearing in the lyric for a short moment, with the last verse and plague what makes the pharaoh to break. Ten verses, ten plagues<sup>375</sup> with a debate built up from citations (Aaron: Exodus 5:1, pharaoh: Exodus 5:2, Aaron: Exodus 5:3, pharaoh: Exodus 10:28) closed with an individual section from Moses, where he praises God.

The closure of the story is give in *Land of the Dead*, which depicts the Exodus itself, closing the whole album with Exodus 13:14 remembering the grief of the left warning the listener that the story is not ending only present record. The three main points to notice in the work of Amaseffer are the importance of Hebrew citations from the Old Testament, that drive the story, the English sections that colourize the original narrative, and the third one that the record did not aim to radically rewrite or actualize the story of Moses and the Exodus, only giving a modern, progressive metal sound to the well known myth.

### 3.2.3.5. Paganism in the Old Testament

Paganism in the meaning of not following the official religion in regard of the Old Testament is a composite topic. Now we do not pursue to give a full detailed examination of the instances of apostasy and paganism found in the Old Testament (the sacrifice to Moloch, the Golden Calf, the worship of Baal, the denial of God's will, sodomy, impurity, etc), we focus only on some phenomenon (exactly two) to represent the reception of Biblical concept of false faith. The sacrificial practices to Moloch/Molech is the topic of Swedish Naglfar's song Feeding Moloch.<sup>376</sup> According to the traditional interpretation the Moloch-offering is a sacrifice to the god Moloch, what was practiced by Kanaanites and then Israelites in the Valley of Hinnom's Sons with the tool called Tofet.<sup>377</sup> There are certain written sources that cite a god called Malik, what is a prominent element in the Ebla corpus' name giving tradition with a parallel from the god Nergal, who has the epithet "*Maliku*" together with the Igigi gods who are chthonic ones (as Nergal is became one). According to the theory of professor Weinfeld the practice is not connected to the god Moloch but with Baal-Hadad, whose epithet was Moloch coming from the root MLCh, meaning king, even questioning the presence of real human sacrifice only interpreting it on a symbolic level that is exceeded in the Old

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<sup>374</sup> Exodus: 7:8-10:29.

<sup>375</sup> We find an alteration: instead of blizzard we have a rain of fire.

<sup>376</sup> Naglfar, *Harvest*, Century Media Records, 2007.

<sup>377</sup> Leviticus 18:21 contains the prohibition of the practice.

Testament to draw away the believers from it.<sup>378</sup> Nevertheless for us now it is not important if it was a real practice or not or a god existed by a name Moloch, only that the Old Testament disapproves this speculative rite making it to be an impurity or a sin against divine order.

The song of Naglfar (*Feeding Moloch*) is cited in fragments,<sup>379</sup> highlighting the most important part for us. The song deals with the Moloch sacrifice in its bloody picture that is suggested in the Biblical tradition. The song's title clearly refers to the offering that is a feast for the evil god is to be provided by his believers, who are presented by the speaker. We see a horror-movie inspired scene where an unnamed murderer lurks around to steal the children and then feed them to Moloch. The thrill and terror caused by the act is depicted in the portions pointing out that the stealing of children from their cradle is most evil deed that can be achieved and it is presented through the eyes of the actor himself. It seems from the text that Moloch is a powerful entity who can bless his followers and give them powers, thus the speaker chases to ease the hunger of his sleeping master. We also have an insight to the ritual that is not only the killing of an infant child, but to call forth and be in the presence of the god while he devours the offering. Naglfar could be part of the Satanist metal section as well, as all their lyrics deal with evil and considered sins that creates the context of this song on one hand to be an ironic praise towards an impure rite and an instance where an Old Testament phenomenon is interpreted as a reality of the original context, illustrating the speculated followers of the Moloch.

In the last section of Old Testament traditions we speak of the god Baal, the main adversary of the YHWH cult in Israel, succeeding from the Canaanite tradition. Baal (meaning "Lord" in Canaanite) is a storm god, quite similar to Marduk or in some aspects to YHWH worshipped by the Canaanite peoples before the arrival of the Hebrews to later Israel and Judah and of course as well by the Philistine conquerors settled in the coastline. Also mentioned in the Ugaritic corpus and the Old Testament we see that the worship of Baal is the most important pagan deed that could be achieved by the Israelites, with numerous mentioning of the god's shrines and cult to be left (e.g. Numeri 25:1-9, Deuteronomy 11:10-

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<sup>378</sup> George C. HEIDER, *Moloch = The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel FREEDMAN, Logos Library Systems, 1995-1999 (CD version).

<sup>379</sup> "[...] *The hunt is on, the scent's been caught, / now I stalk my prey / Whipped into a murderous state / With halos pure and free from sin / Now little piglet let me in [...] I will steal your young from their cradles / Where you thought that they were safe / From their peaceful sleep and into the night / Towards the blood-drenched realms to feed the flames [...] / Moloch, oh Moloch I call upon thee / I bring you gifts of atrocities / The sound of breaking bones / And the grinding of teeth / Moloch has awoken to feed / Devourer of infants come forth and bless me / With this killing spree I aim to please / Your spiritual essence now embodied in me / The blood of babies smeared on my cheeks [...]*" Naglfar, *ibid.* 2007.

11, Judges 2,11; 2,13; 3,1; 3,7; 8;33; Isaiah 27,1; 51,9, etc.) with the famous story of Elijah fighting the priests of Baal (1Kings 18:16-45).<sup>380</sup>

The figure of Baal is invoked by German death metal band Necros Christos. Their 2011 song, *Baal of Ekron*<sup>381</sup> takes the speaker into the place of the god himself who speaks to his future and current followers. The song enumerates the traits of the god, his residence of Ekron (the Philistine city where the god had a sanctuary) and an invitation to build him a shrine (or to found and maintain his cult). The lyric has a certain taste towards irony, as the god is depicted from the viewpoint of Biblical historiography; his figure is covered with negative connotation like doom and his residence in Tehom, what is the deep abyss of the Genesis.<sup>382</sup> The inside-out picture given by the song presents that the god Baal accepted his state of being the enemy of YHWH of the Old Testament, thus his place in the negative edge of the cultic milieu, almost creating a Satan like figure from himself, who is hated by the official religion and supported by rebels. The original god Baal must have had the same (or similar) cult as YHWH had without the connection to any evil phenomenon. In this regard the song of Necros Christos could be named as a Satanist song as well as Naglfar was, worshipping the enemy or its manifestations not to suggest that the musicians agree with the practice of the Moloch sacrifice or the worship of a forgotten Levantine god, but to present that they tend to rebel against Western society through the praising of what is considered evil in its roots, the Old Testament (just like the case of name choice by mentioned Swedish black metal band Marduk). As a summary we can say that what Christianity and Satan represents for Satanist metal music in a New Testament structured rhetoric is the paganism of the Old Testament for the same musicians. What is deviant in either the Old or the New Testament is an object of praise for rebel musicians who attempt to oppose the thought of Western society.

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<sup>380</sup> W. HERRMANN, *Baal = Dictionary of Deities and Daemons*, ed. Karel VAN DER TOORN, Leiden, Brill, 1999, 132-139.

<sup>381</sup> "My name is Baal-Sebul / I am King of Ekron / A Baal of the Highest / My Kingdom is Tehom / I strike down all morals / I'm the ruler of man / As I'm Baal of Ekron / My reign is at hand / Come, gimme worship / And build me a shrine / 'cause I'm Baal of Ekron / Your women be mine / And doom is my saviour / And darkness my friend / As I'm Baal of Ekron / Taking over Command / Ab-hamon / Baal of Ekron / Blessed in Tehom / Baal of Ekron" Necros Christos, *Doom of the Occult*, Sepulchral Voice Records, 2011.

<sup>382</sup> E.g. Genesis 1:2

### 3.3. Hellenic-Roman Antiquity or the Prototype of all Mythologies in Metal Music

#### 3.3.1. General introduction

Current chapter's responsibility is to give a brief insight into the reception of classical antiquity's myths in the realm of extreme metal lyrics. As the classical antiquity may be defined as the collective heritage of classical Greek, Hellenistic and Roman cultures the territory to work with now is quite big, so we confine this introduction to define the most important terms in regarding pantheons and myths. The classical Greek pantheon and its myths are a result of synthesis between the Prehellenic and ancient Hellenic traditions after the "Dark Age" (1100-800 BC). This pantheon could be divided into different categories depending on two major methods of classification:

1) By residence, we have three categories: uranios (those who live in the sky), chthonios (those who live in the earth, e.g. Hades) and gods of the sea.

2) Olympian and non-Olympian gods. The classical Olympian pantheon consists of Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Hermes, Aphrodite, Ares, Demeter, Poseidon, Hestia and Hephaestus. Besides them many local gods were worshipped and may had gained higher reputation or importance e.g. Asclepius with his hospital sanctuary of Kos island.<sup>383</sup>

For a clear picture we have to see that most of what we know of Greek mythology is not from sacred texts of the ancient culture but are to be found in the works of auctors, poets and playwrights who live relatively distant in time from the origin of a myth.<sup>384</sup> For us this means that the different written sources regarding Greek mythology are also a product of reception, but as now we handle mythological texture as pieces of literature this feature is out of our interest. Although we will find some parallels between the "ancient canonization" and "contemporary canonization" of Greek mythology: as different versions existed in the oral and written tradition of ancient Hellas<sup>385</sup> thus we are going to see that the same myth has many different ways of reception in metal music, in a way continuing the work of oral and written canonization. In the first two subchapters we are going to 1) focus on the myths of

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<sup>383</sup> HEGYI Dolores, *Polis és vallás*, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2003, 29-34.

<sup>384</sup> KERÉNYI Károly, *Mi a mitológia? = Az örök Antigóné*, ed. BODOR Mária Anna, Budapest, Paidion, 2003, 315-316 (315-343).

<sup>385</sup> KERÉNYI Károly, *Görög mitológia*, Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 1977, 6.

Prometheus and then 2) examine the reception of different myths (like the Iliad and Odyssey, myth of Persephone and so on).

The third subchapter is going to work with phenomena of Roman religion. Now we do not say that we are going to work with Roman mythology as the stories known as Roman mythology are from either the Romanization of Greek myths or are the historicized versions of ancient myths of the Italian peninsula and especially the city of Rome. It is enough to consider the stories gathering around the founding of the city and the first four just kings, whose myths are well represented by Dumézil to be historicised myths or demythologized myths.<sup>386</sup> In this manner we are going to work with the mentioned founding myth of Rome, the yet introduced Mithras mystery cult and so on, in every case just before the examination with shorter introductions to each topic for orientation.

### 3.3.2. The Myth(s) of Prometheus

In order to get a brighter picture about the title character of the chapter we need to gather some information about Prometheus from ancient Greek literature. The first and oldest source, which accompanying Homer laid down the canonized foundation of ancient Greek mythology is Hesiod.<sup>387</sup> His two works, *Theogony* and *Works and Days* tell us about Prometheus in two accounts. Between lines 507 and 521 can we read about Prometheus in *Theogony*, composing the following data: his father is Iapetus who married Clymene, the daughter of Oceanus. His brothers are Atlas, Menoitios and Epimetheus. His brother who shares the opposite name (Prometheus – forethought, Epimetheus – afterthought) brought many trouble to humankind, taking the first woman ever created to be his consort. Later we also get the information that Zeus was the one who set Prometheus to his famous bondage.

In *Works and Days* the already tragic picture gets more dark colours. In lines 43-105 we get informed about the true sin and trouble of Prometheus and Epimetheus. Prometheus feels pity over humanity, as by the order of Zeus the ambrosia and fire were supposed to be hidden from humanity to teach them not to be lazy. Prometheus steals the spark to give it to humanity and help them lay down the foundations of civilization. Zeus in his anger swears to punish Prometheus and humanity, creates Pandora the most beautiful woman ever to deceive

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<sup>386</sup> Georges DUMÉZIL, *Róma első négy királya = Mítosz és eposz*, ed. FRIDLI Judit, Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 1986, 7-43.

<sup>387</sup> HESIOD, *The Theogony of Hesiod = Sacred Texts*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm> 1914a (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

Epimetheus and unleash troubles to the humans.<sup>388</sup> The primary message of Hesiod's version of the story is a kind of rivalry between Prometheus and the king of the Gods, Zeus. The question is of authority: who has the power – the one who makes the rules or the other who breaks them? Between the two divine forces there is a deeper bond than it would be at first sight thought.

According to the well-known play of Aeschylus as Prometheus confesses all his sins for his audience it becomes clear that the titan had many important roles during the war against titans on the side of Zeus. He appears as an advisor of Zeus who gives the hint to enclose all titans to *Tartarus*, and also to keep humanity alive. As Prometheus is shown us like the protector of humanity steals the fire and teaches many crafts for the race he loves.<sup>389</sup> In this regard Prometheus serves a great parallel to Satan of the Old Testament. Satan is represented as part of the Holy Court of God (compare Book of Job)<sup>390</sup> during the later redaction of the Old Testament became cast away from Heaven, representing the archetypical “*Fallen angel*”. As we see Prometheus also is part of the court of Zeus, later thrown out of it. Both of them commit acts against the divine law, for what they are punished. In case of Satan he must leave Heaven and live among the serpents eternally fighting with the Woman, who always steps on his head and whose heel the Serpent will always bite. Prometheus is also forced in a very similar situation, bound to the rocks of the Caucasus, enduring the eternal torment from the eagle. As Satan is also called by the name Lucifer (“bringer of light”) and Prometheus is the one stealing the spark (the Light) for humanity, it becomes quite clear why is Prometheus a great parallel to the Old Testament Satan figure, and a fertile topic for metal musicians.

Our first song, *Prometheus* of Moby Dick<sup>391</sup> comes from Hungary. The Hungarian metal scene had its own development from the late 1970s and had a big boom after the end of the communist era in the country, during the beginning of the 1990s. Playing an original Hungarian style of thrash metal, also adjusting their lyrics to the mentioned genre what makes this particular song is an interesting piece in a thrash metal environment. The song comes from the compilation of old demos entitled *Memento* from 1994. The song consists of three

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<sup>388</sup> HESIOD, *Works and Days* = *Sacred Texts*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/works.htm>, 1914b (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>389</sup> AESCHYLUS, *Prometheus Bound* = *Sacred Texts*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/aesch/promet.htm> 1881. (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>390</sup> In the book of Job it looks like Satan is not cast away from Heaven, initiating a kind of gambling over the soul of Job. For further information compare: James L. CRENSHAW, *Book of Job = The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel FREEDMAN, Logos Library Systems, 1995-1999 (CD version).

<sup>391</sup> Moby Dick, *Memento*, K&E Records, 1994.

verses and a refrain depicting the suffering of Prometheus from the viewpoint of the titan.<sup>392</sup> It is a clear covering of the story of Prometheus, the title indicates the topic and during the song we get to know the sufferings of a hero who endures the wrath of gods and a bird is biting him day by day. He is also longing for his love but encourages her to bring forth the fire of reason. On this point we can see a bit of a metaphorical approach towards the problems of fire and reason. In this case there is no articulated ideological status in connection with the rebellion of the titan, the song's emotional load is more important. Given is a mythological setting depicting the fight between desire, love, longing and reason, bringing it to a higher level with the mentioned scenery. Although the band plays thrash metal, this song must be considered as a romantic piece of metal poetry, expressing emotions in a sophisticated way.

Our next piece comes from one of Norway's finest of black metal: Emperor. The group's last studio effort bears the name of Prometheus in its title (*Prometheus – The Discipline of Fire and Demise*) what would indicate to analyze the album as a whole. Instead only one song was chosen from the record, what is in the closest connection with the myth of Prometheus. The fifth song, *The Tongue of Fire*<sup>393</sup> revolves around the questions of enlightenment and entrapment. The song is written from the viewpoint of an unknown speaker who seeks the fire to enlighten his mind. The fire of knowledge and the cold of the world are in contrast with each other. Without fire and light there is neither real life nor passion. The speaker suffers in a wordless, but not silent status, placing the ability to speak to be some kind of a higher power. This power could be given by the Tongue of Fire, the fire of knowledge. According to the third song of the album (*Empty*), we can read about the Luciferian soul, what is empty, and maybe needs to be filled with the Tongue of Fire to step into life. These two sections come together with the parallel of Lucifer and Prometheus mentioned above, stressing not the punishment and rebellious movement of the titan, but his great gift and deeds towards humanity. It seems now that the speaker of the song sends his cry for help to the titan himself, outlining not only his enlightening side but also the teacher of crafts. Knowing that all crafts come from the titan according to the mythological tradition,

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<sup>392</sup> “Nap korongja, szörnyeteg / Völgy ölébe száll / Földre hulló istenek / Vad haragja vár. // Tűz lobog látom nappal az éjben / Éjszaka könnyeit nem kell félned / Éhes madár a testembe váj / Tűz lobog látom nappal az éjben / Éjszaka könnyeit nem kell félned / Kincsem örök és nincsen mi fáj. // Vak sötét a félelem / Élve eltemet / Minden éjem végtelen / Ha nem vagyok veled. // Chorus: Vidd tovább a meggyújtott fáklyát / Nyiss utat és lépj rá ne várj / El ne hagyj az értelmed lángját / Látnod kell mit szem nem kutat / Indulj ne nézd a vesztet / Holnap tán holtan fekszem / Menj tovább, ne gondoldj rám! //” Moby Dick, *ibid.* 1994.

<sup>393</sup> “Teach me the tongue of fire / So that I may set the world ablaze / For it is cold / And this blindness can no longer give me shelter / Teach me the tongue of fire / So that I may cry out loud my wrath / And my passion / Or else my coil will blister and decay // The soul is never silent / But wordless / Held imprisoned / In a cursed tomb / Wherein reflections never fade / Never die / Slowly maddened / By the emptiness [...]” Emperor, *Prometheus – The Discipline of Fire and Demise*, Candlelight Records, 2001.

maybe we can identify the speaker as the representative of humanity who asks for help in the name of all living humans in the world. Maybe it does not matter if all humanity or one single person is the speaker, the message is obvious: there is a fire out there what could light up a suffering mind.

The next instance comes from Germany, of cultic black metal pioneer Nargaroth. The chosen song, *Abschiedbrief des Prometheus*<sup>394</sup> is coming from the 2002 EP called *Rasluka II*.<sup>395</sup> The music of Nargaroth is the school example of black metal, using the wide range from fast, blasting black metal, to slow atmospheric, even with ambient influences. As the title of the EP states<sup>396</sup> this record is of poetry. Taking a brief overlook we can pronounce that it is true: the chosen song bears maybe the most poetic mystery, making it the hardest to understand or to let it make sense. The “*Suicide letter of Prometheus*” has three main themes. The first one is the suffering of the speaker, the second the struggle of an unknown doctor with an unknown disease, and a woman also in pain and maybe with power in her hands. Originating from the title, we can read here the farewell letter of the titan, who is exhausted after long time of suffering and punishment. The lyrics are full with agony, pain and anguish, from all the three people mentioned in it. A doctor who can win a fight against a disease (maybe the first doctor ever, who could not heal the people during the aftermath of the opening of Pandora’s Box), a woman who is crying (seem like Pandora herself), and the now unbound titan – he must be unbound as he can flee to his dark caves. It seems that the titan is more human than a supernatural being, counterpart of the gods. Now he is fragile and perishable, and in great agony: the world he wanted to help is now in ruins. The first woman ever is suffering from pain and disease no doctor can heal, causing the titan wanting to leave this life once and for all. In the closing verse we can evoke the death of a soul: a soul which had much passion towards the “*carpet of life*”, but now has to start over again and make a new one. This one will never be the one before, as no spark of real life will be found in it – the “*Suicide*” in this song is not about taking one’s own life but to be clearly desperate and start a great work of ages once again.

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<sup>394</sup> Translation is courtesy of Nargaroth/Ash (formerly known as Kanwulf) from the official website. In the following we will only refer to the English version of the song lyrics found under: [http://www.nargaroth.de/releases/inhalt\\_eng/rel\\_pdf\\_eng/5\\_rasluka\\_part\\_2.pdf](http://www.nargaroth.de/releases/inhalt_eng/rel_pdf_eng/5_rasluka_part_2.pdf) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>395</sup> “*Since times there is a agonizing wound, / which gaping there enjoy the suffering. / That she creates since the hour, / where the black tears had flown. // She dribbles for her own will, / and the doctor fights in vain, / with his art to soothe her. / But it seems, I have to stand her. // So I flee screaming into deep dark caves, / but still I can hear my demons deride me. / I try to shut my soul, / but I hear myself scream, hear myself groan. // So I undo the carpet of life, / and I weave in again the thread. / But in my life will be never again / the spark of the Prometheus.*” Nargaroth, *Rasluka II*, No Colours Records, 2002.

<sup>396</sup> *Rasluka* is the phonetic, latinized written version of the Russian word for poetry.

The deeply depressing song of Nargaroth is succeeded by the more positive theme of Sweden's Therion. As all their lyrics revolve around religion, mythology, occultism and mysticism it is not a surprise that Greek mythology is also covered by their work. The *Sirius B/Lemuria*<sup>397</sup> duo of 2004 is maybe the greatest effort the band ever achieved, spanning thousands of years' mythical and mystical tradition in two one hour albums. The closing piece of the Lemuria disc is the German song entitled *Feuer Overtüre/Prometheus Entfesselt*.<sup>398</sup> The title of the song suggest the main message of the lyrics: after Prometheus loses his bondages starts the real story. The first two verses give a summary of the original myth, evoking the central motives like violating the divine law of Zeus, the stealing of fire, and the already many times cited punishment of the titan. The forthcoming verses stress the aftermath of the release of the titan in accordance with the title of the song: the release of Prometheus is only the beginning of something bigger, which concludes in the enlightenment of humanity. In this manner this instance of reception has a kind of actualizing atmosphere and not a usual romantic nostalgia.

The next instance of reception reaches out the borders of Europe, and lands at the United States of America, the state of Illinois. By genre classification we can say two different titles to describe the music of A Hill to Die Upon. They play a heavy mixture of death and black metal (1), with a white metal interest (2) that is show also by the name they have chosen, referring to the place of Jesus Christ's death, the Golgotha. Besides this many of their lyrics deal with the problems of life and death, all in a Christian framework. The song chosen from their debut album is entitled *Prometheus Rebound*.<sup>399</sup> The title itself is also in harmony with the band's programme, it suggests Prometheus should be, or will be rebound for his deeds, what are the original sins against God. In this case of course we have to regard the Greek myth as a parallel or metaphor in connection with the main topic: what is the origin of sin? Sin is the violation of divine law. Neither his original deeds nor his punishment is mentioned in the song, only his man-creator side is stressed. Through his "*Promethean*

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<sup>397</sup> Therion, *Sirius B*, Nuclear Blast, 2004; Therion, *Lemuria*, Nuclear Blast, 2004.

<sup>398</sup> "Ersteig' den höchsten Berg / Trotze des Zeus Gesetz/ Stiehl die Feuerfackel / Schenke sie die dem Menschengeschlecht // Des Prometheus Funke / Ward zur Menschenseele / In Ketten schlug ihn Zeus / An den Fels im Kaukasus // Prometheus Fessel / Sie sei gelöst! / Prometheus Kette / Erlöst den Gott eur' Seele / Prometheus Fessel / Sie sei gelöst! / Prometheus steig' auf / Dem Adler und Rauche gleich // Zeus straft die Menschheit mit / (Der) Büchse der Pandora / Aber Herakles Kraft / Entfesselt den Titanen // Gewunden in Leid / Doch fühlst es kaum / Du stahlst der Sonne Feuer / Erleuchtet der Menschen Nacht [...]" Therion, *ibid.* 2004b

<sup>399</sup> "[...] Abomination of my clay brothers... / We are the mud and filth of this earth / Of what we can and would become / This likeness is all we are // Artist of my clay spirit / I am the reclaimed fallen son / Of what we can or would die to see: / I fire in the hearts of men // In blackest day of generations / My end is to end as the dead / We dead promethean sons / End of the dead / "Titans, Behold your God!" / Bow before the potter's Son / My end is to end as the dead / Promethean child! [...]" A Hill to Die Upon, *Infinite Titanic Immortal*, Bombworks Records, 2008.

*children*” speaks the band, declaring that all creation of Prometheus is filth and should die with time, altogether with the titan himself. And as the song suggest, a great loving God would shine up for the Promethean children before their end. The song is clear, and opens a new way in the reception of the titan’s myths, not stressing his bravery as a rebel, but his real punishment: death, what he cannot escape.

The last piece comes from the homeland of Prometheus. Previously introduced Septicflesh’s studio album of 2014 bears the title of *Titan* (and the song *Prometheus*),<sup>400</sup> evoking the fate of all titans of Greek mythology: defeat and perishing. In this case we can find a piece of lyrics once again praising the efforts of Prometheus, calling him for aid. The song itself brings in a kind of militant atmosphere mainly not touched so obviously before. The first line itself states that some kind of enemy should be banned with the freshly risen titan on their side. It seems like Prometheus needs some coaching and encouragement, as testified in the second verse. As he is called “*Deus ex Machina*” his new presence brings fear to the heart of gods (not only one god, but for the whole pantheon, once again metaphorizing the *sujet* of the myth). All of the song suggests a great war, a newly risen power that can fight once again the gods, in the centre with the titan, and around all his children: humanity. Only the last two lines bring in some shadows to the anticipated bright future: Prometheus is destined to fall, no matter how much power he can gather; but at least his presence before the defeat can harm the enemy. A rebellion without a possible positive outcome becomes more heroic, makes the enemy more demonic, all together bringing in a higher level of epic atmosphere for the song.

### 3.3.3. Various Greek Myths

The first myths that we are going to focus on are maybe the most well known stories of ancient Greek literature: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The epics are traditionally connected with the mysterious figure of Homer show us two different world views from different stages of ancient Greek thought. The *Iliad* represents a world driven by brute force and dominant skills in combat, highlighting Achilles and Hector to be the ideal while the *Odyssey* relies more on

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<sup>400</sup> "Stand against our enemy / Fire / The blessing touch of your despair / Despair and loneliness / You'll rise up, before you fall again / Atrocious / The bird of prey is haunting us [...] Guide us / Deus / Your fire in our hearts / Deus ex machina / Guide us / Deus / You are bringing fear to gods / Deus ex machina / Guide us / Deus / Your fire in our hearts / Deus ex machina / Guide us / Deus / The children of Prometheus / Deus ex machina / Guide us / Deus ex machina // Prometheus... / As a giant, standing tall / In a shadow close the blackness / Prometheus / As your breed, we are bound to fall / But our light will scare the darkness" Septicflesh, *Titan*, Season Of Mist, 2014.

the trickster figure of Odysseus. The plot and details of the two epics are important bricks in Western culture, thus it is not necessary to retell it. The first song that is inspired by the Homeric tradition is Manowar's<sup>401</sup> *Achilles, Agony and Ecstasy in Eight Parts* from 1992.<sup>402</sup> The title itself localizes the borders of the story: starting from book XII to XXIV, focusing on the figure of Achilles in the mentioned emotions. The song is structured into eight minor chapter each with different sound and ambience in the music itself. The eight chapters are:

- I) *Hector Storms the Wall*
- II) *The Death of Patroclus*
- III) *Funeral March*
- IV) *Armor of the Gods*
- V) *Hector's Final Hour*
- VI) *Death Hector's Reward*
- VII) *The Desecration of Hector's Body*
- VIII) *The Glory of Achilles*

Three section of the above listed (III, IV and VII) are instrumental ones without lyrics. The other five chapters without even taking a look on the actual lyric are showing us the route that the song chose to walk through: the protagonist is Achilles while his antagonist is Hector of Troy, fighting over the death of Patroclus. Let us have some citations to illustrate the endeavour of Manowar. Chapter I is written from the viewpoint of Hector endangering the Greek campaign with his ambush on their fleet, depicting in the second verse<sup>403</sup> the intensity of his attack and the protecting help of Zeus, declared after being deceived by Hera and Poseidon in favour of the invaders.<sup>404</sup> The verse foreshadows the second Chapter. We do not see the death of Patroclus himself only the charging Trojans in Chapter I and the mourning Achilles in Chapter II.<sup>405</sup> The most important elements of the epic are present: the grief of the hero and his promise of vengeance. The funeral of Patroclus and the description of Achilles' armour received from Hephaestus are illustrated with only music, but in Chapter V Hector

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<sup>401</sup> Manowar is one of the leading power/heavy metal bands of the USA always revolving around topics of heroism and male power.

<sup>402</sup> Manowar, *The Triumph of Steel*, Atlantic Records, 1992.

<sup>403</sup> "[...] *We will pay with our glory in the fire of battle / Zeus today is mine / Killing all in my way like sheep and like cattle / smashing skulls of all who defy / I spare not the hammer I spare not the sword / This day will ring with my name / None have to chase me let he who will face me / Kill me or die by the sword [...]*" Manowar, *ibid.* 1992.

<sup>404</sup> HOMER, *The Iliad = The Internet Classics Archive*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/iliad.html>, (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.) Book XIV-XV.

<sup>405</sup> "[...] *Oh friend of mine, how to say goodbye / This was your time, but the armor you wore was mine / I will not rest until / Hector's blood is spilled / His bones will all be broken dragged across the field / This dear friend is how we'll say goodbye / until we meet in the sky [...]*" Manowar, *ibid.* 1992.

speaks again, now to his mortal enemy, Achilles before the eventual arrival of his death by the Greek hero's sword.<sup>406</sup> Chapter VI gives back the word to Achilles, once again we do not witness the great duel between the epic's heroes only the aftermath: the rage of Achilles not lessening by the death of Hector but his will to desecrate the dead body.<sup>407</sup> The song's closure is foreshadowing as well referring to the imminent death of Achilles after the defeat and death of Hector, giving the words into the mouth of the mourning father, Priamos.<sup>408</sup>

The adventures of Odysseus are a treasury of inspiration for all branches of art, from classical to modern painting, sculpture, cinema and metal music. Two examples are chosen to present the reception of the *Odyssey*: from England's My Dying Bride the song *Hail Odysseus*<sup>409</sup> and *Home At Last* from Germany's Grave Digger.<sup>410</sup> Death/doom metal pioneers My Dying Bride from Halifax, England chose to write a song about the most musical episode of the *Odyssey*: the encounter with the Sirens on the sea. The deadly musical experience of the Sirens is a feature outside the world of Homer too in most cases meaning a distractingly sweet singing from demonic creatures that tend to lead all sailors and ships into death with their art.<sup>411</sup> The excerpt<sup>412</sup> shows us that the desire of the sirens to seduce Odysseus and his crew may become a reality. The original epic's plot is altered in this version only to show the other side of the story focusing on the sirens and their lust to have Odysseus become their king. This deadly love is the cause of the distracting song: in the closure of the lyric we witness that the sirens stop to sing after Odysseus fall into their trap. The main actor of the song is a woman not named who desires the most to have Odysseus and to achieve this she steps into the ranks of the sirens to join their song eventually leading to the shipwreck of the Ithacan hero. As we do not have any information about this mysterious woman only the strength of her desire we are not to assume the identity of her.

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<sup>406</sup> "[...] I hear the silent voices I cannot hide / The gods leave no choices so we all must die / Oh Achilles let thy arrows fly, into the / wind, where eagles cross the sky / Today my mortal blood will mix with sand it was foretold / I will die by thy hand into Hades my soul descend [...]" Manowar, *ibid.* 1992.

<sup>407</sup> "[...] Blood and fire death and hate, your body I will desecrate / Dogs and vultures eat your flesh the Hall of Hades waits / Die... [...]" Manowar, *ibid.* 1992.

<sup>408</sup> "[...] Hector's blood will not be washed from my body / Until your body is burned / A prophecy spoken a promise fulfilled / More blood will be spilled, more will be killed" Manowar, *ibid.* 1992

<sup>409</sup> My Dying Bride, *The Map of All Failures*, Peaceville Records, 2012.

<sup>410</sup> Grave Digger, *Clash of the Gods*, Napalm Records, 2012.

<sup>411</sup> KERÉNYI Károly, *ibid.* 1977, 28-29.

<sup>412</sup> "He surely sails on tameless seas / With idle hours in devils hands / One hundred men on tameless seas / Always searching for sacred land [...] Hail Odysseus, come to us / So heave onwards and heave toward us / With wrists bangled with gold and stars // And from below she screams out 'No! Odysseus, please don't go!' / And you must fear the voice you hear / Already now, they're so near / 'And you will fall at the sirens call, into their poisoned claws!' [...] 'So now sing, lure them in, Odysseus can be your king / The only way to love him, dear child, is to sing them in' // And so it was, the crew were lost, even brave Odysseus / Into her arms forevermore, she sings no longer on the shore [...]" My Dying Bride, *ibid.* 2012.

The version of Grave Digger focuses on the climatic point of the epic: the arrival of Odysseus back to Ithaca. The first three verses give the core of the song,<sup>413</sup> giving a glance on the moment of arriving home after the long years of wandering. The song gives a really compressed and brief summary of all his journeys and adventures from the siege of Troy alongside with the hero of *Iliad* (the only one named) until his travel's end. The second verse enumerates a list of oppositions like saint, sinners, gods, killers, suggesting that the long years spent on the seas were not just empty and goalless floating but are containing the full cycle of life and death as the epic suggests as well. The satisfaction of ending the journey is mixed with the last task to perform of driving away the pretenders from his own house. The last picture connects back to the topic of My Dying Bride showing the potent hero in chains chosen by himself. The two songs about the figure of Odysseus shows us that although his adventures are out of this world with their excitement it is more important to focus on the person who is enduring the events and is an object of destructive desire or a traveller home at last.

The myth of Hades and Persephone or the Abduction (or Rape) of Persephone is once again one of the most well known myths of ancient Greek literature. According to the *Theogony* of Hesiod, Persephone is abducted by Hades to be her queen in the Underworld,<sup>414</sup> with the famous episode of Kore and her nymphs collecting flowers when Hades appears on his chariot and takes the girl. The mother of Persephone, Demeter in her grief over losing her daughter turns the weather into winter and does not allow for anything to grow. As result and to let the earth bloom once again Hades gives back Persephone but she ate a seed of the pomegranate, and as she did so in the Underworld, never can leave it fully. Thus one portion of the year she spends in the Underworld (winter) and the other in the upper world. Of course this story has many other aspects but serves to be the origin myth of the cycle of the year as well.<sup>415</sup> The 2004 song of Therion, *Dark Venus Persephone* introduces us the myth in its details.<sup>416</sup> The title indicates us that there is a connection between Greek and Roman mythology, giving the Dark Venus attribute to the goddess (that is present too in calling her

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<sup>413</sup> "Time has come, my journey's at the end / Years I have traveled, lost a lot of friends / At the walls of Troy I fought for my king / Achilles by my side for the faith to win // Saints and sinners / Liars and killers / Gods and heroes / Crossed my ways / Home at last / Goodbye to the past / Home at last / Our faith is hard and fast / Home at last / Tied to the mast / Home at last, Home at last! [...]" Grave Digger, *ibid.* 2012.

<sup>414</sup> HESIOD *ibid.* 1914a, 912-914 lines.

<sup>415</sup> KERÉNYI Károly, *ibid.* 1977, 107-114.

<sup>416</sup> "Together in underworld, Hades and Persephone / Daughter of Ceres, a tragic fate / It fell to your lot the day you ate / Apples from the Elysian fields // Persephone in (the) underworld // Forever in the underworld, (the) fate of Persephone / Only the summer will set you free / But you'll be forced back to your husband / When you taste the pomegranate juice // Persephone in (the) underworld / Inside the underworld / Inside the ice and winter snow / (In the) water of Cyane / Your girdle float // Underworld Venus Persephone" Therion, *ibid.* 2004b

mother by the Roman name: Ceres). From the lyrics it is clear that this identification of the two figures are meeting in the topic of love that is core issue of this instance of reception. The love depicted in the song is of an abusive relationship where Hades seems like a monster from whom the wife wants to escape, but as her fate is sealed with the act of eating in the house of death she does not have the opportunity to do so, only temporarily. As the common reference to the story is the “*Rape of Persephone*” the Dark Venus aspect is explained, as she is the only goddess in the Underworld in the role of a lover. Her lost girdle, found by her mother also stresses the violent, abusive connotations of the story making Persephone to be a queen who is crowned by humiliation accused by her husband.

The era of Titans was introduced in the chapter above, but not Prometheus is the only to be an inspiration for a metal lyric. With regard to this we now take a look on two pieces and only mention the new information necessary for understanding. The song of Rotting Christ from 2007 uses two titans’ names for title: *Helios Hyperion*.<sup>417</sup> As the figures of Helios and Hyperion are in many cases mixed with each other<sup>418</sup> we can say that the writer of the text is aware of the academic results of the field. The chorus of the song<sup>419</sup> show a militant ambience whereas the people who are addressed are invited to his realm that seems to achieve a primordial, instinct driven life, what could be identified with the primeval force of titans and their hostility towards the Olympian gods. The titanomachia clearly depicts the titans as villainous entities that are destroyed and imprisoned by the victorious and just gods.<sup>420</sup> The first verse also relies on the instincts of man<sup>421</sup> having a clear resemblance to the *Blood of Kingu* song by Therion in Chapter 3.2. where the demonic side of human existence is invoked. The war where men are invited to in this regard is a struggle with the power of the gods or with religion itself. *Hyperion* is invoked by Nightfall as well.<sup>422</sup> We see the titan as the Sun itself revolving around all life presented here in a hymn-like form. The praising of the Sun in this way is a mythological description of a myth itself about the almighty Hyperion.

<sup>417</sup> Rotting Christ, *ibid.* 2007.

<sup>418</sup> A. A. TAHO-GOGYI, *Hüperión = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 692.

<sup>419</sup> “[...] *And hype up the will of vengeance, / And draw down to earth by spells and wickedness. / The joyful colour is for me, / What does paint your soul with wickness. / And break up your sacredness, / And bless the impure with joy and rawness. / Supreme victim is for me, / What is haunt with tear and prayer. [...]*” Rotting Christ, *ibid.* 2007.

<sup>420</sup> KERÉNYI Károly, *ibid.* 1977, 14.

<sup>421</sup> “*I am the titan, ruler of the earth, / Lord of upper and under cosmos. I govern the weakness in every cry of the human. / I am the Cronus, offspring of Earth and chaos. / I teach you the art of war, far in you sleepy subconscious. [...]*” Rotting Christ, *ibid.* 2007.

<sup>422</sup> “*The titan beast in flaming suit / The lord of light, the saturn's moon / The father he is of dawn and sun / Beneath the realms of moral man // Blast, above the spring of cosmic dust / The hordes of monster rays ram // Selene and Helious form the bridge / The darkness passes through the rim / Defending beams protect the world / The tongues of flames resist the cold / Hyperion*” Nightfall, *ibid.* 2013.

The lyric speaks for itself quite obviously enumerating the positive effects of Sunlight with warmth. Helios and Hyperion is mixed here as well, nevertheless mentioning both of the separately alongside with the Moon goddess Selene, resembling the many times inconsecutive system of Greek mythology. The depicted sunrise in the text follows the path of descriptive story telling like what we witnessed in the case of Nile in Chapter 3.2.

The last part of current compilation is about the tragic story of Narcissus and Echo. For contemporary society Narcissus is the allegory of vanity, what if we connect with the version found at Ovid<sup>423</sup> than we have a cruel story of a beautiful young person, a son of a god and a nymph who is obsessed with his own beauty<sup>424</sup> thus breaking the heart of the nymph who is only able to echo the last syllable of the word she hears and is in love with the previously mentioned. This myth is the base of the Septicflesh song entitled *Narcissus*.<sup>425</sup> The song grasps this tragic love story reading of the myth, where we can see both actors enclosed in their own worlds. The nymph Echo is placed to be the tragic heroine of the story who is not introduced why is sentenced for the repetition of others last words but is presented as the lover whose love is never to be fulfilled. The first verse states that their story is to be found in Venus' Temple<sup>426</sup> suggesting that this story is of ancient source and from the realm of the goddess of love in this regard forgetting about the origin myth of the narcissus flower for the sake of the tragic side of love. Narcissus is shown to be a cruel and self obsessed being who even states that his love is never to reach Echo.<sup>427</sup> This is also the climatic point of the song with the determination of denying the love of Echo, who at a first glance seems to be not noticed by Narcissus. The cited verse states clearly that the intentions of Narcissus are of vile nature, leaving Echo in agony. The second part of the song focuses on Narcissus and his road to the ultimate fate that is not detailed. The lyric ends with the description of the male nymph's facial expressions that shows us his nature: being beautiful and cold.<sup>428</sup> We have now the tragedy of misunderstanding and the problem of lack of being able to communicate that is fatal in a case of a love scenario.

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<sup>423</sup> A. A. TAHO-GOGYI, *Ékhó = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 667.

<sup>424</sup> M. Ny. BOTVINNYIK, *Narkisszosz = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 722-723.

<sup>425</sup> Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>426</sup> "On the walls of Venus's temple / The tale of Narcissus and Echo [...]" Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>427</sup> "[...] These words hurt deep / His pride his actions leads / << I would rather die / Than you should have me >> [...]" Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>428</sup> "[...] His face was young and / In the crystal waters glowed / His smile was cold reflecting / Back a thought [...]" Septicflesh, *ibid.* 2008.

### 3.3.4. Roman Myths and Religion

As we are going to see Roman mythology and religion are not that popular compared to Greek, Middle Eastern or to Viking and Celtic mythology coming forth. The handful of lyrics chosen are coming from bands with a reputation of underground qualities. The yet introduced chronological order of records is broken for the chronology of the Eternal City's history. Thus the first song brings us back to the moment when the city was founded by Romulus and Remus. The story best known on the account of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* from the book of Romulus.<sup>429</sup> This version of the story describes the fight between the twin brothers who quarrel over the chief authority of the fresh settlement, leading to the well known episode of Remus mocking the low, yet under construction walls of the city ending with his execution leaving Romulus being the only king in the city. The song entitled *Romulus* by Canadian band Ex Deo comes from the 2009 debut album of the band.<sup>430</sup> The members of Ex Deo started their mentioned project in 2008 transforming their musical efforts of Kataklysm (death metal band of decades old career). The whole programme of the Ex Deo version is to work with Roman heritage that may originate from the interest of Italian descent frontman Mauricio Iacono. The song covers<sup>431</sup> the conflict between the founding fathers of Rome. The speaker takes the role of Romulus speaking of the founding of the City. Romulus proclaims himself as the king of the city, drawing the way to the death of his brother, using the most important elements of the original myth. The text gives us an insight to the mind of a brother who was threatened by his twin, justifying the fatal deed. The song offers us a reading of the original myth that never can be restored, building an almost adventure film like scenery. In the excerpt we see a reference to augury that had its importance during early Roman religion and divination, also stating the ancestry of Romulus, in this regard only speaking of himself almost forgetting about the same rights of his brother because of the same reasons. The music of Ex Deo gives a kind of insight into the speculated or imaginary mind of Romulus on the point when he has to deal with the execution of his brother by his own command and to determine the fate of the city that may arise to the future's fame on his choices made in this situation.

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<sup>429</sup> PLUTARCH, *Romulus = Parallel Lives*, Chicago University  
([http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Romulus\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Romulus*.html) Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)  
Caput 10-12.

<sup>430</sup> Ex Deo, *Romulus*, Nuclear Blast, 2009.

<sup>431</sup> "Romulus, from the wolf's mouth I feed eternity / Romulus, with my brother's blood I opened wide the gates of time // Standing at the hill cliff / A flock of birds crown me / I am fathered by the god of war, I am the king of Rome // Then his jealousy blooms, the envy to lead my people: / So perish everyone who shall leap over my wall! [...] Remus defied me, and I shall strike upon those who disobey me with death! [...]" Ex Deo, *ibid.* 2009

The melancholic music of Primordial after *Babel's Tower* guides us to the world of the declining Roman Republic with their 2011 song called *Death of the Gods*.<sup>432</sup> Before turning to the textual side of the song we should state that in a tight meaning this song is not part of the mythological corpus that has been introduced in the pages and chapters above, nevertheless it has references to mythological figures and to ancient history what makes it suitable for us to work with it. The cited section below<sup>433</sup> lists a series of events that are connected with members of the Graeco-Roman pantheon, depicting a transition of power within a state. The terms used, like Týranny, Republic and senate leads our reading towards the decline of the Roman republic during the reign of Caius Julius Caesar whose way to his ultimate power created the cradle for the emperors to come after him. This emergence of Týranny and decadence of republic traits with the applause of the people is on one side a punctual image in a retrospective manner on the new authority system of the Roman state but also could be an allegory, a parallel or a metaphor to refer to other historical events or to a current situation either political or not. The laughing of Zeus and the ask for Mars's lightning bolt mixes the two pillars of classical antiquity widening the picture of the Roman state to an all European perspective. The reference to the "*bloodied spear of destiny*" (the spear that wounded Christ on the cross) brings in an anticlerical shade to the whole song doubting the authority of the Church. This triangle of the leading god Zeus, the war god Ares and the instrument of wounding Jesus draws a line of history with thousands of years of Europe giving the impression that the speaker sees this history as a series of Týrannical powers that were not opposed the way they should have been, encouraging the listener to the ideal of rebellion against any kind of power of the same kind, independent on time and space. In this case of reception we see that the religious phenomena are used to enhance the message only using them as tools for the goal of the song.

The next piece comes from Greek underground black metal band Naer Mataron. *Sol Invictus* of their 2008 LP<sup>434</sup> is an ode to the god of the same name. Sol Invictus is the name of a sun god who achieved his highest rank of worship during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD becoming also a patron of soldiers. The sun god Sol Invictus, literally "*Unconquered Sun*" is in most of the

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<sup>432</sup> Primordial, *Redemption at the Puritan's Hand*, Metal Blade Records, 2011.

<sup>433</sup> "We stood on the shoulders of giants / Like atlas with the burden of faith / We clasped our hands in praise / of a conqueror's right to Týranny / This is a language that has not passed / Our lips in one thousand years [...] This is the death of the Republic and make no mistake / The senate is lost and Zeus is laughing / So Mars God of war can you send a lightning bolt / To smash the temple of the blind / The Tiber is over flowing with the blood of innocent men // And so we stood, among thieves, liars and murderers / Whose names shall live in eternal rest and infamy / Disgraced kings enshrined with their pious men / Who ruled us all with the bloodied spear of destiny [...]" Primordial, *ibid.* 2011.

<sup>434</sup> Naer Mataron, *Praetorians*, Season of Mist, 2008.

cases mentioned in connection with the dating of Christmas. As Christmas in Western culture follows the winter solstice it may seem obvious that the great feast of the returning longer daylight hours celebrated by Roman paganism should be interchanged with the main feast of later dominating Christmas. This theory is refuted by now,<sup>435</sup> nevertheless the figure of the Sun god returning from Darkness to gain victory is important for us now from the great variety of late imperial Rome because of the song of Naer Mataron. The first, second and sixth verses are cited,<sup>436</sup> focusing on the god's main heroic deed of bringing back the light. The dualism of light and darkness are taken into the soul of humanity in this piece of lyric, placing the struggle of the macrocosm into the microcosm in the occultist way depicted in Chapter 2.1. Thus the myth and figure of Sol Invictus is used once again as an instrument or tool to encourage the listener for inner awakening that is illustrated with a militant verse in the closure of the song. This actualizes the victory of Sol Invictus also suggesting that the Unconquered Sun's inner followers may be also unconquered.

Maybe the most famous initiatory cult of the Hellenistic world is the cult of Mithras. Ancient Rites of Belgium devoted their work to the ancient and Middle Ages heritage of Europe, thus their 2006 record called *Rubicon* includes a track entitled *Mithras*.<sup>437</sup> The song is dedicated to the god Mithras, in a hymn like form praising his qualities and praying for his help. The text may try to imitate an ancient formula, what only has a meaning for those who are initiated into the cult – as it was the way for original worshippers. The main elements of the cult (Mithras god of light, who protects the believers, the levels of initiations with given names, and that Mithras is a warrior god defeating darkness keeping the circulation of the world in order)<sup>438</sup> are listed in a lyrically accurate way, romanticizing the original religion.

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<sup>435</sup> Steven HIJMANS, *Sol Invictus, The Winter Solstice, and the Origins of Christmas*, *Museion Series 3/3* (2003), 377-398.

<sup>436</sup> "From the longest night in the year / From the deepest darkness of human existence / From the despire and the resignation / Sol invictus is reborn in the solstice in December [...] Let's turn our eyes inside / Our race's bloody river flows / There where our ancestors live / Let reach out our hand towards them [...] Unfold the banners light the candles and the torches / Flame up in your hearts the flame / Which lights the darkness of denial of our faith / Forge the power of your action" Naer Mataron, *ibid.* 2008.

<sup>437</sup> "Mithras, God of the morning, our trumpets awaken the wall! / 'Rome is above nations, but thou art over all' / Now as the names are answered, and the guards marched away / Mithras, also a soldier, give us strength of the day! // Mithras, God of the sunset, low on the western main / Thou descending immortal, immortal to rise again! / now, when the watch is ended, now when the wine is drawn / Mithras, also a soldier, keep us pure til dawn! [...]" Ancient Rites, *ibid.* 2006.

<sup>438</sup> Sarah Iles JOHNSTON, *Riders in the Sky: Cavalier Gods and Theurgic Salvation in the Second Century AD*, *Classical Philology*, 87/4 (1992), 303-321.

### 3.4. Viking Mythology or the Cold North in a Heated Heathen Music

#### 3.4.1. General Introduction

From the Levantine and Mediterranean cradle of European civilization we move to the cold North, where the commonly known Viking culture dwelt and bloomed their religion and mythology. The word “*Viking*” became equivalent with all the cultures and peoples living in the Scandinavian Peninsula mostly known of their deeds as sailors and pirates. The origin of the word “*Viking*” is not sure until recent days, but as a term for a nation is not sufficient. Vikings were a thin layer of the so called Nordic cultures that consist of the Germanic peoples of the named area living in the current territories of Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Iceland. The age of Nordic cultures in the sense connected to the Viking activities span from the 8<sup>th</sup> century to 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. ending with the christening of the named countries. The known history of Germanic peoples start from the Great Migration age (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) not exclusively focusing on the Scandinavian territories (e.g. Frankish and Gothic history). The usual dating as the starting point of the “*Viking Age*” is the year 793, when Nordic pirates pillaged the Monastery of Lindisfarne.<sup>439</sup> Because of the widespread notion of identifying the Nordic cultures with the Viking conquerors and pirates in this section we are going to refer to the myths presented below as Viking myths.

As we are going to see in case of Celtic mythology as well the tradition of Vikings is mostly known from written sources scribed by Christian monks. The most well known compilations of Scandinavian mythology are the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*. The *Prose Edda* was canonized by Icelandic monk Snorre Sturlason the *Poetic Edda* has no direct editor but could be found in various codexes like the *Codex Regius*. Besides these we have an amount of Runic inscriptions, ancient Latin auctors’ works (e.g. Tacitus: *Germania*), sagas written down in the Middle Ages as well and place names just to mention the most important ones.<sup>440</sup> The pantheon and myths that we learn from these sources show us the belief system of the warlords and their retinue clearly focusing on gods that are involved in fighting, justice and poetry, giving less space for the deities responsible for vegetation.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Eric CHRISTIANSEN, *Vikingek*, Szeged, Szukits Kiadó, 2008, 15-21.

<sup>440</sup> BERNÁTH István, *Skandináv mitológia*, Budapest, Corvina, 2005, 35-45.

<sup>441</sup> Compare in the next section (3.4.2. The Myths of Creation) the Asir-Vanir war.

In this chapter we are going to begin with an enumeration of Viking mythology inspired band names, but first here is to stay the first ever lyrics of heavy music referring to Vikings. The third effort of progressive rock pioneers, Led Zeppelin (*Led Zeppelin III*) starts with the famous *Immigrant Song*.<sup>442</sup> The song only contains small references to mythology, which aims to give a perspective on the conquest of Vikings during the 9<sup>th</sup> century when the conquerors took great territories from the British Isles. In the lyrics the fierceness, dedication and bravery (reference of entering the Valhalla) of Vikings is presented, alongside with the praising of their new homelands. The ironic manner of the title romanticises the aggressive settling of Vikings in a new way, representing it from the viewpoint of the aggressors.

Below is the table of mythological band names and the usual information about them.

<b>Name of band/musician</b>	<b>Origin/Year of Formation</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Mythological reference</b>
Einherjer	Norway/1993	Viking metal	The warriors of Valhalla
Finntroll	Finland/1997	black/folk metal	Trolls
Helheim	Norway/1992	Viking/black metal	The realm of Hel
King of Asgard	Sweden/2008	melodic death/Viking metal	The epithet of Odin
Månegarm	Sweden/1995	Viking/black/folk metal	Cosmic wolf
Naglfar	Sweden/1992	melodic black metal	The ship of the Enemy on the event of Ragnarök
Ragnarok	Norway/1994	black metal	The Twilight of the Gods
Sleipnir	United Kingdom/2005	Viking metal	The horse of Odin
Týr	Faroe Islands/1998	progressive/folk metal	God of warfare and justice

Table 7.: Viking mythology inspired band names

<sup>442</sup> „We come from the land of the ice and snow,/ From the midnight sun where the hot springs flow. // Hammer of the gods will drive our ships to new land. / To fight the hordes and sing, and cry. / Valhalla, I am coming. // Always sweep with, with threshing oar. / Our only goal will be the western shore. [...] How soft your fields so green. Can whisper tales of gore. / Of how we calmed the tides of war. We are your overlords. [...]” Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin III*, Atlantic, 1970.

The band names listed above do not provide us the canon of Viking metal and are only mere examples how Viking mythology inspires band names. As we have seen it in the case of Satanist metal music here we have the overwhelming majority of Scandinavian bands interested in their heritage. This does not mean once again that other nation's metal bands may not be interested in Viking mythology, but the typical scene for Scandinavian myths is Scandinavia. Let us now see what are the topics and who are the figures that manifests in the names of musical groups. The first example in the alphabetic order is Einherjer from Norway, being a Viking metal band of more than two decades of history inspired by the army of Odin. This army consists of the dead who have fallen in battle, forming the primary force of the Asa gods against their enemies during the Ragnarök.<sup>443</sup> Finntroll is one of the most important folk metal acts of Finland of the recent decades mixing the Finnish polka with black metal, referring in their name to the creatures known as trolls, a class of giants being gruesome, eating manflesh and guarding treasure hoards.<sup>444</sup>

Hel or Helheim is one of the realms of the dead. The territory of the goddess Hel (as in Greek mythology Hades is both the name of the deity and his realm thus Hel is sometimes used to name the goddess and the Underworld as well) which is origin of the English word Hell is the opposite of the Valhalla. In the Valhalla we can find the einherjer, the brave dead, in Hel we meet those who died of natural causes, suffering until the day of Ragnarök.<sup>445</sup> Helheim is Viking/black metal band from Norway, using the Scandinavian concept of eternal torment resembling the way as Satanist bands use the concept of Christian hell. Behind the name King of Asgard we find a melodic death metal act with a taste for Viking mythology, also to meet in the next section. The name of the band is one of the epithets of Odin, the king of Asir gods and the ruler of their kingdom, Asgard.<sup>446</sup> The cosmology (Niú Heimar) is to be introduced in the following chapter.

Månegarm is once again a negative figure, an antagonist of the gods like Hel, this time manifested as a cosmic wolf, being the guardian of Hel's gates,<sup>447</sup> just like Cerberos but without the three heads, serving as the name giver of a Viking/folk metal band coming from Sweden. Coming also from Sweden, yet introduced (Chapter 3.2.3.5.) Naglfar does not deal with Viking topics on a general level. The band borrows their name from an instrument of destruction during the Ragnarök once again: the ship built from the nails of the dead suffering

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<sup>443</sup> Kathleen N. DALY, *Norse Mythology A-Z*, New York, Chelsea House, 2010, 24.

<sup>444</sup> M. JUSZIM, *Trollok = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 605.

<sup>445</sup> John LINDOW, *Norse Mythology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, 172.

<sup>446</sup> John LINDOW, *ibid.* 2001, 61.

<sup>447</sup> Je. M. MELETYINSZKIJ, *Garm = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 584.

in Hel is filled with the armies of the antagonists<sup>448</sup> is used in this case as Helheim was used previously.

After many references to Ragnarök, or since Wagner known better as *Twilight of the Gods*, the great battle that brings the end of the world we arrive to the Norwegian Satanist black metal band Ragnarok (with the English transcription of the word). The battle that is fought between the Asir gods and the armies of Hel, supported by giants, the dead and the monster offspring of Loki (Jörmundrgandr serpent, Fenrir wolf, and Hel herself) leads to the ultimate destruction of our world only to let it reborn.<sup>449</sup> Sleipnir is the eight legged horse of Odin an offspring of the god Loki,<sup>450</sup> is the name giver of the sole band coming outside of Scandinavia in this enumeration, a Viking metal band from the UK. The last band to introduce this way is Týr from the Faroe Islands, playing a mixture of progressive and folk metal only dealing in their lyrics with the heritage of their ancestors. The god Týr, the half handed one, who gave his hand to the Fenrir wolf for the gods to be able to chain up the monster is one of the gods of warfare and the judge of the Asir gods, one of the most important ones in this regard.<sup>451</sup> We have seen above that various mythological creatures, places and gods are the sources of inspiration for bands to follow the Viking way, with many different goals and aims. Now it is time to take a look on lyrics that deal with Scandinavian myths.

### 3.4.2. The Myths of Creation

As it was referred above one of the main sources of Viking mythology is the so called Prose or Younger Edda.<sup>452</sup> The first section of the Prose Edda is called *Gylfaginning* or the “*Tricking (Fooling) of Gylfi*” telling the story of king Gylfi searching for the origin of the world. The frame of the story is the meeting between three mysterious figures and the king whereas the three tell the answers to the questions of Gylfi.<sup>453</sup> From this we are informed that the world originates from a void where hot and cold met in the Ginnungagap, creating life from nothingness by sparks. The ancient giant Ymir is introduced who was killed later by Odin, Vili and Ve to construct the world from his body parts. After the creation of the world the origin of many phenomena is introduced, like poetry, the cosmology, the classification of

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<sup>448</sup> Kathleen N. DALY, *ibid.* 2010, 72.

<sup>449</sup> Je. M. MELETYINSZKIJ, *Ragnarök = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 598.

<sup>450</sup> John LINDOW, *ibid.* 2001, 274.

<sup>451</sup> Kathleen N. DALY, *ibid.* 2010, 108.

<sup>452</sup> Younger = the written source for the Prose Edda is younger than the Poetic Edda's.

<sup>453</sup> Compare: *The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Younger Edda, by Snorre*, July 31, 2006 [EBook #18947] <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18947/18947-h/18947-h.htm#gylfe> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

the gods (Asir and Vanir, and their war), the main stories of Odin, Thor and Loki, and the prophecy on the world's end, telling the story of the death of Balder as a prelude to Ragnarök with the events of the battle itself. From this rich source first of all we focus on the creation of the world and the first war to occur in ancient Scandinavian thought.

The chronological presentation of lyrics is once again broken for the sake of the topic. The first song we are to focus on is the *Ginnungagap* from Swedish Therion. The band is cited in every chapter, thus now their concept album entitled *Secret of the Runes* of 2001 is summoned.<sup>454</sup> In the fourth chapter of *Gylfaginning* we read that in the primordial chaos there was a well in Niflheim, the realm of ice which was called Hvergelmer, the spring that flowed many rivers from into the Ginnungagap void where the water became ice, meeting the sparks of Muspelheim (a realm of fire) igniting the first life form ever. In the citation we see a call to the well of Hvergelmer, giving an introduction to the very beginning of creation. The song leads up to the emergence of the cosmic giant Ymir listing and calling the most important tools of his birth: the heat, the spark and the ice that started to melt. The atmosphere of the original story is well presented with a dark and empty void that is filled up with the extremities of the Scandinavian landscape embodied by ice and fire, suggesting that Ymir himself is in between, a mixture of the primeval forces. The rest of the song is in Swedish leaping towards the death of Ymir, and his dismemberment building up the frame of the known world. The change in language gives an even more primordial vide for the song, serving as a prelude for a whole concept album. The whole albums track listing shows the endeavour to introduce the complete cosmology of Viking mythology with the nine worlds (Niú Heimar) on the branches and parts of the cosmic ash tree called Yggdrasil. The track list is the following: 1) *Ginnungagap* (the primordial void); 2) *Midgård* (the realm of men); 3) *Asgård* (the realm of the Asir gods); 4) *Jotunheim* (the realm of Jotuns, "giants"); 5) *Schwarzalbenheim* (or Svartalfheim, the realm of dwarfs and dark elves); 6) *Ljusalfheim* (the realm of elves); 7) *Muspelheim* (the realm of fire); 8) *Nifelheim* (the realm of ice); 9) *Vanaheim* (the realm of the Vanir gods); 10) *Helheim* (yet introduced Underworld).<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> "Fall deep into Void / (in the) black hole of Nothing // Hail, Flow of Vergelmar / Hail, Flow of Vergelmar / Hail, Flow of Vergelmar / Hail, Old Void! // Hail, Flow of Vergelmar / Heat of creation / Hail, Flow of Vergelmar / Hail, Old Void! // Spark in the Nothingness / Heat of creation / Make the ice start to melt / life wake up in the void. // Ymer is born, fire and ice / Chaos will form, Megin will rise [...]" Therion, *Secret of the Runes*, Nuclear Blast, 2001.

<sup>455</sup> Therion, *ibid.* 2001.

The second song comes from King of Asgard referred to in the table of bands. The song, *Gap of Ginnungs* is from the second record of the group titled *...To North*.<sup>456</sup> In the end of Chapter IV of the *Gylfaginning*, we have a list about the deeds of Odin, Vili and Ve, the sons of Bur: the design of the world of the dismembered body of Ymir. The song starts with the depiction of the beginning, the gap of Ginnung presented as infinite nothingness, what is not the absence of existence but something more deep and endless: a void where there is neither sound nor silence and no directions as all these are to be made. With skipping some verses on the life giving spark we arrive exactly to the tearing of Ymir's body listing the newly built parts of the world in accordance to the *Prose Edda*'s sequence. The closure of the song turns back to birth of Ymir, and his living days when he sucked the milk of the comic cow Audhumbla. The last lines state that the death of Ymir is not an act of murder but part of life circularity, where the reformation of one's body parts is the beginning of life for something other or new.

The second big portion of the *Prose Edda* entitled *Brage's Talk (Skáldskaparmál)* gives the details of the first war ever fought on earth. The war between the Asir and Vanior gods resulted in the invention of poetry, thus serves as an origin myth of the mentioned and gives the mythical formation process of the pantheon. In Chapter IV of *Brage's Talk* we are introduced in the peace talks of the war, where after the Mead of Poetry was created. The war itself is referred more in the *Poetic Edda* in the *Völuspá* in stanzas 23 and 25,<sup>457</sup> and is euhemerized in the *Heimskringla* also compiled by Snorre Sturlason.<sup>458</sup> From the account of the last two sources we have a warfare started by the execution of Gullveig leading to a battle between the Asir and the Vanir where Odin is the main hero of the Asir. The war ends with a draw and the peace talks cited above. This hostility between the Asir and the fertility Vanir deities is the base of the 2011 song of Swedish Amon Amarth. *War of the Gods*<sup>459</sup> is the first song of the mentioned album. The career of Amon Amarth is gathering around Viking history and mythology, as it is represented by their whole discography, becoming one of the most

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<sup>456</sup> "In the beginning there was nought but distant past / There was nothing... nothing but a yawning Gap / A great emptiness, unending formless and void / No up, no down / No light, no darkness / No North nor South / No East nor West / No sound... nor silence [...]" *From flesh to Earth / From bone to mountain / From skull to Heaven ...of the frost cold giant // From blood, river, and sea / From teeth and bone shattered / Rocks, boulders, and stone ...of the frost cold giant // Muspelheim's sparks made their way into the Gap / And met with the ice of Niflheim / From melting, poison drops, Ymir and Audhumbla formed / Emergence of structure / Reformed and life was born / Reformed... and life was born [...]"* King of Asgard, *...To North*, Metal Blade Records, 2012.

<sup>457</sup> Compare: *The Elder Eddas of Saemund Sigfusson; and the Younger Eddas of Snorre Sturleson*. January 18, 2005 [EBook #14726] [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#VOLUSPA\\_THE\\_VALAS\\_PROPHECY](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#VOLUSPA_THE_VALAS_PROPHECY) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>458</sup> The Ynglinga Saga. <http://omac.org/Heimskringla/ynghinga.html> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>459</sup> Amon Amarth, *Surtur Rising*, Metal Blade Records, 2011.

important Viking metal bands of recent decades. The song as a whole is using mostly the *Poetic Edda* and *Heimskringla* accounts of the story, focusing on the warfare itself and neglecting the origin of poetry. The citation below shows the main points of the song.<sup>460</sup> The fight between the gods is depicted stating its chronological place (the first war ever) and detailing its causes and its other results than poetry. At the end of the war the two sides could only make a truce with a hostage exchange, bringing the most important fertility Vanir to Asgard. These hostages are not enumerated fully, as only Njord and his son Freyr are listed forgetting Freya the goddess of love. Nevertheless the masculinity represented by Amon Amarth gives enough explanation to this miss; showing in other details the interest and knowledge in the topics of the song (e.g. the Asir hostage's name, the cause and runoff of the war).

### 3.4.3. The Figures (and Myths) of Odin, Thor and Loki

The second section is going to revolve around the figures and connotations of the most important gods presented in the Eddas: Odin, Thor and Loki. As Odin is the chief of the Asir gods, the king in Asgard and one of the figures taking a great part in creation as it was referred to in the previous chapter, thus his deeds are a great interest in the written sources. His son, Thor the friend of humankind is the great warrior hero of Scandinavian mythology, whose hammer casts thunder and lightning (the Mjollnir), travels in the sky on a chariot pulled by two goats.<sup>461</sup> His counterpart is Loki, the trickster of Viking mythology, always thinking of deceiving and ill-fate, the cause of the Ragnarök and supposedly descendant of evil giants, enemies of the gods.<sup>462</sup>

The first song comes from a yet cited band, Manowar of the United States. Although the myth of Achilles was connected to their name in the first row it is to state that Viking heritage is more important in their music. To underline this interest we take a look on their

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<sup>460</sup> "War, the very first war of our world / when the treacherous witch was killed / three times burned, the three times born / by searing flames was Gullveig torn // Death, Odin hurled his spear off with great force / deep into the great Vana-Fyrd / battle horns gave up their sound / and Asgård walls razed to the ground // The Vanir felt deceived Höne was a fool / without Mimr at his side Höne could not rule / in a fit of violent rage Mimr's blood was shed / and to Odin's court they sent Mimr's severed head // Truce, so a brittle and frail peace was forged / and to ensure that the peace remained / Njord and Frej to Asgård came / and Hön' and Mim' to Vanaheim [...]" Amon Amarth, *ibid.* 2011.

<sup>461</sup> Kathleen N. DALY, *ibid.* 2010, 100-106.

<sup>462</sup> Je. M. MELETYINSZKIJ, *Loki = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 591-593.

1984 song *Thor (The Powerhead)* from the LP *Sign of the Hammer*.<sup>463</sup> The god Thor is invoked in this song, not focusing on any particular of his great deeds, rather in a hymn like form gives a general introduction to the figure of the god. Let us gather the information presented in the song about Thor: here is a brave warrior, who wields a hammer, kills giants, fierce, connected to thunder and is going to die together with three classes of existence. Here we have the most important attributes of the god collected as was mentioned above, with a supplementary mentioning of his and the worlds fate of destruction, not mentioning the Ragnarök by name. The list of “*gods, monsters and men*” depicts the triangular classification of existence in Scandinavian mythology dividing the world to the positive powers (gods), the negative ones (monsters, e.g. serpents, dragons, giants, the dead) and the ones in between them (men). These three represent differences of in power and significance but are drawn together for the same level in the event of Ragnarök, where death is inevitable for all. From this equality Thor is lifted up to a higher level, presenting him as the perfect warrior, an ideal for a metal band like Manowar. He is connected to the concept of righteous, religious warfare as well, as his enemies are labelled as infidels. These pagans are not quite clear who may be, at a first glance we can recall of course the giants, jotuns, but the world of Scandinavian mythology does not use this term to the enemies of the gods, thus we are also pressed to search for other possibilities. In this regard, as Thor is attributed to be an ideal for the band, thus a kind of guardian we may suppose that the infidels are a certain group not following the metal code or lifestyle.

The second song on Thor and on Valhalla comes from the also introduced pioneer of both black and Viking metal:<sup>464</sup> Bathory. After the three first records Quorthon choose to follow a still black metal rooted but more epic way of metal music that resulted in the great trilogy of Viking metal by the band. The three records (*Blood Fire Death*, *Hammerheart* and *Twilight of the Gods*)<sup>465</sup> draw an arch from raw black metal to melodic and epic Viking metal paving the road for many later Viking metal bands to choose from either end of the trilogy as

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<sup>463</sup> "I watched as he shouted / To the giants who died that day / He held up his hammer high / And called to Odin for a sign // Thor the mighty, Thor the brave / Crush the infidels in your way / By your hammer let none be saved / Live to die on that final day / Gods, monsters and men / Will die together in the end // God of thunder, God of rain / Earth shaker who feels no pain / The powerhead of the universe / Now send your neverending curse [...]" Manowar, *Sign of the Hammer*, Ten Records, 1984.

<sup>464</sup> Although the music and lyrics of Manowar contain many references to the ancient Scandinavian heritage, their musical performance and different topics in their textuality connects them more to the power metal tradition. As the sound of Bathory incorporates in some cases tunes of folk origin and attempts to pave a new path within the genre we may state that Manowar is a “Pre-Vikingish power metal” band and Bathory is the school example of Viking metal.

<sup>465</sup> Bathory, *Blood Fire Death*, Under One Flag, 1988; Bathory, *Hammerheart*, Noise Records, 1990; Bathory, *Twilight of the Gods*, Black Mark Production, 1991.

a way to play the genre. After a break in his career and a return to the black metal roots two more epic albums<sup>466</sup> reinforced the rules of the genre before the untimely death (2004) of the musician leaving behind a legacy to be a reference point for black and Viking musicians as well up to today. The definitive album, *Hammerheart* contains the song *Valhalla*.<sup>467</sup> Even the title of the whole record show the deep interest and bondage to the ancient Germanic world of Scandinavia, refereeing to the hammer of Thor that is taken to the heart of the musician and the listener thus invoking a real romantic almost nostalgic connection towards the past. The citation below puts two different topics next to each other. The first part focuses on the attributes of the god in an invoking form alike to the one sung by Manowar. The key points are listed here as well: lightning, thunder, the hammer, the glorious bravery of the god, and we also have a reference to the chariot of Thor. The pounding of thunders is associated with the noise of the chariot's wheels and the hooves of his goats (as seen in Chapter VIII of *Gylfaginning*), giving the perspective of a man who is not observing the god's journey from the same level, but from below. From the other parts of the song that are not cited we are informed that the situation where the song takes place is in connection with funerary rites, that is accumulated in the second cited section presenting the desire of the supposed dead to become one of the einherjer. The outlining of Valhalla ("*the Hall of the Slain*") is in accordance with the Chapter XII of *Gylfaginning* with its golden walls and shields, where the slain heroes of battle live their afterlife waiting for Ragnarök. The impression given is if Thor is living or at least waiting for the heroic dead at Valhalla, but in mythology he has his own dwelling in Asgard and does not reside with his father Odin, nevertheless the bravery of Thor thus is expanded to the host of einherjer. The prayer like song hereby gives us the atmosphere of a Viking warrior preparing to enter the promised afterlife worthy for his deeds.

The 1994 song of Enslaved is in Norwegian. The band that is a pillar of progressive black metal for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is inspired by Viking topics from their first recordings up to their recent ones. The song *Loke* is chosen for examination from the early days of the band to show the formation of the genre as well. The pure, Norwegian style black metal of Enslaved played in their first records is a raw and dark presentation of the trickster Loki.<sup>468</sup> Loki is

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<sup>466</sup> Bathory, *Nordland I*, Black Mark Production, 2001; Bathory, *Nordland II*, Black Mark Production, 2002.

<sup>467</sup> "God of Thunder / Who crack the sky / Swing your Hammer / Way up high [...] God of Thunder / Lightning rain / The Winds of Glory / Whispers your name // Pounding pounding / Of hooves and wheels / Forks of lightning / At your heels [...] Fallen heroes / In Battle slain / Awaits my arrival / At the gates of // Valhalla / Shields of gold / Valhalla / Great warriors hall [...]" Bathory, *ibid.* 1990.

<sup>468</sup> "Latter gjaller gjennom natten / Aftensstjernen lyser over Midgard / Ondskap sammenfiltres i mørket / det ordnede kosmos' fiende trer frem / Loke, Fårbautes sønn.. Løgners far / Født av jord, ubundet av lover / Takk gråter el tange tarer / for tapet av solens vakre sønn [...]" In English: "Laughter hurts through the night / The evening star lights over Midgard / Evil joins in the dark / The enemy of the ordered cosmos is emerging / Loke,

known from both *Edda*'s (Chapter IX on Loki and Chapter XV on Balder's death and the *Völuspá* poem) depicted as a great deceiver with a giant father and also god of fire. His figure is introduced in the lyrics of the song focusing on his negative aspects. The song does not count him as one of gods but as a nemesis of all divinity. He is named as father of lies, and a representative of chaos, the enemy of order and cosmos. The second part of the citation focuses on his most evil deed: being the cause of the death of Balder the fairest of gods. The death of Odin's son is the gateway to the world's end and Ragnarök. One episode is highlighted, when the only condition of Hel (as he died not a heroic death he is swallowed by Hel) was to release Balder from his realm is that all things in the world must mourn him. Only the giantess Thok did not mourn him, thus Balder could not escape Hel. The figure of Loki is a catalyst for Viking mythology in many cases causing trouble for Thor and the Asir but in the end making everything right, but not in this case. This introduction of Loki is loyal to the mythological tradition of the figure giving more authenticity of story by the original Norwegian text.

The line is continued with the Norwegian kinsmen of Enslaved, Einherjer with their 1998 song *Home*.<sup>469</sup> The group as their name suggests dedicates their work to Viking mythology, what is present in the chosen song as well.<sup>470</sup> The title promises a picture of a delighted place where the speaker feels at home. Soon it is revealed that this home is nothing other than Valhalla itself. The first verse outlines the situation of a dead warrior arriving to Asgard and Valhalla within (from the lyrics we may assume that in this case the two places are equivalent with each other) on the Rainbow Bridge of Bifröst (compare: the *Prose Edda* Chapter V) in a battle worn armour and a weapons still not dried with blood after the death of the hero. The most important external attribute of Valhalla is mentioned (golden roof) and the lord of the heroes' house is named, not as Odin but on one of his epithets' "*Allfather*". In the second verse the viewpoint changes to the einherjer living yet in the Hall of the Slain, greeting the newly arriving warrior and introducing him the most significant directives for one to live with them. From this verse we are informed once again about the importance of Odin

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*son of Fårbaute. Lies' father / Born of soil, unbound by laws / Thok does not weep heavy tears / for the loss of the sun's beautiful son [...]"* Translation by author. Enslaved, *Frost*, Osmose Productions, 1994.

<sup>469</sup> Einherjer, *Odin Owns Ye All*, Century Media Records, 1998.

<sup>470</sup> "*Across the bridge of colours born / Of fire water and air / Dressed in crimson armours / In hand are bloodwet spears / Reach the entrance heaven's gate / Honoured by the brave / See the hall with golden roof / The home allfather gave // Welcome to the hall of death / Great Odin we hail him / Come in, enjoy the glorious afterlife, my friend / Here we fill the ranks of Týr / Battle is our way / Every morning day and night till the winter fiercest come [...]* Enough of tears, enough of wail! / Not to lament in was Valhalla made / The wind as fresh as the air is clear / The greatest of men are here / All einherjer in Odin's court / Fare to fight each day / Select the slain, then leave the battle / Sit after at peace in the hall. [...]" Einherjer, *ibid.* 1998.

alongside the god Týr. He was mentioned above in a short section, here we should state that his figure is quite close to Odin's as Týr is also a god of war, but because of his bravery and sacrifice of his hand to the Fenrir wolf in accordance for the gods to be able to bind the beast, he is regarded as a divine judge of the Asir gods.<sup>471</sup> In mythology the einherjer are not connected to the god Týr, but his mentioning here with the host of Odin's soldiers suggests that as Týr is a protector of just fighting, it could be understood a praising of the einherjer who are under the protection of justice in their fight to come. In the last cited verse we see the everyday life of the einherjer as well referring to the process of choosing the right ones from the slain. The song is a praising of both the chief god Odin and his right hand Týr as well all bound together in a view over Valhalla.

With a great leap we arrive to 2011, to Germany. Falkenbach is a one person project of Markus Tümmers also known as Vratyas Vakyas. The project's fifth effort, *Tiurida* is started with a textless introduction song continued by ...*where his ravens fly...*<sup>472</sup> The first two verses (or almost stanzas) informs us of Odin's animals the two wolves and two ravens. The wolves are named in the lyrics with the addition of the only refreshment of Odin that is wine. The second verse speaks of the two ravens of the god also named and with the designation of their duties of being Odin's eyes over Midgard. These sections are citations from the *Prose and Poetic Eddas*<sup>473</sup> giving a description on the world and its structures. The song is continued with a shortcut in the *Poetic Edda*'s referred part (stanza 23) talking of the size of Valhalla that has 540 doors where simultaneously 800 soldiers could ride to Ragnarök on the day it arrives. In the last cited verse of the song we see again a change in viewpoint giving the opportunity for Odin to speak of himself. Throughout the song Odin is named in various forms as well in the last verse to focus on. Wuotan, Othin, Ygg, Thung, Wodan and Woden are different forms of his from different dialects and territories where Germanic peoples settled all over Western and Northern Europe.<sup>474</sup> This self reference of the god in the song with its contemplating manner creates a wide gap between believers/followers and god himself, placing Odin on the top of all existence without a clear knowledge of the world

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<sup>471</sup> H. A. GUERBER, *Myths of the Norsemen*, New Lanark, Geddes & Grosset, 2008, 110-120.

<sup>472</sup> "Geri and Freki does Heerfather feed, / the far-famed fighter of old. / But on wine alone does the one-eyed god, / Wuotan, forever live. // O'er Midgard Hugin and Munin both / each day set forth to fly. / For Hugin I fear lest he come not home, / but for Munin my care is more. [...] Five hundred doors and forty there are, / I ween, in Walhall's walls. / Eight hundred fighters through one door fare / when to war with the wolf they go. [...] Now am I Othin, Ygg was I once, / ere that did they call me Thund. / Wodan and Oden, and all, methinks, / are the names for none but me. [...]" Falkenbach, *Tiurida*, Napalm Records, 2011.

<sup>473</sup> Prose Edda Chapter XII and Prose Edda: The Lay of Grimnir, stanzas 19 and 20.

<sup>474</sup> Je. M. MELETYINSZKIJ, *Ódin = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 596-598.

below him. It may be doubted by the listener that is the god is cogitating over his names given by the people if any of the names are really his original one. The unnamed and distant god thus becomes a symbolical entity from the viewpoint of the reader whose mysterious figure in Scandinavian mythology is well underlined with this element who mostly lives in mythological stories but is not reachable by living men also giving the impression that the song is sung by a believer in ancient times, not actualizing but in a romantic way reviving the original setting of the myths.

The last song to consider in this chapter, after the generalising introductions found in the pieces above, is a reimagination of one certain story, namely *The Lay of Thrym*. The summary of the story that is found in the *Poetic Edda*<sup>475</sup> is the following: one morning the hammer of Thor is missing. As he could not find it anywhere Freya the goddess of beauty and fertility lends Loki one of her magic items to be able to search for the hammer. The hammer is found at the house of Thrym, a giant dwelling in Jotunheim. He would give back the hammer on one condition: Freya must marry him. Freya and the Asir gods are in disgust for the proposition to have a giant in their ranks as the husband of the most beautiful goddess. As Thor is powerless without his magical weapon he agrees to Loki's plot to disguise himself as Freya in a bride's gown to trick the giant and get back the hammer. The wedding takes place in the house of Thrym not knowing that his bride is really Thor as his face is under veil. After a sequence of humorous events (e.g. Thor eats a great amount of the food served for the feast making curious the giant) Thor takes his hammer as a wedding gift and slays the giant and all his folk on the ceremony. This many sided story that is attributed to be also caused by Loki is a typical example of Thor's adventures, where he journeys to the land of giants (in many cases to the East), kills many of his enemies in most of the cases accompanied by Loki also many times causing the troubles with his presence and deeds.

*The Lay of Thrym* is the eponymous story of Faroese Týr's 2011 LP containing a song with the same title.<sup>476</sup> The song consists of four verses, only three are cited as the last one is the repetition of the second. The first verse describes the situation with the theft of the

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<sup>475</sup> *The Lay of Thrym = The Elder Eddas of Saemund Sigfusson; and the Younger Eddas of Snorre Sturleson.* January 18, 2005 [EBook #14726] [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#THE\\_LAY\\_OF\\_THRYM\\_OR\\_THE\\_HAMMER\\_RECOVERED](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#THE_LAY_OF_THRYM_OR_THE_HAMMER_RECOVERED) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>476</sup> "Hammertheft and all the world bereft / Of reason and of right overnight / Left between a Týrant's temper mean / And treason and betrayal, cold and stale / Hue and cry, I can't sit idly by / We're hostages to greed, intercede // All you have is illgotten gain / You stand only for your own / Any man may throw you off the throne / Seat will not be set for thee / At the league of free nations / May this mark the end of your reign / Let the lay of Thrym be heard / Leave no Týrant out there undeterred / Thunderstruck theocracy / This theodicy heathen / In the end the giant was slain // Hammer home to any despots dome / That tales of Týranny end with me / Hue and cry, I can't sit idly by / We're hostages to greed, intercede [...]" Týr, *The Lay of Thrym*, Napalm Records, 2011.

hammer during a night that causes fear and panic within the ordered world as Thor is the one to beat the giants and hold outside them of Midgard and Asgard. It seems that the speaker of the verse is Thor himself who is in great agony over the powerlessness he experiences because of the deed that occurred upon him and his world. The second verse changes the viewpoint being an unnamed speaker who intensifies the panic of Thor by enumerating the possible consequences caused by his unarming, e.g. anybody may dethrone him, and will be left out of the league of free nations. The dark foreshadowing is broken when the Lay of Thrym is referred to with the ending of the recovery of the hammer and the death of the usurper. In the last verse word is given back to Thor, regaining his strength and weapon promising to end all Týranny. Within the song we have the tension between Týrannical forms of government and the “*league of free nations*”. In this instance of reception we see from these lines that the myth is actualized for contemporary listeners. The mentioned forms are not to be understood on a political level, as heathenism is also mentioned in the song, thus propagating the freedom of thought and belief through the example of an ancient myth, naming the deceived god to be the patron of all free minded people and Thrym to be an oppressor who attempts to limit the possibilities of e.g. heathen beliefs in contemporary society. Thus the fall of Thrym in the myth is the required fall of Týrannical oppression of a religious way of thinking that is also connected to the relation towards rebellion and power within the metal community. The Lay of Thrym in the usage of Týr is an allegory of metal mentality with an actualizing manner, giving a new meaning to an ancient form, creating a bridge in time between two distant ends.

#### 3.4.4. The Ragnarök

We started present chapter with the creation myths of Scandinavian mythology and close with the prophecy on the world’s end, the yet many times referred Ragnarök, or more commonly known as Twilight of the Gods. The Ragnarök is part of both *Eddas*. The *Elder Edda* has at least three poems considering the end of the world, the *Völuspá*, *Baldr’s Dreams* and the *Lokasenna* or *Loki’s Altercation*. The *Völuspá*, or the *Vala’s Prophecy*<sup>477</sup> tells the story from stanza 40 to 58, *Baldr’s Dreams* speak of the nightmares of the god before his untimely

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<sup>477</sup> *Völuspá. The Vala’s Prophecy = The Elder Edda*, [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#VOLUSPA\\_THE\\_VALAS\\_PROPHECY](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#VOLUSPA_THE_VALAS_PROPHECY) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

death<sup>478</sup> while *Loki's Altercation* tells of the misfortunate feast at Aegir's house ending with the bondage of Loki.<sup>479</sup> The *Prose Edda's* account is segmented among the *Gylfaginning's* Chapter VIII, IX, XV and XVI.<sup>480</sup> The summary of the story according to the mentioned sources is the following: the presence of Loki amongst the Asir gods is the first sign of Ragnarök, as his offspring with the giantess Angrboda (the Fenrir wolf, the Midgard Serpent and Hel) are all tools of the apocalypse. The ill-nature of Loki leads then to many troubles amongst the Asir gods, the most evil of these the death of Balder that was previously touched. After the loss of Balder during a feat at the god Aegir's house Loki starts to insult all gods, except Thor who is on an adventure. When Thor arrives home the gods grasp Loki and bond him to a rock where a snake's venom pours on him causing terrible pain for the god, who is hungry for vengeance. When Loki manages to set himself free and all the evil monsters gather starts the Ragnarök itself, when the Sun and Moon are devoured by wolves, the armies of giants, fire giants of Muspelheim, the dead in Hel on the Naglfar ship gather and attack the Asir. The battle begins on the plain of Ida, the stars fall down from the sky, the Yggdrasil trembles and Earth sinks into the sea. A sequence of duels occurs where the gods fight the monsters and other enemies almost in every case with the result of killing each other. The einherjer host engages into the battle as well and in the end the Yggdrasil is burnt with everyone dead except some of the young gods (e.g. Modi and Magni, sons of Thor) and a pair of humans (Lif and Lífthrasir, literary Life and zest of Life)<sup>481</sup> who build up the world anew.

The first song we are going to consider takes us back to the last group we worked with: Týr. The 2006 LP of the band bears the title *Ragnarok* and all the lyrics are pieces of Ragnarök's reception. On this point we decide to choose only one song of the whole concept that is not going to be represented by other songs in this section. The song, *The Ride to Hel*<sup>482</sup> re-imagines the ride of the god Hermod to Hel to conceive the goddess to release Balder from the dead, as we have seen in the Loke song of Enslaved in the second chapter of present part.

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<sup>478</sup> *The Lay of Vegtam, or Baldr's Dreamsi = The Elder Edda*, [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#THE\\_LAY\\_OF\\_VEGTAM\\_OR\\_BALDRS\\_DREAMS](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#THE_LAY_OF_VEGTAM_OR_BALDRS_DREAMS) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>479</sup> *Oegir's Compotation, or Loki's Altercation = The Elder Edda*, [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#OEGIRS\\_COMPOTATION\\_OR\\_LOKIS\\_ALTERCATION](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14726/14726-h/14726-h.htm#OEGIRS_COMPOTATION_OR_LOKIS_ALTERCATION) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>480</sup> Compare: *The Younger Edda*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18947/18947-h/18947-h.htm#gylfe> (Retrieved: 2017. 10. 28.)

<sup>481</sup> Terry GUNNELL, *Eddic Poetry = A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. Rory MCTURK, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, 84-86.

<sup>482</sup> "Over the ground on the leaving land / We stand united on our way to forever / Under the mound time will take it's toll / We fall divided and it seems that we never learn // Who is right / Who is wrong / See the light / Right is always there where we belong // We all died / When you fell / Far and wide / Waiting one to take the ride to hell [...] Though mothers cry / Even though fathers try / To raise the dead / The last word said / So we still learn / That where is no return / Back from Hel, back from Hel, from Hel // Try as you may, you can't make all mourn / We're born alone and only death is our dowry / There he will stay, left to wonder why / We die alone into from where there is no return [...]" Týr, *Ragnarok*, Napalm Records, 2006.

The first verse depicts the beginning of his ride to the underworld with a preparation to his great task, what is filled with doubt as everything is starting to fall apart with the event. The second verse intensifies the panic over the death of Balder visioning that this is the cause of everybody to die and with a faith in Hermod to be the bravest one to descend to Hel. The English word Hell is used here to describe Hel illustrating the position of Hel in the Scandinavian cosmology. The next verse chosen is the mournful speech of the remaining ones in grief who has to accept the fact that there is no return for Balder from the dead. The last verse starts with the ultimate result of the gods endeavour to fulfill the need of Hel to release Balder: they fail to make everything on the world to mourn the god, continued with the bitter statement that everything is tending towards death. Taking the wider picture of the album the slow process towards the end of the world is filled with bravery but with knowledge of ultimate destruction creating a heroic atmosphere where everything is in vain and it is known from the first moment to the last, building up an hour long mourning process for the world. The heavy hearted manner of the LP takes the viewpoints of gods and einherjer along with the living people as well creating a constant anxiety and distress within the listener as well once again depicting a possible psychological state trying to catch the thought of ancient Germanic people's who are in the continuous fear of the end that is never known when is going to occur.

Leaves Eyes was not mentioned before, but all their career is revolving around Scandinavian and sometimes Celtic mythology and folklore. Their song *Ragnarok* is of their 2009 album that is entitled after the god of seas, *Njord*.<sup>483</sup> This piece gives a general picture on the event of Ragnarök. The viewpoint is given to a single person, who is witnessing the events stated in the first verse. The yet not mentioned occurrence of the thrice winter, the Fimbulwinter is summoned in the last lines of the first verse with the mentioning of coming darkness caused by the wolves eating the Sun and Moon. The beginning of the battle is called by the request of Heimdall, the Guardian of Asgard to blow his horn in accordance to call the hosts of the Asir forward with the sudden chaos by the awaited battle to approach. The gods are prepared and the time has come to their armies what they trained themselves for an eternity. The pictures describing the fall of the world work with motif of declining vegetation

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<sup>483</sup> "Chariots are leaving / I see the leaves falling / Winter and coldness / Freezing the rain // Fimbulvetr / Savage winter / Wolves chasing the sun and the moon // Heimdall blow your horn / Ragnarok will end us all / The voice of chaos screaming / Through the halls of Ásgård / Gods awaiting the end of the world / The end of all // Life stops breathing / I watch the flowers wither / Týr fighting in vain / Groaning with pain // Nidhug dragen // Gnawing at the roots of Yggdrasil // Heimdall blow your horn / Loki's army shatters all / [...] Downfall of the Gods / World serpent raises into the waves / Ragnarok will end us all / Evil call - crushes all / Last army rides [...]" Leaves Eyes, *Njord*, Napalm Records, 2009.

and the mentioning of the god Týr, who fell in the fight with the Fenrir wolf, thus leaving his sacrifice to the wolf and his endeavours to beat him in vain also placing this scene to be a parallel to all existence being in vain as it doesn't matter if Týr would not give his hand to the wolf that is a cause of his fall in the end. Other monsters are named like the Nidhögg dragon or the Midgard Serpent that are all emerging from the deep to serve in Loki's army. The speaker also states that he or she himself/herself is in the situation that will kill them all. This absence of omnipotency creates a desperate feeling as we have seen it in the case of the previous song of Týr as well. This dark and gloomy atmosphere is not dissolved by the heroic sound of the song itself bringing in the certain tension and stress of the brave fight in vanity.

Unleashed is one of Sweden's greatest traditional death metal bands and their textual programme is filled with Viking topics. As their musical approach is strict to the rules of death metal the attribute of Viking metal may not be used on them, but if we use the classification method that is independent on the musicality we may categorize them into the Viking metal movement as well. The name give of their 2010 album is to be discussed below. *As Yggdrasil Trembles*<sup>484</sup> takes the certain viewpoint of the members of the einherjer army. These warriors are called from within the ranks in the first chorus with the question if they are ready to fight. This war-like cry of an unnamed leader is coloured black with the promise of the Fimbulwinter's cold and darkness followed by the description of the coming enemy. This follows a more symbolic than concretized listing of the enemy not naming any of them nor referring to their attributes with a generalization of their host. These are thus horrors and shameless creatures that are demonized in this attempt with a constant reinforcement of for what and who the warriors are fighting for. This allegiance in this case is not for the world of the Asir gods, but for the world of men (Midgard) where from all einherjer originates until their time of worldly death. The main fearful event is mentioned with the title of the album and within the lyrics itself. The citation ends with a rather hopeful picture as the warriors face a new beginning. In this regard we see that the army of Asgard is not in a war of vanity that results in the ultimate death of everybody and everything but this is a process for a later to come good, a new beginning that may not be achieved without the fight they are to participate in. This war chant is of a dark period of the world that must result in a new light, not focusing

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<sup>484</sup> "[...] *Battalions of the world are you ready? / For the lasting cold and darkness / Battalions of the world are you ready? // What will the future hold / What horrors are yet to unfold / Is this our way to Odin's hall / Are we prepared for the final call / Whatever stirs beyond the dark has no shame / Nothing will ever be the same [...]* Our loyalty will be tested / Allegiance to Midgard we have sworn / As the mighty Yggdrasil trembles / We stand to face the new dawn [...]" Unleashed, *As Yggdrasil Trembles*, Nuclear Blast, 2010.

on the possible outcome of it on an individual level but an exhortation to bring out the best from the fighters to ensure the promised recreation of Midgard.

After the scenes of einherjer fighting and fearing defeat the two next songs focus on the enemy. The 2011 LP yet cited by Amon Amarth in its title refers to Ragnarök with the imminent arrival of the fire giant Surtur who is to burn the ash tree of Yggdrasil. The third song of the album, *Destroyer of the Universe*<sup>485</sup> is the introduction of the primordial figure in Scandinavian mythology. Surtur is speaking throughout the recording placing himself in the sequence of the Ragnarök. His whole line of acts is presented, introducing himself pointing to his homeland of Muspelheim, showing that his flaming origin is paired with a rage and a sword of fire as well. The second verse continues this personal depiction with the purpose of the giant to fight and destroy the Asir gods along with bringing end to the world hereby identified with time. The listener is invited to watch his might pour upon the earth, not just named as the destroyer of the universe but also an enemy is men. After this rather long self introduction and listing of attributes we see the giant in action as well: his duel with the fertility god Frey is mentioned. One of Loki's mischieves was to manage to lose the magical sword of Frey, thus leaving the god without his true weapon that would be enough to defeat the fire giant leading to the death of the god. Surtur is so self-confident that even before fighting with Frey he calls his enemy a living corpse sealing the fate of the god without yet harming him. In the last section of the excerpt of the song we see that Ragnarök is also the death of all enemies of order for Surtur as well. The giant speaks of his death too referring to the rising waters as the causes of his death (maybe he is extinguished by the tide?) finding the direction of all fighting in the coming rebirth of the world yet seen in the song of Unleashed.

Swedish Månegarm is our next example to present the enemy. The band plays a folk influenced version of melodic black metal, dealing with the forces of Hel on their album from 2013. The song, *Hordes of Hel*<sup>486</sup> chooses the same way of presentation as we have seen it in the case of the previous one. This is the song of Hel herself with an impatient preparation for

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<sup>485</sup> "I rise up from Muspelheim / My fury is sublime / The sword I bring burns violently / With wild and lethal flames // I march against the asagods / To bring the end of time / I am pure and endless pain / And Surtur is my name // See me rise, the mighty Surt / Destroyer of the universe / Bringer of flames and endless hurt / Scorcher of men and earth // Swordless Frej with horn in hand / Rises to his final stand / He doesn't stand a single chance / I'll split his living corpse in half [...] See me die, the mighty Surt / Destroyer of the universe / Drowning in waves that floods the earth / The beginning of a new rebirth [...]" Amon Amarth, *ibid.* 2011.

<sup>486</sup> "I am the one / My time has come / I will lead the legions / Trough the ice and snow / With hunger and diseases / Starvation and despair / I'll reign my kingdom of death / I am the abandoned one [...] With vengeance in our minds / We march towards the war / When all is done and we have won / Death will ride again [...] The sound of drums / And a thousand feet / That cuts the silent night / Our hordes arrive / Fear your lives / The time has come to die [...] In blackened eyes, a power and might / Days of light, embraced by the night / Now hear my call, I am the chosen one / We will never fall" Månegarm, *Legions of the North*, Napalm Records, 2013.

war as her role was promised and now is the time to act. As she is attributed with death and decay (also depicted in mythology as a rotting corpse) coming from a frozen infernal place she brings forward all the mentioned: the dead from ice and snow with diseases and decay, pinning up her armies for the final fight. The whole text is placed before the clash with the Asir armies, as all the references of it are for a coming fight where she and her hosts cannot be defeated. We know it well that in the end all her attempts for victory are in vain for the world to be destroyed fully, what may not be clear for the speaker. In this regard this song is the negative mirror image of the Unleashed piece what is hopeful before the battle on the rebirth of the world, while here Hel is conceited on the victory regardless the aftermath.

The last example on Ragnarök comes from Sweden as well, from Ereb Altor, a band said to be the one to follow most faithfully the legacy of Bathory. The song chosen from their *Fire Meets Ice* album deals with the aftermath of the Ragnarök, entitled *Post Ragnarök*.<sup>487</sup> The first part of the song deals with the events of Ragnarök referring to the rising waters, the unbound monsters, the devoured sun and coming darkness, with the fulfilled promise of the new life to be born. This is the song of the remaining ones (maybe Líf and his consort) trialed by the events of the world's end preparing for a new life to build. The picture at first glance seems to be a bright one but the second part of the song deals with the threatening possibility that the new world would be filled once again with the venom of a snake (as the previous was with the hostilities of Loki) but commands to be faithful. This picture bears resemblances to the Fall story of *Genesis* as well bringing the motif of the snake into the yet hopeful beginning. As a summary we may assume that this is a warning for the population of the new world: they must beware their actions to drive away a new Ragnarök.

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<sup>487</sup> "Under the blackened sun the earth is drowning / Stars burst into flames, falling / The mist, the fire, the heat touches the sky / All chains are broken, all seals are open / the world rises a second time / A new beginning / Resurrection of truth and light / Beneath dwells the snake of shadows / The shimmering cold snake / Will we succeed where the mighty has failed / To follow the true path / Beware of the cold that dwells in the dark / Waiting, longing for our sins" Ereb Altor, *Fire Meets Ice*, Cyclone Empire, 2013.

## **3.5. Celtic Mythology or the Westernmost Myths of Europe**

### **3.5.1. General Introduction**

On this point it is the arrival of the last chapter to consider mythology inspired lyrics. The last culture(s) to deal with are the Celtic peoples and their mythology. The history of Celtic religion and mythology should be divided to two geographic regions: 1) the continental Celtic world, flourishing in Europe from Eastern Austria to present day France; 2) the Insular Celtic world, present on the British Isles. The history of Celtic people is dated from 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. and in the case of the continental was romanized until the fall of the Roman Empire. On continental Celtic religion we have almost no written sources; most of the data gathered about their beliefs and mythology are from archaeological evidences (reliefs and figurines of gods, votive inscriptions, coins, etc.) and indirect sources like the works of Latin and Greek authors who do not give us much information on the spoken topic.<sup>488</sup> The arrival of literacy for the continental Celts also caused the transformation of usage in language. As the Roman conquerors used their writing system and language for administration, literacy was one tool of Romanization as well. The case is slightly different in connection with the Insular Celtic world. There the original languages of Celts remained dominant after the arrival of Roman literacy, in many cases thanks to the fact that Roman rule did not cover both the bigger isles and the English island only partially as well. After the Christening of the British Isles the work of Christian monks is invaluable in preserving Welsh, Irish, etc. mythology.<sup>489</sup> The case is the same as it was with Viking mythology: the layers of original Celtic myth during the scripture by Christian monks left its traces on thus in many cases the pagan mythological stories are forced and entwined with Christian elements to be able to be preserved for the future. On a general level we may state that Celtic peoples also possessed a mythology and religion alike to the Viking and Graeco-Roman ones of Indo-European origin, with a pantheon of polytheistic nature populated with gods and goddesses responsible for each and every part of life and the world, colourized with heroic stories and magical creatures. On the following pages we are going to deal with four different topics and as the Celtic pantheon is not so popular amongst the metal bands to choose their names from. The first greater portion

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<sup>488</sup> Sz. V. SKUNAJEV, *Kelta Mitológia = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 569-572.

<sup>489</sup> Patricia MONAGHAN, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, Checkmark Books, 2008, X.

is going to deal once again with the stories of creation, from the Irish tradition, entitled *Leabhar Gabhala Eireann (The Book of Invasions)*. The second chapter is focusing on the Irish Achilles, Cú Chulainn and his myths, the third one is on the goddess Morrigan and her reception in metal music, while the last chapter is going to compile various instances of reception of King Arthur and his stories.

### 3.5.1.1. Short Excursion II.: the case of Eluveitie

Before we start to work with the different myths of the Celtic peoples we are to spend some lines on a band entirely dedicating their work to continental Celtic heritage. As most of the bands we are to meet are focusing on the insular Celtic world, Eluveitie from Switzerland shows a unique approach towards folk metal music. As the main title of their website states Eluveitie is the “*New Wave of Folk Metal*”.<sup>490</sup> The music they play is a mixture of Gothenburg death metal and Celtic folk music, original in the time when the band was founded (2002). Their career is shaken by constant lineup changes with seven full length albums, numerous EPs and singles. The name of the band is derived from the Helvetic Celtic language meaning “*The Helvetian*”.<sup>491</sup> The band until today released besides the folk metal albums two neofolk/Celtic folk recordings, namely *Evocation I.: The Arcane Dominion*<sup>492</sup> and *Evocation II.: Pantheon*.<sup>493</sup> The second recordings complete track list consist of songs evocating different continental deities in the following order: 1) *Dureððu* 2) *Epona* 3) *Svcellos II (Sequel)* 4) *Nantosvelta* 5) *Tovtatis* 6) *Lvgvs* 7) *Gannos* 8) *Cernvnnos* 9) *Catvrix* 10) *Artio* 11) *Aventia* 12) *Ogmios* 13) *Esvs* 14) *Antvmnos* 15) *Tarvos II (Sequel)* 16) *Belenos* 17) *Taranis* 18) *Nemeton*. The album would be a perfect example to examine as a whole, unfortunately all the lyrics are written in the Helvetian Celtic dialect thus we are not able to approach the album. Nevertheless from the titles of the songs we can see that almost the whole known continental pantheon is evoked in the Latinized transcription of the names (the usage of “v” instead of “u”, e.g. Esvs and Lvgvs, whose name is academic publications as Esus and Lugus, etc.) showing the romantic, almost revival like interest in the Helvetian Celtic heritage.

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<sup>490</sup> <http://eluveitie.ch/news/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>491</sup> [https://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Eluveitie/13991#band\\_tab\\_discography](https://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Eluveitie/13991#band_tab_discography) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>492</sup> Eluveitie, *Evocation I.: The Arcane Dominion*, Nuclear Blast, 2008.

<sup>493</sup> Eluveitie, *Evocation II.: Pantheon*, Nuclear Blast, 2017.

To illustrate the work of Eluveitie we have chosen the song *Sucellos*<sup>494</sup> from their 2014 album entitled *Origins*. The whole song is cited in note 494 that has two main features. The first one is that the figure of Sucellos is grasped in its entirety. The god was worshipped mostly on the today territory of Switzerland; his most important attribute is a maul and a cup, often depicted with the river goddess Nantosvelta. He is often identified with Silvanus, thus Sucellos is a deity of nature and fertility in a bucolic way, responsible for the growth of herds.<sup>495</sup> In this regard the song is a plain introduction to the figure of Sucellos whereas the second important feature is present: the song is a paraphrase of Psalms 23, using the exact expressions found in the Biblical text altered with the attributes of Sucellus (e.g. maul instead of rod). This re-imagination of a Judeo-Christian sacred scripture is not a stranger for our study as we have seen it in case of Behemoth in Chapter 3.1. Nevertheless now we do not witness the anti-Christian eversion of the original meaning rather than the usage of a sacred text to fill up with a new (or ancient depending on from which viewpoint we regard it) content in order to give a religious vibe to the song. As we do not have much written sources on Sucellos besides the votive inscriptions and images from what his figure could be grasped thus this Judeo-Christian/Celtic hymn is a perfect example to show how an ancient and almost forgotten phenomenon could be actualized: Psalms 23 shows God as a herdsman, and Sucellos is worshipped as a god of the herd thus the identification is made, alike to the *Interpretatio Romana* and *Graeca* (even *Christiana*) creating an instance of *Interpretatio Celtica*.

### 3.5.2. The Book of Invasions

The work called *Leabhar Gahala Eireann*, or *The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, also known as *The Book of Invasions* is a compilation of myths that describe the creation of the Irish Isle. The earliest version of the book is from the 12<sup>th</sup> century known as the *Book of Leinster*, later recompiled in the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Michael O Cleirigh.<sup>496</sup> The summary of the

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<sup>494</sup> "As the blazing red pours over the firmament / The first light runs through my outstretched hands / I see your face, shining on me / Puissance never running dry // Thy maul and staff / They comfort me // Thou art my shepherd, I shall not want / Thy maul and staff, they comfort me / Thou maketh me to lie down in pastures green / Thou leadest me beside the still waters / Bright sun of the night // Begetter, sempiternal force, fire of existence / Sparks of life emit when you strike / Your mallet's target is never missed / No man can fathom the vastness in your hand // Sucellos / Atir aissom / Rodatis buiotutos / Celle! // The times surrender, sun of the Otherworld / The wolf's hunt won't be in vain / As the raven homes and finds the isle / Nantosvelta's noble servant // Escorting the soul / Into the darkness where life is born" Eluveitie, *Origins*, Nuclear Blast, 2014.

<sup>495</sup> Gienna MATSON & Jeremy ROBERTS, *Celtic Mythology A-Z*, New York, Chelsea House, 2010, 104.

<sup>496</sup> Charles SQUIRE, *Celtic Mythology*, New Lanark, Geddes & Grosset, 1999, 414-415.

stories is the following. The first settlers of Ireland were the descendants of Noah,<sup>497</sup> lead by Cesair, followed by the nation of the hero Partholón, then the people of Nemed (from the Caspian Sea) the first to fight the evil Fomorians. The Fomorians are a nation of vile nature, mostly described as monsters supposedly dwelling in Ireland without invading it. The monsters wiped out the Nemedians and later fought wars with the Fir Bolg people, the descendants of Nemed as well. Later the people of the goddess Danu, the Tuatha Dé Danann arrived to clear the island from the Fir Bolg and the Fomorians too. These immortal creatures were then conquered by the Sons of Míl, mortal men who issued a peace with the Tuatha to become the fairies of the island.<sup>498</sup> This series of war is a perfect topic for metal bands to work with. As it is going to be clear soon alike to the situation in connection with Viking mythology, most of the bands have some kind of Celtic (mostly Irish) connection thus creating the genre of Celtic metal resembling once again to the movement of Viking metal.

Our first two songs are focusing on the evil Fomorian king, Balor of the Evil Eye. The first one, coming from Northern Ireland, Waylander is one of the underground kings of Celtic metal. Their second record, *The Light, the Dark and the Endless Knot* contains the song *Balor of the Evil Eye*.<sup>499</sup> The evil king's story is a typical, almost Greek like drama on a prophecy that his own grandson would kill him that with the actions to avoid this event is placed in order. His daughter, Eithne gives birth to the great hero and later god Lugh, who was cast away to die but found shelter with the Tuatha De Dannan and despite being a half-Fomorian fought on their side against his grandfather. In the second battle of Mag Tuired he kills the Fomorian king thus ending his Týrannical rule over the Fir Bolg people.<sup>500</sup> The cited first verse of the Waylander song describes the unworthy and brutal rule of the Fomorian king, referring to the yet there living Nemedians as sons of Ireland, collecting all invaders of the Island to be part of the Irish history and lineage. The figure of Lugh is described as well, being a last remaining ember of a declining race, the god who is the best of craftsmen and a warrior too hereby symbolically calling him the “*equilibrium by sword and sorcery*” referring to crafts as magic. As a god of Sun as well here we see the clash of Darkness and Light in the

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<sup>497</sup> An exquisite example of Christian layers put upon the pagan content. For the full English text of the book please see: *Lebor Gábala Érenn* = <http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/celtic/ctexts/lebor1.html> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>498</sup> Patricia MONAGHAN, *ibid.* 2008, 53-54.

<sup>499</sup> "Fomorian lord ruled with an iron hand / Piracy maintained by this darkened god / Týrannical reign, o'er Eireann's sons / Starve and shame, into submission one and all [...] There's one spark amongst the dying embers / Born to ignite red passions raging / Lugh Samildeanach, true inspiration / Equilibrium by sword and sorcery. // Chaos king meets prince of light / Fulfilling omens of foresight / 'Twas written blood must slay blood / Symbolic duel, redress the balance. [...]" Waylander, *The Light, the Dark and the Endless Knot*, Blackend, 2001.

<sup>500</sup> Patricia MONAGHAN, *ibid.* 2008, 32-33.

lyric, clearly using the idea of prophecy to be fulfilled with the duel and its result. The fight between Lugh and Balor is placed on a metaphoric or symbolic level thus interpreting their duel to be a reference to the constant struggle between Dark and Light with the victory of the later, ultimately calling it as balance. It would be disputable to call the victory of Light over Dark as a manifestation of balance, as balance would require the presence of both in equal measures, nevertheless if we accept the myths reality then balance exists only if the Light is ruling over Darkness, what is clearly addressed in the songs text as well.

If the song of Waylander is a praising of the Sun and light then the one of German Suidakra's is the complete opposite. The Celtic influenced melodic death metal of Suidakra is revolving around different continental and insular Celtic myths in this way arriving to the *Book of Invasions*. As the German territories were also populated (at least North of the Alps) with Celtic people the interest in their mythology, folklore and history is not a surprise to witness from a German band. The last three verses are cited below of *Balor* from their 2011 LP, *Book of Dowth*.<sup>501</sup> The excerpt is the essence of the song: a promise of the darkness by Balor to return. The situation is quite similar to the one we have witnessed in the case of *Rebirth of the Nemesis* of Melechesh with re-imagination of the triumph of Tiamat over Marduk. We are after the defeat of Balor and Fomorian army, it may be assumed that a member of the surviving Fomorian nation is cursing the new conquerors of the Irish Island with a promise that their most powerful leader, Balor will return to take revenge on the accusations suffered by Lugh and the Tuatha De Dannan. The vile nature of Balor is recognized by the speaker, what may make us doubt if the presupposition of a Fomorian is speaking in the song. Nevertheless the return of Balor is to come during a decline in the population of the Irish Isle, as the world is described in negative terms during his new reign. Maybe the cause of his return is this decline as a punishment, what will make him triumphant, silencing the positive forces of humanity bringing back the shadowy days of Fomorian rule. It also seems that Balor is not resurrected, he returns by his own powers from the dead. Or maybe the evil deeds of humanity is the key to his return that may mean that this song is a warning for the listener to live a life to be respected unless a great harm may come (just like in the case of Orphaned Land's album analysed in chapter 3.2.).

We leave now the topic of Fomorians just to witness the arrival of the Fir Bolg people. The band, who calls them in their song *Arrival of the Fir Bolgh*, is the Dublin based Irish

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<sup>501</sup> "[...] Forgotten gods return to roam, / Standing stones begin to shriek, / When hope becomes despair, / In a world full of hate and greed // The triumph of evil, / When good men stay silent, / Then Balor of the Evil Eye, / Has arisen from death // Black cloaked Balor, arisen from death / Black cloaked Balor, will rule again" Suidakra, *Book of Dowth*, AFM Records, 2011.

folk/Celtic metal band Cruachan. Being a high underground reputation band just as like Waylander, Celtic traditionalism is the most important feature of the band. From 2014 we have their song,<sup>502</sup> what is on the Fir Bolg touches many different important features of their myths. We have two important motifs: the misfortunate events upon their arrival and the separation of Ireland into the five known counties. The first one is depicted in the first part of the excerpt, where we see the coming, and yet trialled Fir Bolg people (who supposedly served as slaves in Greece or Thrace, compare the myth in footnote 502) scattered on the sea from each other by a terrible storm. The scene is changed later as their most important achievement is described: the brothers leading the people of Fir Bolg gather at the later sacred city of Tara (however their original gathering place is not Tara) to lay the foundations for the alter kingdom-system of Ireland, dividing the island to five counties. This state foundation is closed with a promise of a war to come, a war with the folk of the next song to examine: the people of the goddess Danu or more commonly known as the Tuatha De Dannan.

Young, once again Irish Celtic metal band Celtachor call the Tuatha in their song Arrival of the Tuatha in their second record entitled, Nuada of the Silver arm, referring to the great hero-god of the folk.<sup>503</sup> To the arrival of the Tuatha many great things are attributed. First of all the main members of the Irish pantheon arrive with them, who are also called forth and enumerated in the song's lyrics, like Manannán, Ogma, Diancécht, Nuada, presented in the song with their responsibilities and functions in accordance with the original myths. The most important part of the song is the battle with the Fir Bolg, the "First Battle of Mag Tuired", where they clashed together (during the second battle was Balor defeated by Lugh). The battle is to take place during the feast of Beltaine. This event (May 1<sup>st</sup>) is one of the traditional dates where the layer between this world and the fairy world is thinned to let the later fairy became Tuatha to reach our reality.<sup>504</sup> Thus we see a battle between mortals and divinities that is also a typical example of fight between generations of Indo-European

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<sup>502</sup> "[...]"Till at last they did arrive / In the glorious seas of Ireland / As they headed for the shore / One more trial was at hand. // The wind became a storm / The seas became enraged / The Fir Bolg ships were scattered / And many too were razed. // Separated into three parts / The Fir Bolg, Domnann and Gaileon / Finally docked in Ireland / As the seas began to calm. // They overcame so many trials / As they sailed to their new land / A new dawn awaits the brothers / A new era is at hand. // At Tara the brothers held council / They divided the land into five parts / Peace had come to the Fir Bolg / But this peace was not to last." Cruachan, *Blood for the Blood God*, Trollzorn Records, 2014.

<sup>503</sup> "Ships of fire burst through / The mist of the skies, / The Tuatha Dé Danann, / From the high air, arrive. / Four corners of the world, / Four cities, four wise men, / Four treasures! / Morias, Urias, Arias and Senias. // Nuada the High King, / Manannán, god of the Sea, / Ogma god of Ogham, / Diancécht god of Life, / Éire, Fódla and Banba, / And Dana the All Mother. // The first day of Bealtaine, / King Eochaid of the Fir Bolgs came / With his army from the South. / Residing in Magh Rein / Till the day of battle arrived. / The Tuatha arrived from the / Northwest of Connacht / To meet their enemy at Magh Rein. [...]" Celtachor, *Nuada of the Silver Arm*, Trollzorn Records, 2015.

<sup>504</sup> Patricia MONAGHAN, *ibid.* 2008, 457.

mythologies, well gripped by the song and its lyrics. The song is a part of a concept album that describes the war between the residents of Ireland after the arrival of the Tuatha leading to the ultimate defeat of the Fomorians yet described, giving a nostalgic and romantic sinking in the past of the Irish island, following the tradition of bards who were to recite the deeds of heroes and gods of old.<sup>505</sup>

### 3.5.3. Cú Chulainn and His Myths

The next chapter in Celtic mythology is of Irish origin once again, from the *Ulster cycle*. The most well known hero from the stories of Ulster is Setanta or more commonly known Cú Chulainn. We may also refer to Cú Chulainn as the “*Irish Achilles*” as his fate was also sealed by heroic deeds and a short life in exchange. Being the son of a mortal woman (Deichtire) and a god (Lugh, the Sun god) his abilities are exquisite. Being raised as a warrior he became the best, even in childhood, amongst the champions of Emain Macha (the traditional capital of Ulster). His original name was Setanta that was changed when during a feast in the king’s hall the dog of the smith Chulainn was unleashed to be a watch, later killed by Setanta. In exchange for the loss of the guard he volunteered to be one, thus replacing the dog of Chulainn, becoming Cú Chulainn (“*the smith’s dog*”). The prophecy of his short but heroic life was chosen by himself, as overhead a druidic dialogue over the coming morning’s event, when the first man who would wield arms would become a great hero but will meet untimely death. Thus Cú Chulainn became a great hero of the Irish (mainly Ulster), fighting and winning many battles even by himself, without help of the Ulster army.<sup>506</sup> He was also involved in a love story with the fair Emer also required by her father for a hero to take his daughter managing greater deeds than any other before. Death came to him by a plot. As it was forbidden for him to eat the flesh of his name giver (dog meat) once being a guest he was forced to eat what was proposed to him in accordance not to harm the hospitality of his host, then half paralyzed captured by his enemies he was bound to a stone pillar where he was speared to death.<sup>507</sup>

The first example to present on the reception of Cú Chulainn’s myth is coming from 1995, from yet known band Cruachan. Their debut album contains the song simply titled

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<sup>505</sup> Gienna MATSON & Jeremy ROBERTS, *ibid.* 2010, 91.

<sup>506</sup> Charles SQUIRE, *ibid.* 1999, 132-140.

<sup>507</sup> Patricia MONAGHAN, *ibid.* 2008, 107-109.

Cúchulainn.<sup>508</sup> This song is the perfect example of contemporary bard-revival, as the song presents the whole story of Cú Chulainn detailed above in the introduction. Thus it would be quite easy just to let lyrics speak for themselves without any analysis, but we do not choose to act like this. In the citation of note 508 we did not write the whole lyrics as it consists of 18 verses, we only highlight some parts of it: the first verse, two from the middle and the last one to illustrate the song's mechanisms. The first verse gives the details of the origin of the hero, with his dual lineage of mortal and immortal parents, with the first line identifying the hero with his newly gathered name. The second citation, also loyal to the original stories tells the prophecy of the hero's short but famous life, in the third one referring to his greatest deed of defending Ulster all alone against the invading army of Queen Medb. The last verse details the final moments of the hero who was not called dead for three days after the humiliating spearing of his bond body but only that moment when a crow started to pick his eye, ultimately proving that the hero is dead. In this song we meet all the important acts of his life and death, all his attributes and heroic deeds thus we can say that as it was with the case of Celtachor the early song of Cruachan takes the position of a bard to recite an ancient story accompanied with music for a gathering of listeners.

*A Hero's Lament*<sup>509</sup> comes from another debut album, this time from also known Waylander of Armagh. In this song we see the hero Cú Chulainn just before his inevitable death. The motif of ravens coming to carve his eye is the first thing that is referred to from the myth, with pictures that illustrate the process of dying. The second verse cited is a self-comforting attempt, that the death what may seem fearful is only the death of the body and not of the fame. As Cú Chulainn is a son of a god thus the god would never let humanity to forget his son's great deeds. It is a last wish and a last request of a dying man who is afraid of death, searching for a handrail that may save him or any piece of him from the coming end. The last verse changes the viewpoint as the hero is dead and all who are mourning over his dead body are singing the closing part of the lament that was started by Cú Chulainn. The

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<sup>508</sup> *"The Hound of Culann, the Hound of Ulster, / He is of the otherworld, / His father is God Lugh Lamheada, / His mother Deictire is mortal. [...] He took up arms on that day, / Which Cathbad declared auspicious, / He who took up arms on that day, / Would become famous but short lived. [...] Cuchulainn solely defended Ulster, / During the mighty war and tain. / When Medb of Connaught invaded, / He stood his ground despite the pain. / He is called a tragic hero / With Caladin his Sword, / He killed his best friend Frediad / at the battle of the Ford. [...] For three days the foe were scared, / Until a crow perched on his arm, / An otter began to drink his blood, / "Cuchulainn is dead", is what they said."* Cruachan, *Tuatha na Gael*, Nazgul's Eyrrie Productions, 1995.

<sup>509</sup> *"As the dark clouds they do gather / I sing my last lament / For the ravens they do gather / My strength is almost spent / My life force it disperses / My blood lies in the sand / The Darkness now Descends / My Death is Close at Hand / My Death is Close at Hand [...] Through sacred Lugh, my father / My name will never die / The deeds I have achieved / Insures my name amongst my brothers / Throughout the sacred green of Éireann / My name will echo in the valleys [...] A farewell to a hero / Your mortal days are gone / Your soul now doth fly / As free as the sun"* Waylander, *Reawakening Pride Once Lost*, Century Media Records, 1998.

song attempts to give two insights: 1) to the mind of the dying hero and 2) to the feelings of the ones who are to mourn the dead. This concept's romantic connotations are able to channel a mythical hero's deepest feelings and fears making it reality, also resonates the very deep feelings of all towards death thus once again building a bridge between two worlds: the ancient and the current.

Suidakra's album of 2009, entitled *Crógacht* is a concept recording based on some stories and deeds of Cú Chulainn.<sup>510</sup> The core topic of the album is episode of Cú Chulainn's adventures on the Isle of Skye, in the middle of his war training that should lead to his wedding with yet referred Emer. During his training the enemy of his mistress, Scáthach, called Aífe attacks. After a series of events Aífe is left pregnant with Cú Chulainn's child, later named Connla, who after becoming a warrior encounters his father who kills him.<sup>511</sup> The story is unfolded in the songs of the album from which we have chosen the third in line titled "*Isle of Skye*". In the song we witness Cú Chulainn to arrive to the Isle of Skye to begin his training. As the original story is drowned in tragedy, as Cú Chulainn does not know that he killed his own son until the moment Connla is dead, thus his entrance to the Isle of Skye to learn the art of war from Scáthach is the beginning of their tragedy. Love ignited his way to the court of the warrior woman but his deeds during the fight against Aífe (Cú Chulainn decides not to kill his mistress' enemy in the last moment in exchange for a son to give him) marked him with ill-luck, making the whole island and all its events to be damned. The title does not give any hint for us on the coming described events, and without any previous knowledge on the storyline it remains a mystery for the listener of what unfortunate things are to come. The last thing to refer is to that the goddess Morrigan had to perform four attempts in accordance to lead the hero to his death, what is to be detailed in the next chapter that focuses on the "*Phantom Queen*" and omen of death.

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<sup>510</sup> "[...] *To win the heart of fair Emer / The Plain Of Ill-luck he crossed / To search for knowledge of war [...] All by yourself you must stride / Not challenge fate with false pride / Beware of the bridge to reach the far side // All by yourself be your own guide / To make the Salmon leap up high / Scáthach you'll find on the Isle of Skye*" [...] *Three times over Cuchulainn tried and failed / And at the fourth attempt he finally prevailed [...] But little did the hero know / What tragedy upon him / Fate would one day bestow... [...]*" Suidakra, *Crógacht*, Wacken Records, 2009.

<sup>511</sup> Charles SQUIRE, *ibid.* 1999, 357.

Therion's interpretation on the story of our hero does not differ much from the above mentioned. Their song simply entitled *Cú Chulainn*<sup>512</sup> grasps again the tragedy of the hero. The first two lines cited contain opposites mentioning death and birth, the details of his death and his sacred fury. He is shown like a saint with a halo but he is more like the angel of death considering that most of his important deeds are connected to bloodshed. His love, Emer is mentioned as well not forgetting that even the greatest heroes are also touched by love. Besides detailing the origin of his name and triumph over the monstrous dog of the smith, his fame is also stressed. As we have seen it in the case of Waylander's current song here the main point of Therion's piece is the same: death may come to a hero in the end, but his legacy and name will survive in the stories that were read by the authors' of the texts, proving their point. The unbeaten might of the hero is another topic of the song underlining the importance of his standing position during the execution-like death scene. Even after dying the dead body is still standing showing the mentioned might and power, as the ravens are approaching to pick his eyes. The enemies of the hero could then only accept the death of their adversary, as no other sign could prove the fact. If the song of Waylander could be understood as most part an inner confession and lament of the hero than the work of Therion projects the situation only to the outside, singing the lamentation of the hero sung by the remaining ones mourning him. In the above mentioned songs we have seen that the most important and catchy part of the myth is the death and tragedy of *Cú Chulainn* that may remind us all that although someone is heroic and powerful in the end death will come to him. Only the fact that his fame and stories lasted hundreds of years may comfort the left behind, retold by modern bards not only of Ireland but from German and Sweden as well.

### 3.5.4. The Morrigan

After a rather depressive section about the tragedy of a hero we arrive to the most grief filled figure of Irish mythology, the goddess called the Morrigan. The Morrigan (or Morrighu, Mórrigna, etc.) is one of the unique Irish goddesses who were worshiped as a single entity or a triple, forging together three aspects into one. Mainly the Morrigan can be attributed as a war goddess who is absent from the fight itself but comes to harvest the souls of the dead,

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<sup>512</sup> "Tied on a stone, he's born as hero / Died on his feet, he's known forever / Born, with a halo of frenzy, you black-browed // *Cú Chulainn, Cú Chulainn / Mighty Cú Chulainn, even death you defy / Cú Chulainn / Still he stands where the raven lands / With Emer as his bride. // Small and youthful, (the) son of Lugh and Deichtine / (He) Killed the guard-dog, killed the monster of Culann / Yes, kill the monster of Culann in warp spasm [...] Cú Chulainn / Still he stands where the raven lands / With Emer as his bride. / (The) Legend of Cú Chulainn flies across the land / Like the spear of your fate"* Therion, *Sitra Ahra*, Nuclear Blast, 2010.

therefore visualized as a crow or raven.<sup>513</sup> She is also connected with prophecy (as one who knows the dead she knows the time of one's own death). Initially arriving with the Tuatha De Danann she was a singer for his tribe in the battle against the Fomorians. Three other goddess figures are called together as "*The Three Morrigan*" 1) Badb, a crow goddess; 2) Nemain, the spreader of panic; and 3) Macha, who is the horse of battle in haste.<sup>514</sup> The three aspects all indicate not the heroic and triumphant war worshipped by the Vikings as we have seen it in connection with Thor, Odin and the Valhalla, but the black and grieving fight that brings death to the land. The so-called "*Phantom Queen*" is not the allegory or metaphor of the Otherworld or the afterlife but Death herself who is about to come for everybody, even for heroes like Cú Chulainn, who in a version of his myth is pursued to death by the Morrigan.<sup>515</sup>

Suidakra's vision on the Morrigan<sup>516</sup> is found on their album of 1999, entitled *Lays from Afar*. Here we encounter the closest experience of death itself. Supposedly a warrior is facing death not in the meaning of the deadly strike of the enemy, but as dying closes around him in the picture of the Morrigan. The goddess is depicted in the lyrics the way we have met her above symbolised by a crow. The red clouds around her, her triple (three faced) and fierce nature, her connection to darkness are all enumerated. The warrior faces his fate with a hail movement greeting the guide to the afterlife showing no sign of anxiety. Besides the crow-like, dark and wild nature of the goddess we also can hear her scream that makes her presence real for the listener, as it shakes the earth, thus the possibility of the Morrigan is only a vision is scattered. Her hunger for the dead is well represented with the picture of crows picking the eyes of thousands of the deceased. The last line of the entire song ("*[...] May the eyes of thousands please thy raging greed - but not mine...*")<sup>517</sup> turns the whole concept into and upside down, as the dying warrior who stands in front of death, accepting the fact of his fall, tries to fight it for one last moment. Here we can witness the basic instinct to avoid death, a very primordial feeling that works even in the last moments of life. The Morrigan in this song is presented more like a metaphor of death and not a goddess, only with lighter pictures to illustrate the process as she devours the souls of the dead.

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<sup>513</sup> Charles SQUIRE, *ibid.* 1999, 431.

<sup>514</sup> Patricia MONAGHAN, *ibid.* 2008, 339-340.

<sup>515</sup> Philip FREEMAN, *Celtic Mythology: Tales of Gods, Goddesses and Heroes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, 90, 134.

<sup>516</sup> "[...] *Wrapped in red clouds / The corvine goddess appeared / Emptiness filled my mind / Fervid thoughts crawled suddenly into me... // Morrigan - three faced goddess dark and wild / For thee I'll raise my sword and shield / Morrigan - grimest crow beneath the sky / May the eyes of thousands please thy raging greed // Come forth now grimest crow / Thou cry shall shatter earth and sky / ...Like a shrieking carnyce... [...]*" Suidakra, *Lays from Afar*, Last Episode, 1999.

<sup>517</sup> Suidakra, *ibid.* 1999.

Waylander's next song, *Morrigan's Domain*,<sup>518</sup> promises to depict not only the goddess but the territory where she is queen. The first cited verse is a natural picture painted with images of death. The whole scene is attributed with the features of a nightmare showing a field of dead bodies supposedly after a battle as the deceased are named as slain suggesting violent death. The nightmarish vision is filled with gruesome images not just of dead bodies but of blood, the amount of the dead, and the natural cycle of life: the coming crows to feast on the corpses. The dead are not considered to be human beings or to have any connection to the living on the surface as those are called "*lifeless forms*" and "*carrion*" not showing any human attribute to them. The last line of the verse reflects on their relationship to the living as an absence for the left behind sons and fathers. In the next section we see the Morrigan once again, coming with a deathly scream just as we have seen her in the song of Suidakra above. She is represented as a crow once again, imitating the movement of the death-birds before approaching their feast. This set table is served with not only the dead bodies but with their souls together. The Morrigan is shown to be the one who is celebrating the loss of others as it is her dining table: a row of attributes are show with triumph and rejoice. The last verse brings together the two previous images of death and the closing crow(s) with a quite natural description focusing on the disgusting and filthy details of death's aftermath also showing the accompanying host of crows picking the eyes of the dead. The obscene and grotesque reality of death is also referred, with a comforting closure stating that the Morrigan welcomes the dead as it is the part of the natural cycle of life. Thus the picture above of death, disgust and degradation may seem the divine curse of the Morrigan but at last it is the fate of everyone living, placing the goddess to her well deserved position in the cycle of life and death, attempting to accept the fact that all of us is pacing towards the depicted end in body but to another stance in the soul.

Our last encounter with Primordial's music is the 2002 song called *Sons of the Morrigan*.<sup>519</sup> As we have seen it previously in connection with Babel's Tower and Death of

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<sup>518</sup> "[...] Nightmare visions, choked with the bodies of the slain / Rivers run red, ravens alight on mounds of lifeless forms / Feasting horribly on carrion and broken bones, / Once proud men, someone's sons and brothers all. [...] Hear the shriek of the Morrigan / As she circles preparing to dine, / To dine upon the slaughtered souls / To feast on fresh dead flesh / Triumphant scream of ecstasy / Exultant in the misery / Wallow in the pain // Putrid stench of entrails and emptied bowels / Morrigan's minions glut on unseeing eyes / A picture painted in detail so obscene / Morrigan greets all those souls who die. [...]" Waylander, *ibid.* 2001.

<sup>519</sup> "Shone the sunset red and solemn / Where we stood and observed / Down the corners of the column / Letter strokes of Ogham carved / 'tis belike a burial pillar / Said he and those shallow lines / Hold some warriors name of valour / And will rightly show the signs // No one saw, how far I fell / And no one ever knew / That there was a heart of flesh / Deep within me / As it was, bled of the twisted horn / And the howling of the dogs / Raise on old Heroes lament / While the weeping of women / Still vexes my heart [...]" Primordial, *Storm Before Calm*, Hammerheart Records, 2002.

the Gods the relation of Primordial towards mythology is more symbolic approach than a factual reception of the stories. Thus now we have a three verse song from which we only cite the first two ones as the last one is a citation itself. Within the lyrics we have a lament of a dying person with only one clear reference to Celtic religion with the mentioning of an Ogham inscription.<sup>520</sup> The song is written from the perspective of a dying (supposedly warrior) far from his homeland awaiting his ultimate end, enumerating the circumstances of his death and some of his sorrows. His lamentation is not just only on the loss of life, but the chance of being forgotten, not just as a whole, but on the deep layers as well, e.g. the forsaking of his humanity and pride. This inhumanly human worry over the end of the life with the inner viewpoint creates a quite pictorial impression of a dying man's mind. Compared to the title of the song we see the same approach towards inevitable death as in the previous instances: death is real and we are all bound to meet it, or meet her as all the living is later becomes the son of the Morrigan, reminding the listener that there is no escape. Thus Morrigan is a symbol of death that is realised and explained in the lyrics of Primordial.

The inner viewpoint is maintained by Cruachan in their song, *The Morrigan's Call*.<sup>521</sup> The title says almost of it all: the Morrigan's call is the moment of death. The speaker shows us the process of transition from being a unique individual into being part of the mass of the dead. This is the liminal moment when one has to say farewell to the world of the living and greet afterlife where everything is transformed. We see the falling warrior in anxiety and worry over his family whom he will not only miss but are concerned what will come onto them. The responsibilities of a man are collected here to care for his wife and children, but not shown as a duty or obligation but a feeling coming from a loving heart. The growth of the children (a spring of life) is opposed with the passing of the speaker who should witness the life of his offspring but a warrior is constantly answering the Morrigan's call and is playing with death.

Darkest Era is a Celtic metal band from Northern Ireland. Their heavy metal music woven with Celtic folk tunes lacking traditional instruments only uses metal to re-ignite the Celtic atmosphere. The debut LP of the band (*The Last Caress of Light*) contains the song:

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<sup>520</sup> The Ogham writing system was the traditional tool of druids attributed to the god Oghma or Oghmios, used for ritual, votive and other religious scripture to carve mostly on stones or wood. Sz. V. SKUNAJEV, *Ogma = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 598.

<sup>521</sup> "I fall to my knees, I await my death. / A fallen warrior, hear my last breath. / I fought so fierce, I fought with pride. / Now I am just another who died. // Who will care for my child? Who will care for my wife? / I leave them behind at the end of my life. / I long to stay and watch my child grow, / but I am dead and I must go." Cruachan, *The Morrigan's Call*, AFM Records, 2006.

*The Morrigan*.<sup>522</sup> This instance of reception considering the Morrigan is quite different from the above listed songs. The main topic of the song is of course death and its approach towards a warrior, but in a new light. We see here a warrior who is brave and determined to win the fight he is about to participate in. The first verse and the first line of the second verse give us the well known description of the goddess lurking around to catch the ones about to die. She is named as the one inciting the concept of war amongst the people of the earth, thus she has her feasts. Thus not the manifested enemy is the enemy of the hero but death and war itself, what he attempts to beat and cast the Morrigan away. In this regard the goddess is in a close parallel to the Christian concept of Satan who is also attributed to be the one responsible for war and all the hostilities amongst men. The only difference is that from death nobody can escape thus his fight is in vain but noble. The last cited lines are about the occurrence of the mentioned event of falling fulfilling the purpose and task of the Morrigan. The songs above are all grasping the main concepts connected to the goddess: death and its inevitability. Most of the songs take the clear inner viewpoint of one facing death to bring it close to the listener, realising the attributes of the goddess and not using them as metaphors or allegories. Although the attributes of the goddess are attempting to only paraphrase death this liminal border is broken down in each song showing the naturalistic and even disgusting details of dying and the dead to underline the vast actuality that everyone must die in the end.

### 3.5.5. King Arthur and His Myths

In the last section to work with Celtic mythology we are going to show a variety of songs that cover the stories of King Arthur. As it was seen above almost all the songs considering Irish mythology are reworked by bands of Ireland and Northern-Ireland, with only one exception of Suidakra, coming from Germany. Opposing the local interest of Irish mythology, the most well-known British myth, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table exceeds to a wider, international audience. On the following pages we are going to meet German, North American and British groups who have chosen to be inspired by King Arthur.

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<sup>522</sup> "Goddess of war, serpent of doom / Destroying all who encounter you / But there is one who you won't kill / There is one whose blood won't spill // Seeker of souls, taker of heads / I watch you conjure war among men / I will strike each form you take / Till you return to me and seal my fate // For one last glory I will prevail / The Morrigan she calls out my name [...] She appears to me before my eyes / Baying for blood in each disguise / Tell me now, how does it end? / Whisper to me, prophetess of death [...] She disappeared from my sight / I knew I would not return from this fight / A black crow waits before I die / As I depart, she'll watch my spirit fly" Darkest Era, *The Last Caress of Light*, Metal Blade Records, 2011.

According to the sources the person we know as King Arthur of Britain lived around the year 500 AD. His figure is full of controversies, considered on one hand to be a real person who fought the Saxons at the battle of Badon Hill, and united the tribes of Britain after the decline of Roman rule,<sup>523</sup> on the other hand he is held as a fully mythological figure without any connection to reality. Nevertheless, his figure and stories are quite late inventions in British thought and show many similarities to certain Irish stories.<sup>524</sup> The first and most important source of the later Arthur mythological cycle comes from the times around 1136 by Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>525</sup> The core of the story is gathered from Monmouth's work, "*Historia Regnum Britanniae*", with the emergence of Uther later called Pendragon, then Arthur and his hostilities with his natural son, Mordred.<sup>526</sup> There are many different sources to the development of the Arthur cycle that contain the other well-known plot events, like the Grail-quests, the appearance of Lancelot, the story of the sword closed in rock, the magical sword of Excalibur, etc. that spring a whole genre of Arthurian romances (e.g. the works Chrétien de Troyes or Wolfram von Eschenbach).<sup>527</sup>

*Mordred's Song*<sup>528</sup> from German power metal act Blind Guardian is joining the yet witnessed method of giving an insight into a mythological figures mind by writing a song from their perspective. Now we have the song that Mordred, the illegitimate son of Arthur sings before the final battle to fight with his father for the throne. The song is written with an omnipotent insight into the events to come; as Mordred has the knowledge of that he will lose the battle against his father. We see the disappointment in the heart of the song's hero of being a king's son cast out of the legacy and inheritance of the crown. Much grief and sadness is gathered in the song that is a preparation for a battle in vain making the cry of Mordred even more tragic than it is originally. The burden of duty is also weighing the shoulders of the speaker referring to the war that he fights in as one he has not chosen but was forced into it. These images together aims to show that the antagonist of the Arthur legends may have his own viewpoint of the events, colourizing the original duality of dark and light or good and

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<sup>523</sup> Or is a mixture of different historical personages, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to 6<sup>th</sup> century, with either Briton or Roman lineage. C. Scott LITTLETON, Linda A. MALCOR, *Székítától Camelotig*, Nyíregyháza, Székita Szarvas Könyvkiadó, 2005, 78-84.

<sup>524</sup> For more information please see: Charles SQUIRE, *ibid.* 1999, 257-260.

<sup>525</sup> C. Scott LITTLETON, Linda A. MALCOR, *ibid.* 78.

<sup>526</sup> Book 8 to 12, in Hungarian please see: *Arthur király históriája*, Geoffrey of Monmouth Britannia Királyainak Története című krónikájából, transl. KISS Sándor, Máriabesnyő, Attraktor Könyvkiadó, 2011, 5-104.

<sup>527</sup> Sz. S., *Artur = Mitológiai Enciklopédia*, ed. Sz. A. TOKAREV, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 573-574.

<sup>528</sup> "I've lost my battle before it starts / my first breath wasn't done / my spirit's sunken deep / into the ground / why am I alone / I can hear my heartbeat / silence's all around // See hate will rise / so don't come closer / fear your child / born with a king's heart / but fate fooled me / and changed my cards / no one asked if I want it / if I like it [...]" Blind Guardian, *Imaginations from the Other Side*, Virgin Records, 1995.

bad found in the legends depicting prince Mordred as an evil one who is of greed and vengeance against his father without a right.

Avalon, the second most famous place in Arthurian legend (after Camelot) and the death of King Arthur is the topic of Cradle of Filth' song, entitled *Haunted Shores*.<sup>529</sup> Cradle of Filth is one of England's most controversial metal acts, starting as a black metal band later developed into an extreme form of gothic metal, not only in the regards of music but in lyrics as well, touching many Romantic English and more ancient literary works. Avalon is a heavenly place in Celtic mythology incorporated into the Arthurian cycle, an island of paradise, the place where King Arthur travelled and later died.<sup>530</sup> In the song we see the dying King Arthur travelling to the haunted shores of Avalon. This is a lamentation song of another hero in the manner how we have seen it before in the case of Cú Chulainn as well. The life cycle of the King is presented with short references on his war to unite the country, his magical sword, the Excalibur what he orders to be returned to the fairy of the lake, from whom he received it, and so on. The picture is somewhat similar to Mordred's Song showing the mighty king in agony just before his death, creating a more human and less divine impression of him bringing his figure closer to the listener.

Grave Digger, a band enthusiastic towards not only Greek but especially Celtic mythology spent an entire record for the stories regarding the yet mentioned magical Excalibur sword. The title track of their album named after the sword is *Excalibur*.<sup>531</sup> Although the whole recording would be worthy for an analysis now for the sake of showing different aspects of the same story we choose only one song for presentation. The song works with the common identification of the sword drawn from the stone by Arthur before elected to be king with the magical sword that was given by the fairy of the lake to the King.<sup>532</sup> The child Arthur is shown as an orphan set to reign after his deed of drawing the sword from the rock. His role and importance is stressed as well with the unmistakable identification of the two mentioned swords. In this regard we may assume that Grave Digger does not

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<sup>529</sup> "[...] From the woods, Pendragon-born, I rose Arcturius. / A proud, audacious king mantled in the vehemence of lust. / Death and destiny undaunted me, I drew a throne divided. / In awe of the glorious battles won, my dark Goddess provided. [...] Morganna art thou near me? / Languid, I wend my path to grave. / Cast my sword to the sulphid grasp, / of the naiad neath the silvered lake. [...] More so than thine, else thy dew-lidded eyes, / art for the Banshees song. / Or our souls entwined like vein upon, / the haunted shores of Avalon [...]" Cradle of Filth, *Dusk and Her Embrace*, Music for Nations, 1996.

<sup>530</sup> Charles SQUIRE, *ibid.* 1999, 337.

<sup>531</sup> "Unknown heir / Orphaned page / A King to be / Come his Age / For God's sake // Sorcerer / Sword in Stone / Release will / Bring the Throne / For the Chosen One // The Almighty will point out / The only royal blood in the crowd // EXCALIBUR / SWORD OF THE KINGS / TAKE ME ON YOUR WINGS / BACK WHERE I BELONG / EXCALIBUR [...]" Grave Digger, *Excalibur*, GUN Records, 1999.

<sup>532</sup> Patricia MONAGHAN, *ibid.* 2008, 164.

misunderstands the concept of two different swords (as we have seen their approach towards the Odyssey to be authentic) but it is an intensifying motif to highlight the importance of the later King Arthur and his sword(s) that led him to victory over his enemies. A hero's praising is shown in the whole records, reviving the romantic interest in Arthurian lore.

The last song comes from American power metal band named after the legendary capital of King Arthur. Kamelot's piece, *Shadow of Uther*<sup>533</sup> is from their 1995 album, *The Fourth Legacy*. The first part of the song is a praising of Arthur's merits turned into the shadowing legacy of his father, Uther Pendragon. The song is entitled about this shade that is Arthur was born of illegitimacy thus his fall is caused by his illegitimate son, Mordred. This motif stressed in the song sheds light on the less glorious details of the romanticized Arthur picture, attempting to give a more differentiated interpretation of the story. With the song of Kamelot we arrive to the closure of the analysing section of our study. The last task remaining after the gathering of data is to reach the consequences in the summary.

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<sup>533</sup> "Due to the legend / a new king will come / rise in the morning horizon / brave and believing / for wars to be won / born with the heart of a lion / he will fight for a country unite / till the last drop of blood confines the oath / till all will respect him wherever he roams [...] he will be holding / the sword in the stone / knights of the kingdom will join him / bring back the honor / of Pendragons name / from where the cauldron is boiling // but the shadow of Uther restrains / all the efforts to reunite the realm / a witch of his own blood from heaven expelled [...]" Kamelot, *The Fourth Legacy*, Noise Records, 1999.

## 4. Summary

### 4.1. Reading and writing

When it comes to writing the process always starts with reading. Not only in the regard of an academic sense but in cases of art as well. It does not necessarily mean reading of scripture, it may be connected to the reading of life and existence. Every manifestation of our world can be a source for inspiration, as it was sketched through the works of Arthur Schopenhauer, the genius of the artist (and of the musician) is that they are able to grasp a piece of existence in an experience where they do not only look on an object but can contemplate the very essence of it, penetrating the idea, the *eidos* behind it and have the ability to create a piece of art that can mediate their contemplation to the audience. In Chapter 3 we were interested how metal musicians write their lyrics that is a manifest of how and what they read. Approaching to the final pages of our study we face a twofold problem once again as usual. One is of the individual and one is of the community. In many cases a high level of interest in a certain ancient culture and mythology is a demand before approaching to write a mythological text for a song. Thus the later written lines to sing or growl are the result of a *reading process*. Staying with the writings of Wolfgang Iser, his article on the inner mechanisms, with a phenomenological approach on reading, is the second pillar.<sup>534</sup> It is now a commonplace that reading itself is not a passive receiving but a process where the reader is actively involved into the text. The main point that is important for us in the cited study is the concept of gaps left by the text within itself and within the reader too. The words and sentences made up from those are individual pieces that are chained together to create a text. But as no verbal communication is able to transmit a phenomenon in its entirety, thus the literary texts itself is not sufficient for this task alone. The gaps, that in a way also represent the quality of a text, are the absences within, stimulates the reader to try to fill in. These gaps make every reader and even every reading (even by the same reader) unique. The various ways as each and every reader fills in the invoked gaps by their own imagination creates the realm of reception. In this regard the central interest of our investigation was *how* the metal musicians read ancient mythological texts? It is sure that they read the myths and than in accordance to their own mental horizon of reception and interpretation they write the lyrics that represent for us the way they read them. It may be a point of debate to examine if the musicians read the myths in

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<sup>534</sup> Wolfgang ISER, *The Reading Process*, *New Literary History*, 3.2 (1972), 279-299.

their original written language or in English translations, what may determine their own range of interpretation but it is not the concern of us now. The key motifs and motivations within an ancient myths plot are also accessible in English (or other language's) translations.

In cases of the myths we were to gather up the current academic viewpoint each and every, to have an official pillar to lean on. This pillar was collided with the product of metal musicians' reception, the lyric, that contains the way how and what musicians read from a certain piece of ancient literature and culture. Remaining on this level of the phenomenology of reading, it seems that official academic viewpoint could also be named as a result of reception as well as the metal lyrics. Both could be called as products of different *interpretive communities*. This does not mean that the two approaches represent the same level of quality and goal, but according to Stanley Fish, both directions (along with many other possible ones) are the results of a realm of interpretation. The theory of interpretive communities of Stanley Fish states and presents<sup>535</sup> through the interpretation tradition of Milton's *Lycidas*, that every action done during literary analysis and interpretation (and even during reading) is predetermined by the inventory provided by the community the reader belongs to. In this regard community may mean many different levels, layers and groups. Just to take some examples Western culture itself is an interpretive community, the academic world is also one, within the academic all the movements and disciplines are interpretive communities, everyday readers, etc. Even the subcultures and the streams of popular culture belong to this theory. On a more wide level it can be said, this theory is not relevant only in case of literature but in all possible interactions.

If every reader is part of an interpretive community, than the individuals labelled as *metal musicians* also represent one. The only question that is remaining in connection with their method of *reading* is to draw the most important attributes featured in their community. As it was cited above, the primary interest of metal music is power and rebellion. As the music itself is aggressive and rebellious in its forms of expression compared to the milieu it was created in (up to present day as well) the lyrics follow this pattern as well. This means that the world is read through the glasses of a rebel: everything is fascinating that represent the ideal, and everything is worthless that is conformist. Or, in other words, the quality of a phenomenon or a literary text is determined by the level of outrageousness and nonconformity incorporated compared to the actual dimension of reality. Focusing on mythological texts, which are in this regard fascinating and inspiring for metal musicians, are dealing with chaotic

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<sup>535</sup> Stanley FISH, *Interpreting the Variorum = Is There a Text in Class?*, Stanley FISH, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1980, 147-173.

powers, and through re-interpreting the myths the way those are read by musicians can be traced back. The expressions used are in many cases polarized in different ways than that are of society's consensus. As many values of Western Christianity are turned upside down in the pursuit of rebellion, thus the traditional positive meanings are turned negative and Hell, Satan and the evil powers are placed onto the throne of ruling interests. We have to see that this protest and references to evil and death worship are in their nature more of rhetoric utilities and not to be understood to the letter. As in many cases a spiritual warfare was introduced thus the tools of war are essential parts of the vocabulary as well. As a consequence the images of blood, pain, weapons together with fate, doom and destiny are in a close relation to power, power over the surrounding world. In the introduction (Chapter 2) we have seen many other lyrics not coming from the realm of mythological metal music whereas we could witness very similar patterns. The main aims of metal music in even the cases of the Dionysian lyric type are the same, and are independent from what do metal musicians read as inspiration. In the end all metal lyrics serve the ideas of rebellion and power, suggesting a quite monochromic picture on behalf of the verbal expressions. But as it could read on the pages above this monochromic approach brings a colourful variety of topics and lyrical contents. The material is drawn together; our last remaining task is to interpret the results and list the consequences.

## 4.2. Categorization

The first thing to do is to sort the material into possible categories. As our reading of metal music is predetermined by the search for the most popular and typical topics, we raise two questions in connection with the material: *what* do metal musicians read, and *how* do they read it. In this regard the first direction of categorization is on the main motifs and topics in the myths presented above, and the second direction is on method how the metal groups (re)used the motifs and topics entwined with their own reading. The focus is on the analysed and presented lyrics and not on the enumerated band names and recording titles, as the lyrics serve with the best insight into the reception of Biblical and mythological topics in the realm of extreme metal music.

<b>Creation/ Foundation</b>	<b>Death and afterlife</b>	<b>Warfare and heroism</b>	<b>Rebellion against the divine</b>	<b>Apocalypse (end of the world)</b>	<b>Cult or figure of a deity</b>	<b>Romance and tragedy</b>
Enûma Eliš (3.2.1.2.)	Egyptian underworld (3.2.2.2.)	Achilles (3.3.3.)	Mesopotamian Demonology (3.2.1.3.)	The Flood (3.2.3.2.)	Satan and God (3.1.)	Narcissus (3.3.3.)
Exodus (3.2.3.4.)	Persephone (3.3.3.)	Odysseus (3.3.3.)	The Amarna reform (3.2.2.3.)	The Ragnarök (3.4.4.)	Moloch (3.2.3.5.)	
Romulus and Remus (3.3.4.)	Valhalla (3.4.3.)	Asir-Vanir war (3.4.2.)	The Tower of Babel (3.2.3.3.)		Baal (3.2.3.5.)	
The Fooling of Gylfi (3.4.2.)	The Morrigan (3.5.4.)	Thor (3.4.3.)	Prometheus and titans (3.3.2.)		Sol Invictus (3.3.4.)	
The Book of Invasions (3.5.2.)		Cú Chulainn (3.5.3.)	Loki (3.4.3.)		Mithras (3.3.4.)	
		Arthurian legends (3.5.4.)			Sucellos (3.5.1.1.)	

Table 8.: The categorization of myths by main theme/motif

Before presenting the content of the table we are to make three remarks:

1) Mesopotamian demonology is listed amongst the “*Rebellion against the divine*” category as the focus is on the evil nature of demons fighting the divine and human order.

2) The Exodus is listed in the “*Creation/foundation*” category as the Exodus is the prelude to the birth of Israel.

3) The stories of Odin, Thor and Loki are distributed amongst different categories, as the stories regarding their figures are connected to greater, umbrella like motifs.

Comparing the material chosen and the myths represented within we can see that the most popular topic is the stories connected to warfare and heroism. As it was discussed on the masculinity and the relation towards power in metal music it is no surprise that male power and fighting are in the lead. The other topic with a head-to-head position on top is the figures of different deities and gods. Second in line are the myths of creation or foundation with an interest in primordial chaotic forces and the case of rebellion against divine order. The third place is taken by the mysteries of death, the Underworld and the afterlife. The fourth most interesting topic is the great cataclysms of religions e.g. the Flood and the Ragnarök, while with only one instance in the fifth place we meet a tragic love story. The categorization of

myths above does not consider the method of reading by metal musicians, thus the way the stories are read and rewritten may differ from the original topic of the story, what is to be detailed in Chapter 4.2. Although as it may be clear for the reader, also indicated by the remarks on the table, this categorization of myths gives place for the establishment of certain sub-categories. The best example would be the presentation of different gods and deities: the images in connection with Satan and the Ragnarök in many cases could be the part of the “*Warfare and heroism*” type, or the Amarna reform could be placed into the “*Cult or figure of a deity*” category. As this mixed sub-categorization does not erase the statements of the table thus we do not discuss it in details. The interest of extreme metal in mythology covers almost the whole palette of mythological topics: we have the stories of creation and the destruction of the world, the figures of different gods, heroic stories, a romantic story, the problem of death and the afterlife, all that are natural part of the “*Chaotic*” lyric type cited from the work of Deena Weinstein. Now we know what kind of stories do metal musicians interested in mythology read, thus we can approach the problem of how do they read them and how do they write their lyrics and interpret a story depending on their understanding of it.

<b>(Anti-)Christian (-Religious) content</b>	<b>Retelling of a story</b>	<b>Rewriting or expansion of a story</b>	<b>Actualization of a story</b>
Behemoth: <i>Messe Noire</i>	Amaseffer: <i>Slaves for Life</i>	A Hill to Die Upon: <i>Prometheus Rebound</i>	Ancient Rites: <i>Mithras</i>
Carpathian Forest: <i>It's Darker Than You Think</i>	Amon Amarth: <i>War of the Gods</i>	Bay Leaf: <i>Triumph or Defeat</i>	Cruachan: <i>The Morrigan's Call</i>
Darkthrone: <i>To Walk the Infernal Fields</i>	Amon Amarth: <i>Destroyer of the Universe</i>	Behemoth: <i>Pazuzu</i>	Darkest Era: <i>The Morrigan</i>
Deuteronomium: <i>Christ Addict</i>	Apophis: <i>Apophis - Hostile Forms</i>	Blind Guardian: <i>Mordred's Song</i>	Emperor: <i>Tongue of Fire</i>
Dimmu Borgir: <i>In Sorte Diaboli</i>	Bathory: <i>Valhalla</i>	Cradle of Filth: <i>Haunted Shores</i>	Ereb Altor: <i>Post Ragnarök</i>
Frost Like Ashes: <i>Cruel Verse</i>	Celtachor: <i>Arrival of the Tuatha</i>	Eluveitie: <i>Succelos</i>	Nargaroth: <i>Abschiedbrief des Prometheus</i>
Ghost: <i>Ritual</i>	Cruachan: <i>Cúchulainn</i>	Falkenbach: <i>Where his Ravens Fly</i>	Nightfall: <i>Akhenaton, the 9th Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty</i>
Marduk: <i>Accuser/Opposer</i>	Cruachan: <i>The Arrival of the Fir Bolgh</i>	Kamelot: <i>The Shadow of Uther</i>	Orphaned Land: <i>Mabool – The Story of Three Sons of Seven</i>
Mercyful Fate: <i>The Oath</i>	Einherjer: <i>Home</i>	Melechesh: <i>Rebirth of the Nemesis</i>	Primordial: <i>Babel's Tower</i>
Moredhel: <i>Victory March of the Black Phalanx</i>	Enslaved: <i>Loke</i>	Melechesh: <i>Deluge of Delusional Dreams</i>	Primordial: <i>Death of the Gods</i>
Naglfar: <i>Feeding Moloch</i>	Ex Deo: <i>Romulus</i>	Melechesh: <i>Ghouls of Nineveh</i>	Primordial: <i>Sons of the Morrigan</i>

Rotting Christ: <i>Serving in Heaven</i>	Grave Digger: <i>Excalibur</i>	Naer Mataron: <i>Sol Invictus</i>	Rotting Christ: <i>Helios Hyperion</i>
Stryper: <i>Soldiers Under Command</i>	Grave Digger: <i>Home At Last</i>	Necros Christos: <i>Baal of Ekron</i>	Septicflesh: <i>Prometheus</i>
The Devil's Blood: <i>Christ or Cocaine</i>	King of Asgard: <i>Gap of Ginnung</i>	Septic Flesh: <i>Sumerian Daemon</i>	Suidakra: <i>Balor</i>
Vader: <i>Blood of Kingu</i>	Leaves' Eyes: <i>Ragnarok</i>	Septicflesh: <i>Babel's Gate</i>	Suidakra: <i>Morrigan</i>
	Månegarm: <i>Hordes of Hel</i>	Therion: <i>Son of the Sun</i>	Therion: <i>Blood of Kingu</i>
	Manowar: <i>Thor (The Powerhead)</i>	Unleashed: <i>As Yggdrasil Trembles</i>	Therion: <i>Feuer Overture/Prometheus Entfesselt</i>
	Manowar: <i>Achilles, Agony and Ecstasy in Eight Parts</i>	Waylander: <i>A Hero's Lament</i>	Týr: <i>The Lay of Thyrm</i>
	Moby Dick: <i>Prometheus</i>		Waylander: <i>Morrigan's Domain</i>
	My Dying Bride: <i>Hail Odysseus</i>		
	Nightfall: <i>Hyperion</i>		
	Nile: <i>Opening of the Mouth</i>		
	Nile: <i>Burning pits of the Duat</i>		
	Nile: <i>Cast Down the Heretic</i>		
	Rotting Christ: <i>Enûma Eliš</i>		
	Septicflesh: <i>Anubis</i>		
	Septicflesh: <i>Narcissus</i>		
	Suidakra: <i>Isle of Skye</i>		
	Therion: <i>Cú Chulainn</i>		
	Therion: <i>Dark Venus Persephone</i>		
	Therion: <i>Ginnungagap</i>		
	Týr: <i>The Ride to Hel</i>		
	Waylander: <i>Balor of the Evil Eye</i>		

Table 9.: The categorization of lyrics by main feature/approach

On the table above we can see that the 85 songs examined in the study are split into four different categories. The first category “(Anti-)Christian(-Religious) Content” was discussed in details in Chapter 3.1. The “Satanist” and “Christian” metal songs are placed in the same slot as those represent the two sides of the same coin. The approach towards religion and Christianity with an opposing interest is the surface attribute of the presence of the demonic

(Frye) and carnival (Bakhtin) grotesque (Halnion) within metal music, the typical form of rebellion and representation of power (Walser) against the cultural majority. It could be said that if metal music is the art of rebellion than it is self evident that Anti-Christian or at least Anti-Clerical movements should emerge. The problem of Christian metal was detailed as well concluding to that the form provided by metal music may be filled in with Christian content as well using the same tools as the Satanist counterpart, but turned it upside down, rebelling against the rebellion of Satanist meal music. The least amount of songs was chosen from this type (15 songs) to illustrate the two movements, even listing songs with direct mythological references (e.g. Naglfar: *Feeding Moloch* and Vader: *Blood of Kingu*) using the chosen mythological figures to be the tools to stress the Anti-religious interest. The grotesque praising of the Moloch-offering touches a level of absurdity leading the focus not on the real worship of a child-sacrificing practice but on the fact that it is a cursed sin of the Old Testament, thus the praising of it is the denial of Biblical truths. The figure of Kingu is as well an antagonist but in Babylonian mythology, thus the song sympathizing with the destruction of all gods suggests the rejection of all religions on a metaphorical level.

The second label “*Retelling of a story*” is the mostly populated class in our categorization and gathered material (33 songs). In this regard the “*retelling*” does not mean a plain reproduction of a certain mythological topic with the reformulation of a myth’s original text. As the lyrics of this category do not tend to alter in any way the original plotlines, figures and actions of a story on a general level we can say that these are retellings. But if we take a closer look on the songs chosen we can witness in many cases that the speaker’s stance is often directed inwards: an inner viewpoint is show, where the speaker tells of certain events as he is part of them, like when the goddess Hel speaks of her armies (Manegarm – *Hordes of Hel*), the dying hero tells of his expectations of the Valhalla (Bathory – *Valhalla*) or his fear about the measurement of the soul by Anubis (Septicflesh – *Anubis*). It is important to stress that the inner viewpoint of present category does not share the same attributes as the next one’s (“*Rewriting or expansion of a story*”). The other part of the songs with an external viewpoint (e.g. Amaseffer : *Slaves for Life*, Amon Amarth : *War of the Gods* or Rotting Christ: *Enuma Elish*) are quite precise musical interpretations of myths, making the musicians to act like the previously cited bards of the Celtic, skálds of the Scandinavian or rhapsodists of Greek culture. These musicians of old served a great part in conserving the cultural heritage of a culture or nation, thus the revival of pagan cults and the organization of Neopagan groups is in a clear parallel with the interest in ancient mythologies within popular culture.

The third category, “*Rewriting or expansion of a story*” contains 18 songs being the third in rank. Here the myths (re)used by the bands are the foundation that is altered in smaller or bigger portions to serve as a container of a message. Again we may see similarities with another category, this time with the fourth one (“*Actualizing of a story*”), but with different goals. We have examples where different cultures mythologies are mixed together around the same topic (e.g. Behemoth – *Pazuzu* mixes Babylonian and Egyptian demonological features) or reimagined cosmic warfare occur (e.g. Melechesh: *Deluge of Delusional Dreams* with a not present war between gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon). Another way of alteration or rather expansion of a story is when the speaker’s viewpoint is focusing on details that are not or only in fragments are present in a myth. For example as we have seen it in Blind Guardian’s Mordred’s song the thoughts of Mordred, the antagonist are presented in a manner what aims to create sympathy towards the unless considered evil character of the Arthurian legends. The situation is quite similar if we recall the song of Unleashed (*As Yggdrasil Trembles*) with the hopeful einherjer fighting not only because it is their duty during the Ragnarök but because without their bravery the re-creation of the world would not occur. The confession of Cú Chulainn before his death from Waylander’s piece (*A Hero’s Lament*) tries to catch the imagined last thoughts of the dying hero who is afraid of death, although we can only know him from his ultimate power and bravery witnessed in his stories. As summary we can say that the expansion or alteration of a myth attempts to shed light on forgotten or not considered parts of each story, proving the ever inspiring and thoughtful nature of ancient lore.

“*Actualizing a story*” (19 songs, the second in rank) differs from the previous category in the goal it tries to achieve. In this context actualization means that a metal band rewrites or expands a mythological storyline to meet the interest of present day in accordance to make it valid for contemporary listeners. The best example for it is the album of Orphaned Land: *Mabool (The Story of Three Sons of Seven)* that retells the story of Noah and the flood without even mentioning the hero of the Biblical text. The three main characters that represent the three greatest Abrahamaic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, what are in war with each other are working together in peace and support of each other to lead the world away from a disaster. The Flood happens in the narrative of the album but for the listener it suggest that if the three mentioned religions would cease fire and make peace with each other than the symbolic flood of our world would be evitable. This unique rewriting and actualizing of a mythological story, what is a base narrative for the three mentioned religions, thus is able to be relevant for all listeners, may also be evaluated as part of interreligious dialogue. As the

story originates from the Old Testament suggests the acceptance of the cultural heritage that is opposed by most of metal bands. Nevertheless we have pagan stories actualized as well. The problem of enlightenment in Occult and New Age movements was discussed in Chapter 2 that can be found in songs like Emperor's *The Tongue of Fire* that refreshes the motif of the stealing of fire from the gods by Prometheus with the aim of contemporary men to search for the fire and light of hidden knowledge. The warning for a darker age to come of Orphaned Land is present in a pagan environment as well. The song of Suidakra on *Balor* or *Post Ragnarök* by Erebus Altor both speaks of vile events that may occur only in the case if humanity does not change its attitude. In this regard the search for peace between religions, the search for inner enlightenment or change of attitude all paces towards the same goal: to use motifs of ancient times that are timeless achieve a change in the people's mind (once again a New Age trait). In this approach the most unique examples if Primordial never retelling any story but using different cultures' myths to be the channels where they can project their thoughts on e.g. death and alienation.

As all categorizations prefer strict borders but art does not thus in some cases a song should be placed into more than one category. The yet mentioned song of Vader this way could be placed into the Anti-Religious, rewriting and actualizing classes as the reimagination of Kingu's story indicates it. Most of the rewriting and actualization categories' members could be sorted into both types, only slight differences made us put them into the categories they are in. For example, Naer Mataron's *Sol Invictus* praises the Sun god placing the speaker into an ancient environment but also suggests a connection to the contemporary Roman paganism revival movement. This suggestion is not clear in the song thus the imagined praise only gives a different impression on the god's cult and followers, placing the song among the "rewriters". If we attempt to synthesise the two categorization we find that the "modern skalds" (the retelling category) prefer to cite myths of warfare and heroism just as the singers of old did in the courts of chiefs and kings. Rewriting and expansion is preferred by bands who work with obscure or mystical topics in their music, e.g. demonology, rebellion against the divine, etc, while the questions of liminal importance are actualized, like death, destruction of the world, or the origin of humanity.

The differences in attitude towards religious scripture and especially the Bible are well presented by the pair of Behemoth's *Messe Noire* and Eluveitie's *Sucellos*. Both songs are relying on important portions of the Bible, but while Behemoth uses the form and turns the content upside down for an Anti-Christian message to send then Eluveitie uses a many thousand years tradition to fill it with the sacred content of another religion. Thus the original

Psalm is not mocked rather reused to be a Celtic Psalm, once again being part of typical Neopagan methods. The attitude of painting black certain sacred texts are eased by ironical tones as well like the song of Necros Christos, whereas the god Baal speaks of himself the way the enemies of his faith would both reflecting the Biblical opinion on the god and the interest in the alternative of the YHWH cult of ancient Israel. The two-faced nature of metal music could be also witnessed in the different approaches towards the same topic or story, like Prometheus. On one hand A Hill To Die Upon from a Christian viewpoint stresses the righteous punishment of the titan who did against the divine law, while Therion focuses on the liberty of the human mind that may be achieved through the deeds against the gods' commandment.

The last possible way of categorization systematizes the depth of sinking into the world of ancient mythologies and cultures. The five-level proposal is going to list the names of the bands, album and song titles.<sup>536</sup> The list follows an alphabetical order.

### **Level 1: Usage of mythological/religious topics as an inspiration for a band's or musician's stage name**

Absu; Amarna Sky; Anubis; Ancient Rites; Apophis; Astarte; Behemoth; Coffin Texts; Deuteronomium; Ea; Einherjer; Ereshkigal; Finntroll; Hathor; Helheim; Horus; Inanna; Isis; Kamelot; King of Asgard; Manegarm; Marduk; Naglfar; Nergal; Nile; Ragnarok; Sarpanitum; Schammasch; Seth; Sleipnir; Therion; Tiamat; Týr;

### **Level 2: Usage of mythological topics as an inspiration for a band's album title**

A Hill To Die Upon: *Infinite Titanic Immortal*; Amon Amarth: *Surtur Rising*; Apophis: *Gateway to the Underworld*; Bathory: *Twilight of the Gods*; Bay Leaf: *The Son of the Sun*; Celtachor: *Nuada of the Silver Arm*; Celtic Frost: *To Mega Therion*; Cruachan: *Blood for the Blood God*; Cruachan: *The Morrigan's Call*; Einherjer: *Odin Owns Ye All*; Eluveitei: *Evocation II.: Pantheon*; Emperor: *Prometheus – The Discipline of Fire and Demise*; Ex Deo: *Romulus*; Frost Like Ashes: *Tophet*; Grave Digger: *Clash of the Gods*; Grave Digger: *Excalibur*; Iron Maiden: *The Number of the Beast*; Marduk: *Rom 5:12*; Nightfall: *Cassiopeia*;

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<sup>536</sup> The purely Satanic/Anti-Christian related material is only included in cases whereas pre-Christian mythological elements are found together, as the Satanist/Christian metal issues was well detailed in this manner in Chapter 3. References to Biblical scripture are included.

Nile: *Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka*; Orphaned Land: *Mabool – The Story of Three Sons of Seven*; Rotting Christ: *Theogonia*; Septic Flesh: *Sumerian Daemons*; Septicflesh: *Titan*; Suidakra: *Book of Dowth*; Suidakra: *Crógacht*; Therion: *Lemuria*; Therion: *Secret of the Runes*; Tiamat: *Sumerian Cry*; Týr: *Ragnarok*; Týr: *The Lay of Thrym*; Unleashed: *As Yggdrasil Trembles*;

### **Level 3: Song (or complete album) dedicated to mythological topics**

A Hill to Die Upon: *Prometheus Rebound*; Amaseffer: *Slaves for Life*; Amon Amarth: *Destroyer of the Universe*; Amon Amarth: *War of the Gods*; Ancient Rites: *Mithras*; Apophis: *Apophis - Hostile Forms*; Bathory: *Valhalla*; Bay Leaf: *Triumph or Defeat*; Behemoth: *Pazuzu*; Blind Guardian: *Mordred's Song*; Celtachor: *Arrival of the Tuatha*; Cradle of Filth: *Haunted Shores*; Cruachan: *Cúchulainn*; Cruachan: *The Arrival of the Fir Bolgh*; Cruachan: *The Morrigan's Call*; Darkest Era: *The Morrigan*; Einherjer: *Home*; Eluveitie: *Succelos*; Emperor: *Tongue of Fire*; Enslaved: *Loke*; Ereb Altor: *Post Ragnarök*; Ex Deo: *Romulus*; Falkenbach: *Where his Ravens Fly*; Grave Digger: *Excalibur*; Grave Digger: *Home At Last*; Kamelot: *The Shadow of Uther*; King of Asgard: *Gap of Ginnungs*; Leaves' Eyes: *Ragnarok*; Månegarm: *Hordes of Hel*; Manowar: *Achilles, Agony and Ecstasy in Eight Parts*; Manowar: *Thor (The Powerhead)*; Melechesh: *Deluge of Delusional Dreams*; Melechesh: *Ghouls of Nineveh*; Melechesh: *Rebirth of the Nemesis*; Moby Dick: *Prometheus*; My Dying Bride: *Hail Odysseus*; Naer Mataron: *Sol Invictus*; Naglfar: *Feeding Moloch*; Nargaroth: *Abschiedbrief des Prometheus*; Necros Christos: *Baal of Ekron*; Nightfall: *Akhenaton, the 9th Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty*; Nightfall: *Hyperion*; Nile: *Burning pits of the Duat*; Nile: *Cast Down the Heretic*; Nile: *Opening of the Mouth*; Orphaned Land: *Mabool – The Story of Three Sons of Seven*; Primordial: *Babel's Tower*; Primordial: *Death of the Gods*; Primordial: *Sons of the Morrigan*; Rotting Christ: *Enûma Eliš*; Rotting Christ: *Helios Hyperion*; Septic Flesh: *Sumerian Daemon*; Septicflesh: *Anubis*; Septicflesh: *Babel's Gate*; Septicflesh: *Narcissus*; Septicflesh: *Prometheus*; Suidakra: *Balor*; Suidakra: *Isle of Skye*; Suidakra: *Morrigan*; Therion: *Blood of Kingu*; Therion: *Cú Chulainn*; Therion: *Dark Venus Persephone*; Therion: *Feuer Overtüre/Prometheus Entfesselt*; Therion: *Ginnungagap*; Therion: *Son of the Sun*; Týr: *The Lay of Thrym*; Týr: *The Ride to Hel*; Unleashed: *As Yggdrasil Trembles*; Vader: *Blood of Kingu*; Waylander: *A Hero's Lament*; Waylander: *Balor of the Evil Eye*; Waylander: *Morrigan's Domain*;

#### Level 4: Mythological text cited in translation or in original

Amaseffer: *Slaves for Life*; Behemoth: *Pazuzu*; Eluveitie: *Succelos*; Nile: *Burning pits of the Duat*; Nile: *Cast Down the Heretic*; Nile: *Opening of the Mouth*; Orphaned Land: *Mabool – The Story of Three Sons of Seven*; Rotting Christ: *Enûma Eliš*; Septicflesh: *Narcissus*;

We promised a 5 level classification, yet there is only 4 listed. Level 5 could be named as “*Ancient ritual scenery used during performances*” and as we do not focus now on performative phenomena thus we do not classify any of the listed bands within this category. The four levels clearly show us a downward spiral deep into the world of ancient mythologies. There are numerous examples within each group, and it can be witnessed that we have many bands that are listed amongst more than one level, or even in all the four. Naturally the mostly dedicated bands can be found in all four ones, while the less interested in only the first level. The lists may speak for themselves giving a descriptive systematization of our material of the dissertation. Looking through the bands that are listed in at least Level 1-3 or on all we may raise the question that maybe in these cases our preliminary proposition on the importance of the lyrics within mythological metal music seems to be proven. A hoard of interviews was collected from the most prominent bands of the list above that can also confirm our hypothesis.

The search included the following bands (the internet addresses of the respective interviews are to be found in the footnotes): Amaseffer,<sup>537</sup> Amon Amarth,<sup>538</sup> Ancient Rites,<sup>539</sup> Behemoth,<sup>540</sup> Cruachan,<sup>541</sup> Eluveitie,<sup>542</sup> Enslaved,<sup>543</sup> Ereb Altor,<sup>544</sup> Ex Deo,<sup>545</sup> Melechesh,<sup>546</sup> Nightfall,<sup>547</sup> Nile,<sup>548</sup> Orphaned Land,<sup>549</sup> Primordial,<sup>550</sup> Rotting Christ,<sup>551</sup> Septicflesh,<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> [http://www.metalstorm.net/pub/interview.php?interview\\_id=503](http://www.metalstorm.net/pub/interview.php?interview_id=503) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>538</sup> <https://www.norsemyth.org/2010/07/interview-with-johan-hegg-of-amon.html> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>539</sup> <http://www.extreminal.com/extreminal/interview.asp?id=458> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

and <http://thegrimtower.com/ancient-rites-interview-part-i-gunther-theys-talks-band-formation-influences-philosophy-behind-new-album-laguz/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>540</sup> [https://noisey.vice.com/en\\_us/article/rmjewq/behemoths-nergal-interview-2015](https://noisey.vice.com/en_us/article/rmjewq/behemoths-nergal-interview-2015) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

and <http://www.metalunderground.com/interviews/details.cfm?newsid=12397> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>541</sup> <http://www.irishmetalarchive.com/interview-cruachan-frontman-keith-fay/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>542</sup> <http://aaabackstage.com/interview-chrigel-glanzmann-from-eluveitie/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>543</sup> <http://thequietus.com/articles/21413-enslaved-interview> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>544</sup> <http://www.extreminal.com/extreminal/interview.asp?id=489> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>545</sup> <http://getreadytorock.me.uk/blog/2013/09/interview-with-maurizio-iacono-ex-deo-10-september-2013/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>546</sup> <https://www.metal1.info/interviews/melechesh/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

and <http://www.metalpaths.com/interviews/2015/02/19/interview-melechesh-ashmedi/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>547</sup> <http://rocklivebg.com/web/interview-with-efthimis-karadimas-from-nightfall.php> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>548</sup> <http://www.chroniclesofchaos.com/articles.aspx?id=1-253> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>549</sup> [http://www.metal-temple.com/site/catalogues/entry/musicians/kobi-farhi-orphaned\\_2.htm](http://www.metal-temple.com/site/catalogues/entry/musicians/kobi-farhi-orphaned_2.htm)

Suidakra,<sup>553</sup> Therion,<sup>554</sup> and Týr.<sup>555</sup> The general impression gathered from the interviews is that the purpose of the music played by the bands is not only for the sake of metal music but also to communicate a message through it. The message is in many cases in connection with the power and rebellion combination of the metal code, but we also see approaches towards higher truths (e.g. Melechesh or Therion), to revitalize lost wisdom (e.g. Septicflesh), to actualize archetypical patterns (e.g. Primordial), to represent cultural heathenism and national identity against Western culture<sup>556</sup> (e.g. Týr, Cruchan, Ex Deo or Waylander), or simply to pursue a personal interest (e.g. Nile). In cases of North European mythologies (Viking and Celtic) the national romantic nostalgia of lost past is a prominent aim for the bands to be presented on all level of their works, sonic, verbal and pictorial. The three different classifications' testimony tend to draw us to the original starting point of our work: all forms of metal music represent either power or rebellion and the verbal has a crucial role in it, at least in mythological metal.

Last but not least it should be well underlined that besides many bands that are dedicated for the revitalization of one culture (e.g. the Viking and Celtic bands, or Melechesh with Mesopotamian imagery), often coming from the covered topic's homeland, we have a handful of interesting bands using the myths of several areas. The perfect example is Therion, the Swedish symphonic metal band that was mentioned in all the chapters on mythologies, or Septicflesh with interest on Greek and Middle Eastern traditions. These bands show a deep, almost scholarly demand on exploring and understanding the realm of the world's mythological traditions, not just projecting this interest to their listeners but also joining the cause of multicultural understanding and pointing out that all ancient cultures can speak from the distance of thousands of years to postmodern men.

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(Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>550</sup> [http://www.metalsstorm.net/pub/interview.php?interview\\_id=754](http://www.metalsstorm.net/pub/interview.php?interview_id=754) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>551</sup> [https://noisey.vice.com/en\\_us/article/6a9z46/rotting-christ-interview](https://noisey.vice.com/en_us/article/6a9z46/rotting-christ-interview) (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

and <http://brokenamp.com/sakis-tolis-rotting-christ-interview/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>552</sup> <http://playdead-nation.blogspot.com/2012/07/interview-sotiris-vayenas-septicflesh.html>

(Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>553</sup> <https://metalscript.net/2014/08/suidakra-interview-en/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>554</sup> <http://redevampyrica.com/thomas-karlsson-a-exclusive-interview/> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>555</sup> <http://hardrock.hu/?q=node/24056> (Retrieved: 2018. 08. 01.)

<sup>556</sup> A short but not insignificant note should be placed here. The problem of national romanticism and right wing extremism in connection with metal music may be a prominent topic as well. As we are not dealing with the problem of politics and metal music we only refer to the problem that the genres such as NSBM, National-Socialist Black Metal are existing but insignificant tendencies within metal music. For a detailed study on the possible boundaries of politics, black metal and heathenism please see: Christian DORNBUSCH & Hans-Peter KILLGUSS, *Unheilige Allianzen: Black Metal Zwischen Satanismus, Heidentum und Neonazismus*, Hamburg, Unrast Verlag, 2005.

### 4.3. Conclusion and Further Directions or The Framework of Mythological Metal

Different bands, different sub-genres, different myths, different approaches and different goals. Only one thing is common within the enumerated material: an interest in religious and ancient mythological traditions. With the introduction of alternative lifestyles, religions and spiritual movements into the mainstream culture of Western societies in the 1960s, many parts of popular arts started to be interested in the mentioned. The revitalization of mythological topics and traditions in contemporary popular culture and metal music is a result of a long but direct development whereas the path paved by New Religious Movements and New Age phenomena is connected with metal music. As it was referred many times above the main goal of metal music is to present power and with power to rebel against the conformist society starting with outrageous and ironical methods arriving to the presented system of mythological metal. The fact that metal bands are inspired by ancient religious and mythological topics does not mean unconditionally that the musicians are the followers of the Neopagan cults connected to the cultures where the myths originate from, but it means that the feature that was described as the Demonic form of literature by Northrop Frye, could be found in long lost culture's traditions. Everything that is outside of Christianity's realm is fascinating for a metal musician and the opposition could be easily expressed through the reading and singing of the mentioned. And as the Demonic is always in connection with the attribute of the grotesque or the phenomena that are not part of the ordered cosmos (in this regard the worldview of Christianity) thus the myths that are inspiring are not surprisingly on death, bloodshed, alternative cosmologies, origin of man, the world's end and so on. The power and carnival aggression (with its excessive nature) against the above listed result in metal music and its now discussed sub-genre, mythological metal. The sub-genre's name (as in the case of ritual black metal, Viking metal or Celtic metal) is not a matter of musical classification but refers to the lyrical contents of a band stressing that in the case of this section of popular culture the form of metal music may be subordinated to the content of lyrics. As we do not forget that metal music is a product of mass culture we do not tend to give it the traits of high literature. For this study the main interest was to show what kind of myths do metal musicians *read* in order to find inspiration for the rebellious attitude and *how* do they read the stories that could be witnessed from the lyrics presented, analysed and categorized above. Our thesis seems to be proven: metal musicians' interest in mythology is a

direct movement within metal music that shapes and fills the genre with creative power based on knowledge and conscious endeavour to revitalize ancient cultural heritage for today's listeners, serving as a way for an intellectual exodus from contemporary ruling Western/Christian thought.

Our investigation within the boundaries of present study ends here. This does not mean that the world of mythological metal should be considered fully explored. As present study focused on the literary side of metal music it arises other possible directions as well. Once the verbal expressions are understood within the mythological wing of metal music it would worth another deep analysis to explore the realm of the pictorial expression. The album covers and sleeves, booklet artworks, band photos also contain many yet less researched topics that may give new perspectives for art historians in connection with the revival of ancient symbols and issues. The performative side of mythological metal music may connect to the pictorial expressions as well. As the main theatre for metal music is the live concert, the usage of ancient symbolism and motifs on stage provides different viewpoints as well. It should be noted as well that only the myths of Western society were detailed in our work, but the Slavic traditions, Eastern and South Asian, South American and even African heritage also has their bands who attempt to revive lore long forgotten. This also leads to the problem of the globalisation of metal music. Today only a handful of localised scenes exist, most of metal's artists tend to a global market making one's own cultural legacy to be a global phenomenon as well. The sociological side from the perspective of the listeners worth mentioning too: we have seen that the musicians have a clear insight to the questions of mythography, but how do the listeners understand the message? And last but not least the question of religiosity emerges: do the metal musicians follow (as the question was postponed but may have importance) the Neopagan cults or it is a mere accessory for creating art?

Or we may alter our direction from metal music to other forms of popular arts to search for other usage of myths. The last decades of film making shows the interest towards the ancient world as well, it is enough if we think of the movies *Odyssey* (1997), *Troy* (2004) or *Clash of Titans* (2010), not to forget the movie versions of comic books from the 20<sup>th</sup> century e.g. *Thor* (a rewriting of Viking mythology) or *Wonder Woman* (of the amazons of Greek mythology). Or just to stay in the scene of popular music the case of Neopagan/neofolk music may demand the same questions as mythological metal did. The scholarly directions seem endless and every piece of work may give us a brighter and wider perspective on the contemporary phenomenon of mythological revival.

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## Abstract

The topic of my study is the Biblical and mythological references in the lyrics of the musical genre known as extreme metal. The study has three main pillars: 1) The results of history of religion, what gives the answer to the new phenomena of the 20th century, namely the emergence of „New Religious Movements” and „New Age” cults that serve as a primary inspiration for the named musical environment. 2) The results of Metal studies, a new and developing scholarly movement that aims to research the music and its culture, giving the frame of present paper. 3) The relevant works of reception and reading theories (e.g. Wolfgang Iser, Northrop Frye, Richard Schustermann, etc.) what provides the methodology in connection with literacy. The three pillars are assigned to get a deeper insight on metal culture.

After the detailed introduction and contextualization within metal subculture of the above mentioned pillars comes the chapter dealing with the reception of different myths, gathered around certain cultures. The curve drawn from East to West focuses on Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Old Testament, Graeco-Roman, Viking and Celtic mythologies and legends covered in the lyrics of extreme metal. Before the culture-based approach the so called „Satanist” metal movement is analysed as it is the origin of religious topics involved into metal music together with the reaction to it known as „Christian metal”. The subchapters working with different cultures are structured around the most times covered myths with the introduction of their historical context (e.g. the Babylonian creation epic, the Prose Edda or Arthurian legends, etc.). The analysis of the lyrics has a content-analysis attribute; always focusing on how does a lyrics rewrite the original content of a myth. In relevant cases band names and album titles are examined as well.

The closure of the study attempts the possible categorization of the gathered material (85 songs) based on the attitude towards a myth (e.g. retelling, rewriting of the original text, actualization of a myth). After the categorization we try to draw the framework of „*mythological metal*” based on the gathered data (with taking into consideration the results of history of religion, metal studies and reception theory) giving an insight into the yet less researched territory of popular culture that may be expanded later with focus on the pictorial (e.g. album covers) and performative segments, to reach an even detailed understanding of the genre.

## Absztrakt

Dolgozatom témája az extrém metal néven ismert könnyűzenei zsáner dalszövegeiben megtalálható bibliai és mitológiai utalások vizsgálata. A dolgozat három pilléren nyugszik: 1) A vallástörténet eredményei, amelyek választ adnak a XX. század második felében beállt vallástörténeti változásokra, az „Új Vallási Mozgalmak” és „New Age” jelenségek feltűnésére, amelyek a nevezett zenei környezet számára is inspirációul szolgálnak. 2) A napjainkban kialakuló, a metal zenét és kultúráját tudományos igénnyel vizsgáló irányzatok eredményei, amelyek megadják jelen dolgozat elméleti kereteit. 3) A recepció- és olvasáselmélet releváns szerzői (pl. Wolfgang Iser, Northrop Frye, Richard Schustermann, stb.) akik munkái a vizsgálat irodalomtudományos módszertanát szolgáltatják. A három pillér a metal kultúrájának jobb megértését segíti.

A fent említett pillérek részletes bemutatása és a metal szubkultúra kontextusába helyezése után következik kultúrákra osztott egységekben az egyes mítoszok és azok feldolgozásainak ismertetése, elemzése. A Keletről Nyugat felé haladó ívet leíró fejezetben megismertetem az olvasót a mezopotámiai, egyiptomi, ószövetségi, görög-római, viking és kelta mítoszok, legendák dalszövegi feldolgozásaival. Az említett kultúrákra való fókuszálás előtt a vallásos kérdések megjelenését tárgyalom a metal zene világában, külön szakaszt szentelve a „sátánistának” nevezett irányzatok áttekintésével, illetve az arra adott válasz, a „keresztény metal” felvillantásával. Az egyes kultúrák köré szervezett alfejezetekben a leggyakrabban feldolgozott mítoszok és azok vallástörténeti vonatkozásai is felvázolásra kerülnek (pl. babiloni teremtésmítosz, a prózai Edda világa, Artúr-legendák, stb.). A szövegelemzések leginkább tartalomelemzés jelleget öltenek, azon kérdést szem előtt tartva, hogy az egyes tételek milyen módon írják újra egy-egy mítosz eredeti tartalmait. Egyes releváns esetekben zenekarnevek és albumcímek is hasonló módon elemzésre kerülnek.

A lezáró fejezet a „mitologikus metalnak” is nevezhető irányzat feldolgozott dalszövegeiben (összesen 85 tétel) megtalálható jegyek alapján azok kategorizálását (pl.: újra elbeszélés, jelentős változással újírás, aktualizálás) tűzte ki céljául. A kategorizálást követően pedig kísérletet teszek arra, hogy az összegyűjtött adatok alapján (figyelembe véve a vallástörténeti, metalhoz köthető kulturális és recepcióelméleti megállapításokat) keretbe foglaljam a populáris kultúra ezen újszerű és eddig kevésbé kutatott szegmensét, amelyre a későbbiekben a dalszövegek mellett a képi megjelenítések (pl. lemezborítók) és a zenei performativitás vizsgálata is építhető, annak érdekében, hogy mélyebb belátást nyerjünk a zsáner működésébe.