

**National Identity in Northern and Eastern European
Heavy Metal**

Mark David Deeks

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

In the last thirty years the genre of heavy metal has seen an increasing number of bands utilise aspects of their national or regional identity to inspire their work. This identity portrayal has been manifested in many forms — visual, textual and musical, and often with combinations of more than one. In the context of the work of Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, and drawing comparison with the Romantic Nationalism movement of the 18th and 19th centuries throughout, this thesis examines the field and seeks to establish that writing on the subject has thus far failed in a number of key areas.

The terms Viking metal, battle metal and Pagan metal form the core of current genre classification. I demonstrate how these are both inaccurate and insufficient, as they not only ignore the considerable breadth of work being produced, but also focus too heavily on bands from the Nordic region. As a result, the equally significant role that both the U.K. and Eastern Europe have played in the genre's development has not been acknowledged. Subsequently, there is a need for transnational identities that are being both presented and received to be recognised or challenged where appropriate. Finally, the majority of writers to date have centered their attention on either textual content or matters of a (sometimes sensationalist) cultural or ethnographic nature. I seek to establish that the deficiency in academic musical analysis on the work being produced does the musicians a disservice. Tracing source material throughout, the thesis utilises a case study on the English band Oakenshield that presents a collage of all of the themes contained, and encapsulates the type of transnational identity being portrayed. The conflict between intention and reception in genre classification as discussed by writers such as Jeffrey Kallberg and Heather Dubrow is therefore demonstrated.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Overview

This study looks at the developing movement of heavy metal bands that have explored elements of national identity in their music. The last thirty years has seen an increasing number of these bands (within a variety of styles) explore the rich historical and mythological heritage of nations both their own, and other, as inspiration for their work. Bands that have referenced the Nordic region have thus far received the primary focus of the heavy metal record industry, media, and therefore audiences. Whilst it would be incorrect to suggest that some of these bands have not played a significant role in the development of this movement, the activities of contemporaries elsewhere deserve equal recognition and analysis. In particular, the perception that bands from some other European countries are simply copying the Nordic trend is, I believe, misleading. By not only examining Nordic bands but their contemporaries from both the UK and eastern European countries such as Poland, Ukraine, Estonia and Latvia, I will establish clear evidence that the movement has developed concurrently across separate European regions. I will also demonstrate the range of styles of writing that have formed part of the national identity of these countries in the modern world, and how they have subsequently been adapted as source material for numerous heavy metal artists. Crucially, where appropriate, this will involve musical analysis in order to emphasise the aspect of the material that is most frequently ignored.

After using this introductory chapter to examine the relevant literature, terminology, and provide a historical context, Chapter 2 will focus on genre construction within popular music, before detailing how the history of heavy metal has developed and subsequently splintered into multiple sub and sub-sub genres, highlighting the key distinctive features. A critique of the lexicography that thus far has been used to discuss the bands relevant to this study follows, challenging the accuracy and suitability of previous terminology. Likewise, the extensively stated conclusion that *Blood Fire Death* by the Swedish band Bathory was the identifiable moment that 'Viking metal' began, not only fails to acknowledge the importance of other albums, but in attempting to portray the bands concerned as a unified whole, neglects the considerable variety of work within this genre.

Chapter 3 includes an analysis of the different visual aspects of the material being created by examining how this music is presented to the public in terms of its artwork, symbolism and fashion. In addition to exploring areas of semiotics, and in particular at the role of the receiver or listener in forming transnational identities, the extensive use of 18th and 19th-century art by contemporary heavy metal artists, and evident connections with the National Romanticism period, will also be examined. An overview of recurring imagery and symbolism will be provided, with a discussion of the significance of such cultural revisiting.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed assessment of how a wide range of northern and eastern European metal bands (significantly, not just those from the Nordic region) have incorporated a rich vein of historical and mythological texts in order to provide inspiration for their lyrical content. There are comparisons of multiple treatments of texts including *The Kalevala*, *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda*, the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, *Irish Mythological Cycle*, and the poetry of writers such as Taras Shevchenko (Ukraine), Vilis Plūdonis (Latvia) and John Imlah (Scotland). Whether replicating a previously-composed text, or merely using the stories contained within these narratives as a starting point for an original creation, I will demonstrate the breadth of material being generated, adding further weight to the argument that it is impossible to classify this material under one umbrella term of ‘Viking metal’.

The fifth chapter shifts the focus to a study of the music itself. Bands repeatedly make use of the sounds of the natural world to supplement their metal soundscape, along with the deployment of a wide range of traditional instrumentation and vocal techniques. In addition, the chapter will provide a considerable number of notated examples of vocal lines, harmonies and rhythmic devices. As well as demonstrating some of the influence of traditional and folk music on this field, this method of analysis also facilitates a study of how the material being created can be a musical representation of place of considerable scope. In keeping with many folk traditions, it is also possible here to offer comparisons of multiple treatments of the same source materials, to show how their approaches can vary from artist to artist.

The final case study chapter focusses on the music of English band Oakenshield, and specifically the band’s second album, *Legacy*. Despite the band’s English nationality, and the use of source material from across both the U.K. and Scandinavia,

Oakenshield's music is widely referred to as Viking metal.¹ As such the work of sole member Ben Corkhill provides an ideal crystallisation of many of the ideas, methods and content examined thus far, providing a microcosm of northern European national and transnational identity in heavy metal. The artwork, texts and musical content (both traditional source materials and original compositions influenced by historical / cultural contexts), all combine in a musical soundscape inspired by a range of sub-genres of metal, to create an album that is both multi-faceted and ripe for study.

The aims of this research are:

1. To examine the range of bands from Northern and Eastern Europe that have used aspects of national identity to inform their music, lyrics or artwork. This will challenge the predominant focus on bands from the Nordic region by demonstrating the breadth of comparable examples from elsewhere, and identify a form of cultural revisiting with traceable connections back to the National Romanticism movement of the 18th and 19th-centuries.
2. To question the lack of joined-up thinking with regards to relevant genre-labelling, and to identify issues with the terminology currently in use by media, record labels and audience when describing this music.
3. To challenge the inherent notions of tradition and authenticity in both sender and receiver and draw comparisons with the theories of Benedict Anderson ('imagined communities') and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger ('invention of tradition').²
4. To offer a case study to illustrate how historical texts and musical sources are being adapted in conjunction with original material to create a stylistic whole where distinctions between the two become blurred, predominantly unchallenged, and transnational identities formed.

The subject matter and associated literature relevant to this research comes from a wide range of disciplines including national identity and nationalism, sociology, history, art, semiotics, folk culture, and musical analysis. The greatest challenge, therefore, is not only assimilating an effective assortment of background reading, but also in establishing an accessible lexicography and list of terminology that help to

¹ <http://shop.napalmrecords.com/legacy.html> [Accessed 27 January 2016].

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

facilitate readers versed in different contexts with an array of experiences. To this end, there follows a methodology as well as a selection of key terms and information regarding sources for further information where useful.

1.2: Methodology and Music Literature Review

My analytical work on the music of the bands relevant to this study must be placed within the context of certain core texts from the field of popular musicology and its surrounding subjects. These include Raymond Williams' *Keywords*,³ and particularly Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, which has continued to be a core text in the field of cultural studies since its publication in 1979. Although he was discussing teddy boys, his conclusions of how a subculture is understood in the context of its time period and surrounding world is pertinent here:

The material [...] which is continually being transmitted into culture (and hence subculture) can never be completely 'raw'. It is always mediated: inflected by the historical context in which it is encountered; posited upon a specific ideological field which gives it a particular life and particular meanings.⁴

The work of Roy Shuker is also particularly relevant, especially when considering research methods best suited to studies on popular music. In *Understanding Popular Music* (1994) he cited the importance of the work of Stuart Hall and his approach, which has significant resonance with my own work.

[Hall] distinguished three key 'moments' in the sociological analysis of any cultural form: production, text, and appropriation. As Hall argued, it is not simply a question of examining each of these independently, but rather the way in which they fit together. This interlinking is central to the consideration of the relationship between forms of popular music culture and the ideologies associated with these.⁵

In more recent years, the works of a number of writers who have a particular focus on various aspects of popular music have been useful here to a varying degree. Whilst the language and examples that these authors make use of are not always relevant to my own work, this background reading is something that would be useful to the interested reader who wishes to put my research in context. For example, David Brackett presents a useful insight into why many popular music analyses tend to concentrate on the lyrics

³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (Flamingo: Fontana Press, 1983).

⁴ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 80.

⁵ Stuart Hall cited by Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. viii.

rather than the music itself. This provides the motivation for this study including multiple examples of musical analysis, in an attempt to provide greater balance to popular music discourse.

In popular songs, most listeners probably hear the lead vocalist as the source of a song's emotional content; it is the words and sounds associated with the most prominent voice in the recording that are heard to emit the signs of emotion most directly.⁶

The writings of Allan Moore are the most pertinent to my own work, and Richard Middleton is another who makes valuable contributions to this area of research.⁷ Indeed especially relevant is Moore's discussion of Middleton's thoughts on authenticity and the appropriation of traditions when considering the 'supposed "authenticity" that "folk" music' has for many.⁸ This will be a recurring theme here, especially when considering how metal bands make use of traditional folk music (or create original material in the style of) in order to increase the audience perception of authenticity by adding a sense of history and heritage. In a wider musicological setting, my research can also be situated in relation to those who have focused on similar issues of the collision between music and national identity formation but within a classical music context such as Shay Loya's work on the music of Liszt,⁹ and the collection of analyses of the music of Sibelius edited by Daniel Grimley.¹⁰ Furthermore, Loya's writing also informs some of the discussion on appropriate terminology when it comes to the actual musical analysis such as his work on the labelling of scale and mode patterns.

Historically there has been a relatively small number of significant books written on the subject of heavy metal and its surrounding subculture. For many years, the core works in this field had been those by Deena Weinstein and Rob Walser.¹¹ To the contemporary researcher they both provide a useful context, although the world of heavy metal has changed significantly since they were written. Weinstein acknowledges that heavy metal initially saw a splintering of sub and sub-sub genres develop:

⁶ David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Ewing: University of California Press, 2000), p. 2.

⁷ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990).

⁸ Allan Moore, *Rock, The Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 158.

⁹ Shay Loya, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Daniel Grimley, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹¹ Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1991), and Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

[Heavy metal] after a spurt of growth, it began to fragment. It's main line [...] continued, but new lines were added that departed from some of the codes of heavy metal, but still acknowledged a close enough kinship to their predecessor to prevent them from becoming altogether new genres. Rather than being supplanted by new genres, heavy metal spawned subgenres.¹²

However, her analysis then goes to demonstrate how heavy metal's lexicography has modified extensively, as whilst she relies on terms such as Lite metal and Speed metal, these are both now terms that are rarely if ever used.

More relevant to my research was the seminal text on the explosion of the second wave of black metal in early nineties Norway in the form of *Lords of Chaos* by Moynihan and Söderlind.¹³ Containing many interviews from some of the main protagonists, the book has become both a useful resource for the researcher and a point of interest for the fan alike, although there are those for whom it represents a somewhat sensationalist representation of the often criminal events surrounding the sub-genre rather than being an academically reliable source of musical or cultural analysis. Indeed Ross Hagen suggests that the book contains 'lurid anecdotes' and should be considered a 'product of the black metal scene itself, rather than an objective study, due to its apparent mythologizing agenda'.¹⁴ Apart from concerns over some of the melodramatic interviewees (many band members were very young at the time of the events in question), the book must also be understood in the context of accusations of extreme far right politics and fascism; these have not only been levelled at Michael Moynihan himself, but *Lords of Chaos* has been accused of furthering 'a white supremacist agenda'.¹⁵ Whilst in 1994 Moynihan conceded that 'I would not say fascism wraps up my world view completely, but it is a step in the right direction',¹⁶ he later focused much more on an atavistic viewpoint, asking, 'Why on Earth would I be a white supremacist? I find most of the behaviour of white people to be totally reprehensible'.¹⁷ Certainly Moynihan's output, not just in the written word but in his musical work in the

¹² Weinstein, p. 44.

¹³ Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 1998).

¹⁴ Ross Hagen 'Musical Style, Ideology, and Mythology in Norwegian Black Metal', in *Metal Rules The Globe: Heavy Metal Music Around The World*, ed. by Jeremy Wallach and others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 181.

¹⁵ Zach Dundas, *The Notorious Michael Moynihan*,

http://web.archive.org/web/20060301162900re_/www.mumblage.com/story.php?id=36, [Accessed 24 June 2014].

¹⁶ *Heretic* magazine, No. 10, (October 1994), <http://imperium.lenin.ru/EOWN/DIJ-politics.html>, [Accessed 24 June 2014].

¹⁷ Dundas, *ibid.*

band Blood Axis as well as his record label Storm Records, continues to produce a variety of strong responses in relation to potential intent and motivation; for some, Moynihan's connections to 'far right ideologues' colour his work.¹⁸

Since the turn of the twenty-first century there has been an increasing number of books that have covered a variety of aspects of extreme heavy metal and its surrounding culture, and these have varied greatly in their areas of focus. *Extreme Metal* by London scholar and author Keith Kahn-Harris takes a primarily ethnographical approach to the extreme metal scenes in the UK, Sweden and Israel.¹⁹ Of particular relevance to my own work is his examination of issue of the concept of 'scene' (as a term that can be considered an alternative or addition to 'genre'). In addition, he also presents an informative discussion of how extreme metal includes elements of what he terms 'sonic', 'discursive', and 'bodily transgression', noting 'although extreme metal is produced across the world, its transgressive practices are always, at least in part, aimed at specifically Western targets'.²⁰ If, in this context, we take the use of the term 'Western targets' to include the framework of Judeo-Christian organised religion, and more precisely its perceived replacement of more traditional, historical practices and faiths, then the fact that many of the bands pertinent to this study present a desire to return their nation(s) to traditional or cultural roots would not only be a common theme of these bands, but would in fact be considered by Kahn-Harris to be part of a more integral identifying factor of extreme metal as a whole.

As heavy metal started to become more of an internationally recognized subject for research, initially the majority of writing on the subject came in the form of academic papers for conferences or journals such as that of English academic and sociologist Karl Spracklen in 2008, 'True Aryan Black Metal: the meaning of leisure, belonging and the construction of whiteness in black metal music' from the same year.²¹ Some conferences have subsequently been followed by related publications (either online or in print), such as *Reflections in the Metal Void*²² and *Heavy Metal*

¹⁸ Hagen, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 48.

²¹ Karl Spracklen, 'True Aryan Black Metal: the meaning of leisure, belonging and the construction of whiteness in black metal music', conference paper, 'Heavy Metal and Its Others', Newcastle University, 17–20 June, 2008.

²² Niall W.R. Scott, ed., *Reflections In the Metal Void* (Freeland: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2012).

*Generations*²³ that followed the Inter-Disciplinary Press conferences in Salzburg (2008) and Prague (2012) respectively. The first of these is particularly pertinent as it includes a section of essays entitled *Metal Musings: Literary and Mythological*, containing (amongst others) writings by Imke von Helden and Florian Heesch, two German academics prominent in the field that examine aspects of the appropriation of Viking mythology and culture by metal bands. Whilst in some ways similar in subject matter to my own research, the writing of von Helden, like many others, is approached very much from a cultural and historical perspective, and makes no attempt to conduct any analysis of the music, focusing instead on the connections between lyrics and mythology. Furthermore, she fails to trace the evolution of the sub-genre sufficiently far back, placing her emphasis solely on the importance of the Swedish band Bathory's 1988 album *Blood Fire Death*, and omitting several important examples prior to this. Labelling is often vague, and von Helden fails to tackle some of the issues caused by the imprecise and seemingly interchangeable terminology (battle metal / Viking metal / Pagan metal) that she and others employ. This is similarly the case with the work of Aaron Mulvany in 2000, that whilst including some examples of musical analysis relevant here, uses folk metal as an umbrella term under which he attempts to position a variety of bands.²⁴ I will present an analysis of these genre pitfalls in Chapter 2.

Heesch, an academic at the University of Siegen who specialises in the reception of Norse myths, contributes a paper entitled 'Metal for Nordic Men: Amon Amarth's Representations of Viking'; this study highlights the importance of the American band Manowar, a group that is often erroneously omitted during writing on the history of Viking metal (although Heesch stresses the importance of their 1984 release *Sign of the Hammer*,²⁵ strangely neglecting to mention that the previous year they had released a track called 'Gates of Valhalla', on the album *Into Glory Ride*).²⁶ In the same paper, Heesch also does some analysis of an Amon Amarth song entitled 'The Pursuit of Vikings' from the 2004 album *Fate of Norns*.²⁷ However, the primary focus of this analysis is how the sounds and vocal style used create a masculine gender representation, rather than any detailed analysis of the music itself. The *Reflections in*

²³ Andy R. Brown, and Kevin Fellezs, eds, *Heavy Metal Generations* (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2012).

²⁴ Aaron Patrick Mulvany, 'Reawakening Pride Once Lost: Indigeneity and European Folk Metal' (unpublished master's thesis, Wesleyan University, 2000).

²⁵ Manowar, *Sign of the Hammer* (Ten Records, 1984).

²⁶ Manowar, *Into Glory Ride* (Megaforce Records, 1983).

²⁷ Amon Amarth, *Fate of Norns* (Metal Blade Records, 2004).

the Metal Void collection also includes an essay by Laura Wiebe Taylor looking at nationalism in Norwegian black metal. This is of particular interest as it introduces the importance of the concept of locality alongside matters of national identity as part of the fundamental core of a genre:

Norwegian black metal represents an intersection between locality and genre: its locality figures the scene as a national expression within a global metal underground, its genre as a particular set of stylistic and ideological practices within the broader category of metal music.²⁸

Writing on black metal is becoming more prevalent including Dayal Patterson's comprehensive overview of the development of the genre *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*,²⁹ and *Black Metal: Beyond the Darkness*, which attempts to 'look past the much-discussed Second Wave [of the early 1990s]'.³⁰ In addition the collection of essays *Helvete: A Journal of Black Metal Theory* includes an interesting piece by Timothy Morton examining the prominence of nature, ecology and anti-modernism within the work of the Cascadian band Wolves in the Throne Room.³¹ Similar topics form the core of the 2013 collection *Melancology: Black Metal Theory and Ecology*, where Niall Scott speaks of the collision between black metal and nature, calling Wolves in the Throne Room an invitation 'to head for the darkest place we know, into the woods beyond the briar thickets to a place even beyond the relative comfort of darkness'.³² This kind of collision occurs frequently in this thesis (see Chapter 5 for an extended discussion of recurring musical features), and a combination with a band whose career has become synonymous with the identity of a region of the United States makes both Morton and Scott's writing particularly pertinent.

Although often less relevant to this research, it is also worth noting that black metal's extreme metal 'sibling', death metal, has also begun to be a more frequent subject for authors. Significant examples have included those by Decibel Magazine editor Albert Mudrian, and Natalie Purcell, as well as contributions from musicians who have been part of the musical aspect of the field in the form of *Swedish Death Metal* by

²⁸ Laura Wiebe Taylor, 'Nordic Nationalisms: Black Metal takes Norway's Everyday Racisms to the "Extreme"', in Scott, ed., p. 185.

²⁹ Dayal Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2013).

³⁰ Tom Howells, ed., *Black Metal: Beyond The Darkness* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012), rear cover.

³¹ Timothy Morton, 'At the Edge of the Smoking Pool of Death: Wolves in the Throne Room', in *Helvete: A Journal of Black Metal Theory, Issue 1: Incipit*, ed. by Amelia Ishmael, and others (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), pp. 21-8.

³² Niall Scott, 'Blackening the Green', in *Melancology: Black Metal Theory and Ecology* ed. by Scott Wilson (Alresford: Zero Books, 2014), p. 66.

Daniel Ekeroth (Insision) and *Extremity Retained* by America's Jason Netherton (Misery Index / Dying Fetus).³³ Extreme metal's ongoing fascination with transgression continues to provide a rich source for academic examination, including many of the essays in the *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures* collection that Kahn-Harris edited alongside Titus Hjelm and Mark LeVine, in 2013.³⁴

Black metal defines itself to a large degree through transgression, alienation and provocation [...] Racism and neo-Nazism force black metalers to confront the ambiguity of hatred and define the limits of transgression in a globalized black metal scene. [...] Black metal, in all of its forms, glorifies the distant past and seeks to annihilate the mundane present.³⁵

As my period of research has progressed, the volume of academic study of heavy metal and subjects with which it overlaps, has continued to increase in the form of what has become known as metal studies. This has come to fruition firstly in the form of collections of papers presented at heavy metal conferences. This has been typified by some of the examples of collections referenced throughout this research,³⁶ but continues to be added to books such as *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies* in May 2016.³⁷ Containing writing from many of the key names in the field such as Deena Weinstein, Keith Kahn-Harris and many more, the introductory chapter from the editors identifies the most pertinent of issues that has faced those academics wanting to produce research on heavy metal: '[There has been] academic neglect [and] conflict over the value of legitimacy of metal music and its culture'.³⁸ Whilst discussing how the birth of an academic study of heavy metal has only really gathered pace in the last ten years, it is acknowledged that an increasing number of conferences designed to get interested academics to share their previously well hidden knowledge, have played a significant role in its development.

³³ Albert Mudrian, *Choosing Death: The Improbable History of Death Metal and Grindcore* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2004), Natalie J. Purcell, *Death Metal Music: The Passion and Politics of a Subculture* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), Daniel Ekeroth, *Swedish Death Metal* (Johannesov: Tamara Press, 2006), and Jason Netherton, *Extremity Retained: Notes From The Death Metal Underground* (Brainerd: Bang Printing, 2014).

³⁴ Titus Hjelm, and others, eds, *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2013).

³⁵ Benjamin Hedge Olson, 'Voice of our blood: National Socialist discourses in black metal', in Hjelm, and others, eds, p. 136-7.

³⁶ See Wallach and others, eds, Scott, 2012, ed., and Titus Hjelm and others, eds.

³⁷ Andy R. Brown and others, eds, *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 1.

Of particular interest here is a thesis by Ashley Walsh published during my research, *A Great Heathen Fist From The North: Vikings, Norse Mythology, and Medievalism in Nordic Extreme Metal Music*.³⁹ Walsh makes some useful observations about both national, and what she terms pan-Nordic, identity construction. She also comments on the importance of ‘the romanticization of the natural primordial world’,⁴⁰ and this draws comparison with both the artistic themes examine in Chapter 3, and the recurring sounds of nature discussed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, Walsh presents one of the more accurate descriptions of the term Viking metal, acknowledging at least some of the disparate musical styles contained within: ‘Viking metal typically consists of Black and Folk metal but can also include bands from other subgenres such as Unleashed and Amon Amarth which are Death metal bands’.⁴¹ However, she then goes on to point out that bands can belong to more than one category, and so concludes that ‘I would recommend not placing too much attention to the subgenre labels if unfamiliar with the actual musical styles’.⁴² Whilst the labelling of the music may not have been the primary focus for Walsh’s research, this conclusion sidesteps one of the most crucial aspects of the field as it neglects to challenge one of its core failings.

As the editors of *Global Metal Music and Culture* recognise, many of those who are active in the field have continued in the same vein as those in other areas of popular music studies, by often allowing lyrical, ethnographic or subculture-based topics to take primary focus. In 2015, Davide Maspero and Max Ribaric added to such a canon with a volume looking at the history of the National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) movement. Relevant here as it closely examines a particularly controversial intersection between extreme metal and matters of nationalism and national identity, it describes NSBM as:

The ground zero of an ensemble of values and ideals declined according to territorial needs: anti-Christianity, nationalism, defence of the race and its own traditions – often pagan traditions as opposed to Judeo-Christian ones.⁴³

The book goes on to demonstrate how NSBM is yet another example of a heavy metal genre label predominantly based on lyrical content rather than musical analysis. Indeed as Brown and others comment, ‘it remains the case that studies of metal *as* music are

³⁹ Ashley Walsh, ‘A Great Heathen Fist From The North: Vikings, Norse Mythology, and Medievalism in Nordic Extreme Metal Music’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Oslo, 2013).

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 9.

⁴² Ibid. p. 10.

⁴³ Davide Maspero and Max Ribaric, *Wolves Among Sheep: History and Ideology of National Socialist Black Metal* (Milan: Tsunami Edizioni, 2015), p. 13.

few and far between'.⁴⁴ Their collection attempts to address this imbalance by containing a section entitled 'Metal Musicology' containing three studies focussed on different aspects of heavy metal music as opposed to lyrics.⁴⁵ Chapter 5 of my own research endeavours to add to this element of metal studies by concentrating on a range of significant musical features that are frequent within the works of many metal bands' portrayal of national identity, and examining their approach to adapting excerpts of traditional source material. By way of studying Oakenshield's *Legacy* album, Chapter 6 extends this initiative further by drawing comparison between the band's use of specific melodic and rhythmic devices, and those of similarly influenced recording artists.

As can be seen, the majority of writing on heavy metal in general and extreme metal specifically (whether sensationalist or not) tends to focus on the cultural, political and identity-based issues of the subject. Even when discussing aspects of a more musical nature, writers often choose to concentrate on the genre or sub-genre's development in terms of biography, discography, or on tracing lines of influence. Even in popular music's comparatively short history, as identified by Brackett earlier, where an attempt has been made to deduce meaning from close examination of specific albums or tracks, all too often the lyrical content has represented the primary focus. Prominent examples include the writing of Simon Frith (such as 'Why do songs have words?'),⁴⁶ the collection *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music* edited by Richard Middleton,⁴⁷ and Lars Eckstein's *Reading Song Lyrics*.⁴⁸ Of these, the last is the most relevant to my work as Eckstein presents a set of case studies comparing songs 'Performing Englishness' from the 16th and 19th centuries, concluding with a lyrical analysis of prominent Britpop artists around the turn of the last millennium. The amount of writing and research that has been published to date specifically regarding the bands and movements in metal that my work focuses upon is minimal, and at least as far as books are concerned, tends to come in the form of brief references rather than more extended stories. The collection of essays entitled *Inspired by Tradition: Kalevala Poetry in Finnish Music*, contains a very short essay by the Finnish academic Matti Riekkö on the subject, entitled 'From the Smithy of Ilmarinen: Kalevala and Heavy

⁴⁴ Brown and others, eds, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Ibid. pp. 35-88.

⁴⁶ Simon Frith, 'Why do songs have words?', in Frith, *Music for Pleasure* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), pp. 105-128.

⁴⁷ Richard Middleton, ed., *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁸ Lars Eckstein, *Reading Song Lyrics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010).

Metal'.⁴⁹ However, the collection does contain a number of chapters discussing how the *Kalevala* influenced various styles of both popular and classical music; these chapters are beneficial for drawing comparisons and placing the bands in this research in a historical context. To date, few writers in the field of heavy metal have presented any kind of academic analysis of the music itself in a way comparable to many other styles of music, both popular and from the classical canon. One of the aims of this thesis is to redress the balance. Whilst Mulvany (2000) did produce some relevant examination of how some bands combine traditional folk instrumentation within a primarily black metal soundscape, and the melodic and rhythmic devices used by the bands he discusses, there are inconsistencies in his use of genre labelling, and his inclusion of Finnish music under the banner of Viking metal is inherently problematic.⁵⁰ The Finnish writer Esa Lilja also presented some musical analysis in *Theory and Analysis of Classic Heavy Metal Harmony* (2009).⁵¹ Although this work devoted large sections to a deconstruction of the overtones created by distorted guitar tones and analyses of the frequencies involved that are not pertinent to my own research, Lilja also provides some useful commentary on the harmonic construction of heavy metal. This includes a section on parallel voice leading that is particularly relevant to the style of harmony writing used by many bands covered in my own research. In Chapter 5 I draw a comparison between this and organum harmony, one of the earliest forms of harmonic composition.

1.3: Glossary and Key Terms

1.3.1: Norse

This is a term most frequently used as part of the phrase 'Old Norse', which linguistically is used as an umbrella term for the language shared throughout much of the Scandinavian region until the beginning of dialectal differences between what we now know as Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The language of the Sami people represents an exception to this generalization, having more in common with the Uralic

⁴⁹ Matti Riekkö, 'From the Smithy of Ilmarinen: Kalevala and Heavy Metal', in *Inspired by Tradition: Kalevala Poetry in Finnish Music*, ed. by Jutta Jaakkola and Aarne Toivonen (Helsinki: Fimic, 2004), pp. 139-143.

⁵⁰ Mulvany, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Esa Lilja, *Theory and Analysis of Classic Heavy Metal Harmony* (Helsinki: The Finnish Music Library Association, 2009).

and Finnic languages, which share traits with the languages of Hungary and Estonia. The writing of Orri Vésteinsson is of particular relevance here, not only in identifying distinctions of geographical origin and specificity, but also placing the term within a temporal milieu:

This common language [Old Norse] - *dǫnsk tunga* it was called by its speakers – is the manifestation of a common ethnicity – the speakers of ‘dǫnsk tunga’ considered themselves to be ‘norrœnir menn’ – and the term ‘Norse’ is often used as a translation of *norrœnn*. As such it applies to all the Germanic peoples of Scandinavia and their colonies in the British Isles and the North Atlantic. In the context of the Viking age we often find ‘Norse’ used as a description of anyone of Scandinavian origin, synonymous with ‘Vikings’, ‘Scandinavians’ and ‘Northmen’, whereas after the end of the Viking Age it is as a rule not used to describe Danes or Swedes.⁵²

Gwyn Jones’ hugely informative *A History of the Vikings* references Elias Wessén’s history of the Swedish language *Svensk Språkhistoria* (1943-5) as significant here, particularly when further emphasising the shared linguistic history of the Norse territories. Jones concludes that ‘such information as can be assembled from early sources about the oldest form of the Old Norse language suggests that it was used by all the Norse Scandinavians’.⁵³ Furthermore:

[There are] great and obvious resemblance between the languages of the Northern countries [and if the history of the languages are traced back] gradually the differences diminish up to a point where they disappear altogether.⁵⁴

Whilst it is commonly accepted that there was a substantial period of linguistic commonality in the region, writers such as Michael Barnes believe that there has been an oversimplification of how the language subsequently developed:

The mid- and late Viking Age is not a period in which a relatively unified form of speech begins to split into easily identifiable eastern and western types, but is characterized by innovations in different places, probably also by different groups, leading to very ragged and fluid dialect boundaries.⁵⁵

There is not sufficient space here to further examine the lexicological history of the Old Norse language and the route taken to its modern-day equivalents; however, our knowledge of the ancestries of a language only really begins to develop when the language itself moves from its oral origins to the written form, and it is often the latter that is fundamental to this research.

⁵² Orri Vésteinsson, ‘Archaeology of Economy and Society’, in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 7.

⁵³ Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 71.

⁵⁴ Elias Wessén, ‘Svensk Språkhistoria (1943-5)’, in Jones, p. 69.

⁵⁵ Michael Barnes, ‘Language’, in McTurk, ed., p. 183.

1.3.2: Scandinavia

The meaning of this term varies according to the context in which it is employed. In terms of etymology, it refers to the southernmost area of the Scandinavian Peninsula, although historically the term has been used to cover the whole of the Peninsula instead. Today, Scandinavia is commonly used to denote the area covered by Norway, Sweden and Denmark, although occasionally it refers to all of the areas with Nordic heritage, thus including Iceland too. Less frequently, it can also denote Finland.

Referring to Scandinavia as a ‘distinct region of Europe’, T.K. Derry states that ‘Although Scandinavia today comprises five independent sovereign states, these peoples of the North (Norden) are still united by inherited ties of culture, political experience and social sympathy’.⁵⁶ Whilst Gwyn Jones restricts the use of the term Scandinavia to just the three modern-day nations, he identifies many key similarities to Derry, stating that the Swedes, Danes and Norwegians ‘share the same language, religion, law, social organization, art, and general culture. And they share the same heroic tradition, the same legendary and part-historical past’.⁵⁷ Wherever possible, should the use of term Scandinavia be needed in this study, specific details of its implications will be provided.

1.3.3: Viking

The origins of the word ‘Viking’ are commonly accepted to stem from the Old Norse word ‘vik’ meaning creek.⁵⁸ The extension of the word, ‘vikingr’, means ‘a man from the vik’, i.e. a form of sea-faring man. As well as appearing in isolation, the term has subsequently become used as part of the phrase ‘Viking Age’ to refer to the period approximately between A.D. 800-1100, during which time many Vikings travelled both as aggressive raiders as well as to trade. Tim Clarkson explains:

Why a considerable number of Scandinavian males were attracted to a life of piracy across the North Sea is an interesting question which continues to exercise the minds of historians and archaeologists. Evidence from the Nordic countries suggests that a combination of social, economic and technological factors lay at the root of the Viking Age.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), p. 1.

⁵⁷ Jones, p. 69.

⁵⁸ Yves Cohat, *The Vikings: Lords of the Seas* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), p. 11.

⁵⁹ Tim Clarkson, *The Makers of Scotland: Picts, Romans, Gaels and Vikings* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2012), p. 149.

Mirroring the use of ‘Norse’ and ‘Scandinavia’, the term ‘Viking’ is often adopted with a lack of precision. Indeed Vésteinsson notes that archaeologists ‘happily use the no less ill-defined term [than “Norse”] “Viking” of anything Scandinavian during the Viking Age, but after its close things archaeological become “medieval” all over Scandinavia’.⁶⁰ In fact Derry even challenges the ‘man of the creek’ definition by calling this the ‘least unsatisfactory of many explanations’ suggesting that ‘in the world of the ninth and tenth centuries it denoted a “pirate” or “sea-robber” who emerged from the north’.⁶¹ Despite examples of the almost interchangeable use of ‘Norse’, ‘Scandinavian’ and ‘Viking’, at least when discussing the Viking Age itself, Yves Cohat’s explanation helps to ascertain the distinctions between them:

At the time that the Vikings embarked upon their first devastating raids they were a purely Scandinavian people. They spoke the same language, Old Norse, shared the same primitive way of life in isolated farms and worshipped the same gods. Their bards sang the same songs of old warrior heroes common to all.⁶²

Whereas the range and exploits of the Viking travellers across much of Northern Europe to numerous modern day nations including Iceland, Greenland, Russia, Greece, Turkey, the British Isles, and the Faroe Islands has been established, debates continue over whether the Vikings also travelled further afield, and in particular to the United States. In 1974, for example, James Robert Enterline’s *Viking America* argued that ‘Norsemen not only sailed to America but established long-standing colonies there’.⁶³ However, Kirsten Seaver suggests that those who expound this theory ‘prefer a homemade story to the far more fascinating reality gradually revealed by research’.⁶⁴ She even goes so far as to entitle the chapter concerned with this theory as ‘The Fictional Norse in North America’ leaving little room for doubt as to her conclusions. Although there is not sufficient space here to conduct an overview of the differing theories, there has been much written that will be of interest to the reader keen for further information, including Wahlgren’s *The Vikings and America*, the back-cover notes of which suggest the nature of the debate by calling the subject ‘a historical detective story of the finest order’.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Vésteinsson, *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶¹ Derry, p. 16.

⁶² Cohat, p. 16.

⁶³ James Robert Enterline, *Viking America: The Norse Crossings and Their Legacy* (London: New English Library, 1974), rear cover notes.

⁶⁴ Kirsten A. Seaver, *The Last Vikings: The Epic Story of The Great Norse Voyagers* (London: Tauris, 2010), p. 203.

⁶⁵ Erik Wahlgren, *The Vikings and America* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986).

1.3.4: The National Epics

It is difficult to assimilate what can be established as historical fact and what should be classified as fiction when analysing the national epics, myths, sagas, and poetry relevant to this thesis. Although the Nordic region has again received a great deal of attention from this perspective, equivalent texts from the United Kingdom and eastern European countries such as Ukraine, Estonia and Latvia are also worthy of focus. Myths have been interpreted, just as they have been crafted, in numerous ways. The *Oxford Concise Dictionary* describes a myth as a narrative ‘involving supernatural or imaginary persons’.⁶⁶ However, definitions vary, from being viewed as ‘a comment on human existence and a model of social behaviour, an attempt to define the inner realities’,⁶⁷ to ‘attempts to make sense of the world. Myths are not just for entertainment, but stories of the origins of things. For the culture that subscribes to them, they have explanatory power’.⁶⁸

It is a common supposition that myth and history are binary opposites. Myth is associated with what is fictive (imaginary) and of subjective value, whereas history is associated with what is real (factual) and of objective value.⁶⁹

Pernille Hermann’s identification of the inherently fictional nature of myth is significant, as whilst there may have once been attempts to portray myths as having historically accurate facts as their basis, this has for many steadily eroded; Heather O’Donoghue suggests that this was never the case:

It has been suggested that myths began simply as entertaining tales, and only gradually acquired significance and deeper meanings [...] Myths are stories which other people – not ‘people like us’ – held (or hold) to be true ... myths can be seen as encoding if not the religious beliefs of societies, then beliefs of almost equal, or perhaps related, significance ... [we tend] to treat myths as historical or anthropological curiosities.⁷⁰

As noted above *A History of the Vikings* by Gwyn Jones (1984) is a highly regarded, detailed book, full of extremely useful information on a multitude of matters of Viking history, culture, the genealogies of the countries concerned, as well as of the forming of the nations themselves. Of similar standing, but with more of a focus on the mythologies and belief systems of Northern Europeans, is *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* by H.R. Ellis Davidson (1990). As well as describing the myths themselves,

⁶⁶ Della Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 900.

⁶⁷ H.R. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 213.

⁶⁸ Catherine Belsey, *Post-Structuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University, 2002), p. 39.

⁶⁹ Pernille Hermann, ‘Íslendingabók and History’, in *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, ed. by Pernille Hermann, Jens Peter Schjødt and Rasmus Tranum Kristensen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 17.

⁷⁰ Heather O’Donoghue, *From Asgard to Valhalla* (New York: Tauris, 2008), pp. 1-2.

Ellis Davidson also writes well on subjects such as the changing perceptions of the Northern myths throughout the centuries, a topic of recurring importance:

At the close of the nineteenth century it was believed that myths were essentially attempts to explain natural phenomena [...] When this method of interpretation went out of fashion, there was great faith for a while in the study of folklore as a means of tracing the lost religions of the past.⁷¹

Material focusing upon the changing perception of myths and their relevance to modern-day culture is significant here as it can help inform understanding of how such myths may have influenced the musicians at the heart of this study. Studies include the *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga* collection of essays edited by Andrew Wawn (especially the writing of Jesse Boyd),⁷² and Lars Lönnroth's 'The Nordic Sublime: The Romantic Rediscovery of Icelandic Myth and Poetry' from the *Wagner's Ring and Its Icelandic Sources* collection edited by Bragason in the same year.⁷³ David Wilson's paper 'The Viking Age in European Art – A Note' from the book *The Waking of Angantyr: The Scandinavian Past in European Culture* and Mattias Gardell's, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* are both helpful.⁷⁴ In whatever way they are perceived, there is no doubt that mythologies the world over have played a powerful role in how nations and the people with their cultures view themselves, their collective histories and their national identities.

1.3.5: Edda

This term appears in the titles *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda*. In her translation of the second of these in 1996, Carolyne Larrington states that 'Edda' is 'a word whose etymology is uncertain but which clearly means "poetics" where it occurs in fourteenth-century Icelandic'.⁷⁵ *The Poetic Edda* (sometimes referred to as the *Elder Edda*) is a collection of poems in Old Norse that have been preserved in the medieval manuscript

⁷¹ Ellis Davidson, p. 7.

⁷² Jesse Boyd, 'Modern Nationalism and the Medieval Sagas', in *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga*, ed. by Andrew Wawn (Bath: Redwood Books, 1994), pp. 163-187.

⁷³ Lars Lönnroth, 'The Nordic Sublime: The Romantic Rediscovery of Icelandic Myth and Poetry', in *Wagner's Ring and Its Icelandic Sources*, ed. by Úlfar Bragason (Reykjavík: Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals, 1994), pp. 31-42.

⁷⁴ David, M. Wilson, 'The Viking Age in European Art – A Note', in *The Waking of Angantyr: The Scandinavian Past in European Culture*, ed. by Else Roesdahl and Preben Muelengracht Sørensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 176-191. Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁷⁵ Carolyne Larrington trans., *The Poetic Edda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. xii.

the *Codex Regius*. The name *Elder Edda* is sometimes attributed to the collection given its status as the primary source for the 12th-century collection of poems and tales of Norse mythology, *The Prose Edda* (also known as *Snorri's Edda*, named after its creator, the Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson). Peter Orton highlights Sturluson's work as being 'of major importance for our knowledge of Scandinavian pagan mythology [...] Snorri's prose *Edda* [is] the most important of all our literary sources'.⁷⁶

1.3.6: Icelandic Sagas

The Icelandic literary canon has at its centre a collection of sagas, known simply as the *Sagas of the Icelanders*, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The origin of the sagas' stories is the subject of academic debate, with some writers such as Rudolph Simek challenging the long-held theory that they were initially part of an oral tradition in the Viking Age:

Because of their realistic presentation, these sagas give the impression of historical accuracy [...] In fact, they were the literary masterpieces of the 13th century authors (book prose theory), into which admittedly historical sources, genealogies and short episode-like tales flowed, and in which partly also really orally transmitted skaldic verses were used. They are equally marked by Medieval scholarship, Christian education and political thought of the 13th century.⁷⁷

Whilst the original writers of the tales are unknown, the sagas have come to be recognized as a 'gem of world literature' and a 'great world treasure – elaborate, various, strange, profound, and as eternally current as any of the other great literary treasures'.⁷⁸ Despite his criticisms of assumptions surrounding the factual accuracy of the sagas, even Simek concedes they have 'high literary quality'.⁷⁹

1.3.7: *The Kalevala*

The *Kalevala* was compiled by Elias Lönnrot in 1835 during a series of field trips in the first part of the 19th century; it subsequently 'became a rallying-flag for national aspirations, and is regarded as the "national epic" by modern Finland'.⁸⁰ It is a

⁷⁶ Peter Orton, 'Pagan Myth and Religion', in McTurk, ed., p. 308.

⁷⁷ Rudolf Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Inc, 2007), p. 274.

⁷⁸ <http://www.sagadb.org>, [Accessed 26 September 2014], and Örnólfur Thorsson, ed., *The Sagas of Icelanders* (New York: Penguin, 2001), p. ix.

⁷⁹ Simek, p. 274.

⁸⁰ Keith Bosley, trans., *The Kalevala* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. xiii.

collection of folk poetry and mythology from Finland and Karelia (an area of land that links modern-day Finland and Russia). Pekka Laaksonen states that ‘in compiling the Kalevala, Elias Lönnrot by no means had to start from scratch. Finnish folk poetry collecting had been going on for some time before him’.⁸¹ In order to turn this extensive quantity of verses and songs into one cohesive work, Laaksonen suggests that Lönnrot added his own literary contributions, in the tradition of Karl Axel Gottlund, one of the leading Finnish thinkers during the Enlightenment period.

If we should collect the ancient folk songs and organize them into a methodical whole, whether it be an epic, a drama or any other thing, it might become a new Homer, Ossian or Nibelungenlied’ [1817 in *Svensk Literaturtidning*]. We cannot conclusively prove that these particular words were what Lönnrot took to heart. But this, in any case, is the first documented instance of the idea of an epic based on Finnish folk poetry.⁸²

Timo Leisiö notes how the completed work has played a significant role in the formation of Finnish national identity over the last 150 years.⁸³ Whilst it is often perceived as presenting the Finnish equivalent to the role that Norse mythology and the Eddas have played for the Scandinavian countries, its significantly more recent origins must clearly be taken into account when considering how it is received in a historical or ethnological context.

1.3.8: Anglo Saxon Codices and Manuscripts

In the canon of poetry and manuscripts from the Anglo Saxon period, there are a number of significant literary works that have gone on to become representative; the works of Michael Wood, Kevin Crossley-Holland, Michael Swanton, and the edited collection of Anglo Saxon poetry by S. A. J. Bradley are important and well recognised here;⁸⁴ the writings of Geoffrey Hindley and Mark Amodio are also particularly useful.⁸⁵ The *Codex Exoniensis* is otherwise known as *The Exeter Book*, and is the largest surviving collection of Anglo Saxon poetry, containing poems such as ‘The Wanderer’,

⁸¹ Pekka Laaksonen, ‘From Oral Tradition to National Epic: About the Poetry, the Collecting and Elias Lönnrot’s Kalevala’, in Jaakkola and Toivonen, eds, p. 13.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Timo Leisiö, ‘The Runo Code: The Finnish Epic Folk Song Tradition in Finland’, in Jaakkola and Toivonen, eds, p. 54.

⁸⁴ Michael Wood, *In Search of The Dark Ages* (London: BBC Books, 2005), Kevin Crossley-Holland, *The Anglo Saxon World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Michael Swanton, ed., *The Anglo Saxon Chronicles* (London: Phoenix Press, 2003), S. A. J. Bradley, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: Everyman, 1995).

⁸⁵ Geoffrey Hindley, *A Brief History of The Anglo-Saxons: The Beginnings of The English Nation* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2006), Mark C. Amodio, *The Anglo-Saxon Literature Handbook* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

‘The Seafarer’, ‘The Phoenix’, and ‘The Ruin’. Dates for its origin vary, but the second half of the tenth century is a commonality; its name stems from the fact that the collection was a gift to the library at Exeter Cathedral from Leofric, the Bishop of Exeter in the mid-eleventh century. A similar etymology is responsible for *The Codex Vercellensis* or *The Vercelli Book*, which has been housed in the Capitulary library in Vercelli since the eleventh century; this anthology contains at its core six Old English Christian poems including ‘Soul and Body’ (often referred to as ‘Soul and Body I’ as opposed to ‘Soul and Body II’ which is found in *The Exeter Book*),⁸⁶ ‘The Fates Of The Apostles’ and ‘Elene’, the last two of which are ascribed to a poet named Cynewulf.⁸⁷

The Nowell Codex or *Cotton Vitellius* is most famous for being the manuscript that contains the epic poem *Beowulf*, and is therefore often referred to simply as the *Bewoulf manuscript*.⁸⁸ The remainder of the manuscript includes a small number of other texts including another Old English poem ‘Judith’, as well as the ‘Letter of Alexander to Aristotle’. *Beowulf* has been the subject of multiple references in the arts such as the 2007 computer animated film of the same name featuring Angelina Jolie and Anthony Hopkins, *The Lament For Beowulf*, the 1925 work for choir and orchestra by American composer Howard Hanson (1896-1981), and the 2016 ITV TV series. The history of the original poem is the subject of some debate, its creation being placed between when it is thought to be set (‘in the pagan world of sixth-century Scandinavia’),⁸⁹ and the eighth century,⁹⁰ whilst the manuscript through which it survives (as with those of these other significant Anglo Saxon codices) has been traced to around 1000AD.⁹¹ However, as Hindley suggests, the dating of a surviving manuscript is not a ‘guaranteed indicator of even the approximate date of composition’,⁹² especially when considering the transcribing of stories rooted in an oral tradition.

The significance of the *Beowulf* poem has been discussed extensively elsewhere and there is not sufficient room here to present a detailed analysis. The similarities between some of the artefacts discovered in the 1939 archaeological finds at Sutton Hoo

⁸⁶ Amodio, p. 188.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

⁸⁸ Hindley, p. 234.

⁸⁹ <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/beowulf> [Accessed 28 September 2015].

⁹⁰ Wood, p. 93.

⁹¹ Amodio, p. 31.

⁹² Hindley, p. 242.

in Suffolk and some of the details described in *Beowulf* have drawn particular comment, regardless of debate over the relative proportions of historical fact and fiction contained within; the British Library, for example, describes how a 1939 archaeological dig ‘uncovered things which had only hitherto existed in the world of myth and stories of *Beowulf* and the sagas’.⁹³ Suffice to say that despite being set in Scandinavia, the role of *Beowulf* in, or connection to, the formation of an English national identity is well established, and this makes it pertinent here:

The historical reality of an English identity grew out of traditions of loyalty and lordship from the epic heritage of a pagan past embodied in the poem of *Beowulf* in a common vernacular language.⁹⁴

The last of the four main codices of Anglo Saxon poetry is the *Cædmon Manuscript*, otherwise known as the *Junius Manuscript* or *Codex Junius*, named after the German collector of manuscripts and philologist Franciscus Junius (1591-1677) who published the first edition in 1655. Thought to be amongst the oldest of the surviving long poems, the themes in this collection are primarily biblical.⁹⁵ Indeed Caedmon’s role in the development of the English language is significant according to the account in Bede’s *History of the English Church and People* where he is accredited as having written ‘the first lines of Christian poetry ever to be composed in the English language’.⁹⁶

Focussing more on the prose style of writing, the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* is of primary significance for a variety of reasons. The British Library not only describes the manuscript as ‘the earliest known history of England written in the English language’ but also as ‘the oldest history of any European country in a vernacular language’.⁹⁷ It was begun at the behest of Alfred the Great (described as the ‘patron’ of the *Chronicle*),⁹⁸ and Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge note how ‘The contemporary annals in the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* form the basis for the narrative history of Alfred’s reign’.⁹⁹ The lexicological importance of the *Chronicle* is primarily due to Alfred’s determination to promote and redevelop the English language, having many Latin texts

⁹³ Wood, p. 65.

⁹⁴ Hindley, p. xxxi.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁹⁶ Bradley, ed., p. 4.

⁹⁷ <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/histtexts/anglosax/> [Accessed 9 June 2014].

⁹⁸ <http://www.royal.gov.uk/HistoryoftheMonarchy/KingsandQueensofEngland/TheAnglo-Saxonkings/AlfredtheGreat.aspx> [Accessed 28 September 2015].

⁹⁹ Simon Keynes, and Michael Lapidge, eds., *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 113.

translated, and encouraging the creation of informative prose. Amodio concurs regarding the significance of the *Chronicle* and its on-going impact, whilst suggesting how it should be approached:

[The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is] one of the most important and most remarkable documents to survive from Anglo-Saxon England [...] An unrivalled source of information, one from which a great deal of what we know of Anglo-Saxon England's history derives [...] For ease of reference the Chronicle is frequently discussed as if it were a unified, monolithic text, the Chronicle, but it would be more accurate to describe it as a series of interconnected texts, produced in different parts of the country by a variety of anonymous, perhaps monastic, annalists over the course of several centuries.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the historical significance of the document, it also contains perhaps one of the best-known references to the Viking invasions of England, in the form of the AD793 entry concerning the raids on Lindisfarne or Holy Island, just off the coast of Northumberland:

This year came dreadful fore-warnings over the land of the Northumbrians, terrifying the people most woefully: these were immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons flying across the firmament [...] on the sixth day before the ides of January in the same year, the harrowing inroads of heathen men made lamentable havoc in the church of God in Holy-island, by rapine and slaughter.¹⁰¹

1.3.9: Irish Mythology

The surviving canon of Irish mythology is primarily divided into four sections, each of which has multiple names, a system that can lead to some confusion for the researcher:

The notion that Old Irish narratives should fall into four cycles, Mythological, Ulster, Fenian and Kings, would have sounded strange to medieval storytellers and scribes. It was instead those great classifiers of data, nineteenth-century German academics, who sorted out these categories for us.¹⁰²

The four divisions or cycles are usually referred to in the following order: The *Mythological Cycle* is also referred to as the *Cycle of the Invasions*, whereas we also see the *Ulster Cycle* called by any of the *Red Branch*, *Ultonian* or *Conorian Cycle*. The third is the *Fenian Cycle*, sometimes referred to as the *Ossianic Cycle* after its narrator Oisín. Where the remaining mythological canon is given a title, it is usually either the

¹⁰⁰ Amodio, pp. 67-9.

¹⁰¹ Bob Carruthers, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Illustrated and Annotated (Military History from Primary Sources)* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2013), pp. 89-90.

¹⁰² James MacKillop, *Myths and Legends of the Celts* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 150.

Historical Cycle or the *Cycle of Kings*. However, these works have also been referred to simply as ‘a multitude of miscellaneous tales and legends which it is hard to fit into any historical framework’.¹⁰³

This considerable body of work has provided much inspiration for bands on both sides of the modern day Irish border, and there is no need to provide a detailed catalogue of its contents here, although it is worth identifying some examples of tales that have been referenced by metal bands relevant to this study. The *Ulster Cycle* includes tales that concentrate on the stories of Cúchulainn, including his defence of Ulster in battles against Queen Medb of Connacht in the epic ‘*Táin Bó Cualigne*’, and his slaying of Culann’s ferocious dog. Stories of the ‘Children of Lir’ from the *Mythological Cycle* focus upon Tuatha Danann (the tribe of Danu, a goddess), either a race of people with supernatural powers or, in fact, deities. This style of euhemeristic writing, where the line between historical characters and gods is somewhat blurred, is extremely common throughout many of the texts from this period across a wide range of cultures and nations. For example, Brian Boru, the early eleventh-century High King of Ireland, was a historical figure, whose acts and deeds continue to play a prominent role in Irish culture, including being the source of inspiration for the lyrics of some heavy metal bands. However, there are numerous examples of stories of Boru being laced with elements of mystical forces, such as when T.W. Rolleston discusses ‘The Quest of the Sons of Turenn’ from the *Mythological Cycle*, where ‘Brian in a magical ‘water-dress’ goes down [under the sea], sees the thrice fifty nymphs in their palace, and seizes the golden spit from their hearth’.¹⁰⁴

James MacKillop, as well as providing an effective overview of Celtic mythology, constructs a valuable analysis of modern-day surviving oral traditions in the Celtic regions whilst reminding the reader that our understanding of not only the content but the context and role of mythological tales is often open to debate:

We can never be sure what status a story held within the society where it was collected. Was it mere entertainment or was it thought to contain an esteemed truth of the tribe? Nineteenth-century publication occurred before collection from oral sources had attained professional academic standards. We cannot always guess the collector’s limitations or biases.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ T.W. Rolleston, *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race* (London: CRW Publishing, 2004), p. 80.

¹⁰⁴ Rolleston, p. 98.

¹⁰⁵ MacKillop, pp. 284-5.

1.3.10: Scottish Poetry

In terms of Scottish poetry, by far the most prominent writer is Robert Burns (1759-96), who ‘has more museums devoted to him than any other Scot’,¹⁰⁶ and is established in the minds of many ‘as Scotland’s national ‘bard’’.¹⁰⁷ Included within the significant catalogue of works that Burns created (amounting to more than 550) are references to noteworthy historical characters and events in Scotland’s struggle for independence. Naturally these include tales such as those of Robert the Bruce (1274-1329), the medieval king of Scotland who in the early fourteenth century fought for Scotland’s independence from England, achieving victory at the Battle of Bannockburn (1314) and subsequently signing the Treaty of Edinburgh and Northampton in 1328, a year before his death:

Now’s the day, and now’s the hour;
See the front o’ battle lower;
See approach proud Edward’s power--
Chains and slaverie! [...]

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!¹⁰⁸

‘Robert Bruce’s March to Bannockburn’ was not the only time that Burns let his proud sense of Scottish identity colour his work. This places him as another significant example of the arts playing a role across Europe in the national identity formation of the National Romanticism movement. ‘Such a Parcel of Rogues In a Nation’ (1791) saw Burns deliver a withering assessment of those Scots who signed an Act of Union with England in 1707, viewing this as treachery against the efforts of Robert Bruce and William Wallace some four hundred years earlier:

O would, o I had seen the day
That treason thus could sell us
My auld grey head had lien in clay
Wi’ Bruce and loyal Wallace!
But pith and power, till my last hour,
I’ll mak this declaration;
We’re bought and sold from English gold,
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ R.A. Houston, and W. W. J. Knox, eds., *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. lvi.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Crawford, and Mick Imlah, eds, *The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.xxi.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁰⁹ Crawford and Imlah, eds, p. 302.

Amongst the compatriots of Burns whose output contains a similar sentiment include Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) whose writing eulogised the beauty and power of the Scottish landscape, and John Stuart Blackie (1809-95) who was noted for works such as ‘Hail Land Of My Fathers’ (‘Hail, land of my fathers! I stand on thy shore [...] Old Scotland, my mother, the rugged, the bare, That reared me with breath of the strong mountain air’).¹¹⁰ There is not sufficient space here to provide a more comprehensive overview of the history of Scottish literature, but the poets mentioned are amongst those most relevant to this study, and the work of writers such as William Ferguson make useful reference to the role this writing played in the formation of the Scottish nation.¹¹¹

1.3.11: Ukrainian Poetry

The role played by language and specifically the written word is of fundamental importance to the formation of national identity. This can include the construction of dictionaries, the transcription of folklores and myths previously passed on orally, the creation of a written press, and the conception of new poetry by writers who wish to represent their nationalist or political viewpoint. As Ernest Renan declares, ‘Language invites people to unite, but it does not force them to do so’.¹¹² In a similar fashion to many other nations, this was particularly the case during the early 20th-century as the combined Russian Empire previously ruled by a long history of Tsars began to disintegrate into separate areas that wanted to firstly form then later establish distinct national identities of their own. Whilst it was during this time that the modern-day nation of Ukraine was formed, it was not the first time that the region had been the subject of conflict or attempts to reconstruct national boundaries. During the previous century the poetry of Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) and others like him had done much to help fuel the fire of Ukrainian nationalists and their struggles for independence:

[Writers of this kind] idealized the simple rustic lifestyle of their peasant countrymen and added folk themes to their works in an effort to create a ‘national style’. This appropriation of the native culture [...] was more than a passing fashion [...] It was part of a broader project by a newly conscious urban middle class: the creation of a set of ethnic symbols as the basis of their own national ethos and identity.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ http://www.rampantscotland.com/poetry/blpoems_fathers.htm [Accessed 26 September 2014].

¹¹¹ William Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

¹¹² Ernest Renan, ‘What is a nation?’, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 16.

¹¹³ Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (London: Pimlico, 1996), p. 71.

Kobzar (Minstrel), Shevchenko's first collection of poetry, published in 1840, not only established his reputation as a Ukrainian writer of great significance, but also helped to ascertain the presence and validity of the written Ukrainian language, as previously the inhabitants of the region had been taught to communicate in Russian:

The Ukrainian language was not thought to be a refined enough for the eloquence of poetic verse. Shevchenko's work not only transformed Ukraine's literary scene, but it also helped to reinvigorate pride in the Ukrainian culture.¹¹⁴

Shevchenko not only crafted a career as a poet, but also worked as an artist. Throughout his output, the recurring theme was one of Ukraine as a land mistreated by outside rule or occupation, and the Ukrainian natives as victims who still proudly burned with a desire for identity, freedom and independence. Whilst other poets such as Oleksandr Oles (1878-1944) and Yuriy Klen (1891-1947) have subsequently gained a reputation for producing work permeated with a strong Ukrainian national identity, for many it is Shevchenko that continues to be the figurehead of Ukrainian literature. His writing is littered with references to his life in serfdom (slavery) and his work is often symbolically used during times of tensions between Russia and Ukraine. One commonly-quoted Shevchenko phrase encapsulates the sentiment that his work came to represent: 'Body and soul I am the son and brother of our unfortunate nation'. The source of this quote was identified in personal communication with Ukrainian metal musician Roman Sayenko of the band Drudkh.

This is not a poem or book, but a part taken from Taras Shevchenko's letter to his friend and homonym Varfolomey Shevchenko. Letter was written on February 2, 1859 in St. Petersburg.¹¹⁵

Chapter 4 discusses references to Shevchenko's work, both by Drudkh and their compatriots.

1.4: National Identity and National Romanticism

Identity formation (especially that in the context of nationalism) is a subject that continues to raise a number of interesting issues. The essential book in this field is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006). The theories presented by

¹¹⁴ <http://thenews.choate.edu/article/shevchenko-ukraine%E2%80%99s-hero#sthash.8XCoLpQX.dpuf> [Accessed 15 August 2014].

¹¹⁵ Personal communication with the author, March 2016.

Anderson are significant here. Firstly, he reinforces the earlier point of the importance of language to the creation of a national identity by referencing the writing of Hugh Seton-Watson who observed:

The formation of an accepted Ukrainian literary language owes more to [Shevchenko] than any other individual. The use of this language was the decisive stage in the formation of a Ukrainian national consciousness.¹¹⁶

Anderson goes on to draw similar comparisons with the development of both language and identity in other countries relevant to this study such as Finland and Norway. In addition, Anderson's reference to the work of French philosopher Ernest Gellner who wrote that, 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' is also significant here.¹¹⁷ This is because the notion that both nations and some of the traditions held as integral there within are man-made constructions rather than historical facts could bring into question the suggestion by many of today's metal bands that they are in some way revisiting their nation's ancient cultures, or 'returning to roots'. Hagen identifies this particularly in black metal when he refers to 'heathen revivalists and neotraditionalists seeking to resurrect idealized ancient Norse and Germanic cultures and belief systems'.¹¹⁸ Writers such as Eric Hobsbawm focus on this topic especially, and by providing a historical context for the role of tradition in nationalism books such as *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* and the collection *The Invention of Tradition* will inform subsequent discourse.¹¹⁹

The role of mythology is important here; using that of the Scandinavian region as a demonstrative example, Norse mythology is fundamental in our knowledge of the history of the Vikings, and the sagas and Eddas have gone through periods of differing perception and recognition. Over the last millennium, academics and the general public alike have often had difficulty distinguishing fact from fiction when reading or studying the epics from that part of the world, and opinion as to the factual accuracy of the texts has varied considerably throughout the centuries. Has the blurring contributed to the acceptance into national consciousness of mythology as factual history, further perpetuating the notions of 'invented traditions'?

¹¹⁶ Hugh Seton-Watson, cited by Anderson, p. 74.

¹¹⁷ Ernest Gellner, cited by Anderson, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 182.

¹¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds, *ibid.*

Pernille Hermann, the Danish academic based at the University of Aarhus, notes that ‘it is a common supposition that myth and history are binary opposites’,¹²⁰ whilst, in 1992, Yves Cohat referred to the Norse gods as ‘marvellous heroic figures of Scandinavian imagination’.¹²¹ Perhaps part of the issue lies in the lack of hard evidence; as Raymond Page suggests:

[The Vikings] recorded little of their beliefs and still less of their myths. Any knowledge of these that we now have comes either from outside Scandinavia if within the Viking Age, or from within Scandinavia in the post-Viking era.¹²²

Jesse Byock describes how the medieval period saw sagas and mythology ‘which had previously been understood to be the remnants of a flourishing folk-tradition of oral narration, were now elevated to the position of a written genre’.¹²³ In 2002, whilst discussing the work of the French writer and semiologist Roland Barthes, Catherine Belsey described myth as converting ‘history into nature’. She went on to define the task of the mythographer as:

[Attempting to] rediscover the element of history that motivates the myth, to elicit what is specific to a given time and place, asking what interests are served by the naturalization of particular convictions and values.¹²⁴

This approach suggests that myths are consciously created in order to pass on a people’s explanations of the world in which they live. However, it seems that these inner messages are not the focus of the attention that much of the metal society has given Viking history in recent years, more the fascination with the sense of Other that this musical movement has allowed non-Scandinavians to experience, whilst also giving those that do share a national heritage the opportunity to strengthen old roots.

The rekindling of interest in the heritage and history of a nation, as well as folklore’s role in a nation’s identity and sense of community is not a new trend. The National Romanticism movement, for example, particularly in Northern Europe, generated an interest in such ‘cultural revisiting’. Centring around the mid-18th century to the early 20th century, National Romanticism (or Romantic Nationalism) had a particularly significant cultural effect across Europe. In fact, Kuhn has referred to ‘the period in which the drama of nationalism and its quest for symbolic expression first

¹²⁰ Hermann, *ibid.*, p. 17.

¹²¹ Cohat, p. 11.

¹²² Raymond Page, *Norse Myths* (London: British Museum Press, 1990), p. 10.

¹²³ Byock, in Andrew Wawn, ed., p. 165.

¹²⁴ Belsey, p. 31.

held the stage: nineteenth-century Europe'.¹²⁵ Similarly, Anthony Smith identifies how, 'for most scholars, nationalism, the movement and ideology, can be dated to the late eighteenth century'.¹²⁶ During this period many young European nations were embarking on a similar quest to establish the quintessential characteristics of their own national identity, and the arts played a fundamental role here, particularly in the visual arts, poetry and music. Subsequently the artistic creations themselves in turn became part of the representation of national identity.

In an effort by the creators of these works to portray not only where they were from but also to assist in the creation of a pride in that nation or region, many inadvertently managed to add the element of time to the discourse surrounding their output. For those taking an active role in National Romanticism, any geographical focus in the arts was often accompanied by a desire to suggest significant periods of time, a historical context, or a sense of the 'original'. Indeed, when discussing the writing of Romanian historian Mircea Eliade (1907-86), Sigurd Aarnes identifies an element of Eliade's work that was crucial not only to the National Romanticists, but will also be seen to have become a feature of the bands relevant to my own work.

[Eliade] emphasizes that there is one feature of mythical thinking that has survived to this day, 'the prestige of origin'. It is generally agreed that this 'prestige of origin' is a prominent feature of European Romanticism. It postulates a golden age at the beginning of history and in the infancy of a nation [...] One of the fathers of Scandinavian Romanticism, the Danish poet Adam Oehlenschläger, sings of 'the shining peak from whence we have fallen, but once more shall scale'.¹²⁷

Being able to trace or suggest this line of origin, and the 'prestige' associated with it became a recurring desirable feature of Romantic Nationalism. This study will confirm how not only this 'prestige of origin' but also Oehlenschläger's suggestion that a people or a nation must strive to return to previous glories (often to conquer an invading people, nation or religion) is a theme that constantly surfaces in the writings of the bands contained here. As O'Donoghue notes:

One of the key elements of Romantic nationalism throughout Europe was the revival of the common historical roots of the nation [...] In this sense, Romantic nationalists looked back to a glorious, unified past.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Hans Kuhn in *Romantic Nationalism in Europe*, ed. by J.C. Eade (Canberra: Australian National University, 1983), p. v.

¹²⁶ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 44.

¹²⁷ Sigurd Aarnes, 'Myth and Heroes in 19th Century Norway', in Eade, ed., pp. 101-2.

¹²⁸ O'Donoghue, p. 130.

Antti Häyrynen states that the collection of folk poetry (*Stimmen der Völker*) by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) ‘equated national identity – and thereby the concept of a nation state – with the individual folklore of a nation’,¹²⁹ and Oskar Bjarnason adds that Herder had a ‘belief in the need for every nation to have a mythological background [that] would become one of the principles of romanticism’.¹³⁰ Herder’s writings are especially important due to his emphasis on the concept of Volk, and numerous authors have identified how Herder is crucial to our understanding of how myths have fed into national identity. George Williamson suggests:

At the centre of Herder’s approach stood his concept of the *Volk* (folk, people, nation), which he viewed as the basic unit of human history [...] The mythology of a *Volk* contained in nuncio the seeds of its future development: its poetry, its art, its customs, its religions, its laws. Because it embodied a particular way of viewing nature and the world at large, this mythology was a nation’s most precious possession.¹³¹

This idea is developed by Shay Loya:

[Learning from the common folk had the benefit] of authentically representing national identity [...] These ideas were significantly developed in the 1770s in the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder who further argued that in order to express a timeless national spirit in modern times, the great writer, poet, or composer must tap deeply into the natural reservoir of collective genius, as bards had done in ancient times.¹³²

Catherine Belsey expands on the points of origin and restoration, hinting at the concept of contemporary modern society interfering with a nation’s rightful heritage:

Since the 19th century, nationalism has offered to restore a true identity that has been all but erased [...] Don’t nationalists identify with the nation as it once was, or as it one day might be? Isn’t perfect identity always the property of others?¹³³

1.5: National Identity and Mythology in Music – A Context

Although this chapter does not allow for an exhaustive historical overview of the use of mythology in music, as this thesis demonstrates, there is a considerable precedent for the style of national identity formation that the bands in this study are creating, even

¹²⁹ Antti Häyrynen, ‘Kalevala Poetry in Finnish Classical Music’, in Jaakkola and Toivonen, eds, p. 68.

¹³⁰ Öskar Bjarnason, ‘The Germanic Heritage in Icelandic Books’ in *The Manuscripts of Iceland*, ed. by Gísli Sigurðsson and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavik: Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland, 2004), p. 121.

¹³¹ George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 33.

¹³² Loya, p. 86.

¹³³ Belsey, pp. 64-5.

if their methods of presentation suggest a collision of perhaps seemingly unlikely source materials. This is equally so when it comes to comparing the use of mythology as a source material or inspiration for some of classical music's most significant composers. Perhaps the most familiar figure to have made such use of a mythological canon was the German composer Richard Wagner (1813-83).¹³⁴ He is particularly significant here not only in the context of his use of Norse mythology, but also through his music's association with Hitler and the Nazi party. As will become evident, a connection (or accusations of a connection) between musicians producing materials with elements of national identity and extreme far-right politics (accurate or otherwise) is not uncommon.

In the example of Wagner, it is accepted that not only did his music portray elements of national identity, but the composer himself held some viewpoints that mean that his connection to national socialism was more than just him being 'Hitler's favourite composer'.¹³⁵ However, there is debate as to whether his musical work itself expresses these viewpoints, or whether it is possible to make a separation. O'Donoghue feels that Wagner's work (and specifically *The Ring* opera cycle) 'suited both the ideology of National Socialism, and the tastes of its adherents'.¹³⁶ Asking if it is fair 'that Wagner's works are tainted by his anti-Semitism and the Nazi's enthusiasm for them', in 2014 the BBC's Clemency Burton-Hill tried to distinguish between Wagner's personal belief and the appropriation of his work and the legacy that continues to exist as a result:

The conflation of Wagner and Hitler has always posed difficulties for any principled listener, Jewish or otherwise. [...] Was Wagner's music despicably perverted by the Nazis, or did their adulation merely expose its inherent perversions? [...] Some facts stand. It is incontrovertible that, like many Germans of his day, Wagner was virulently and unapologetically anti-Semitic. [Wagner] made his monstrous sentiments clear, beginning with his infamous 1850 treatise *On Jewishness in Music*. Although the musicological and academic jury is still out as to whether the music dramas can themselves be described as anti-Semitic, there is little doubt as to their composer's ideology.¹³⁷

It is clear, however, that there have been those (albeit some seventy years earlier) who believe that Burton-Hill is wrong to draw direct connections between Wagner's use of Norse mythology and an intent to express a nationalistic outlook. Einstein called the introduction of Norse divinities into Wagner's work 'nothing to do

¹³⁴ For example, see Eero Tarasti, *Myth and Music: Approaches to Semiotics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979).

¹³⁵ O'Donoghue, p. 145.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20130509-is-wagners-nazi-stigma-fair> [Accessed 4 March 2016].

with nationalism’ and said that the 1850 pamphlet that Burton-Hill refers to ‘was not, as it were, the artistic manifestation of a purpose which Wagner professed’ in it.¹³⁸ What does seem clear, is that as Lönnroth terms it, the music of Wagner was the ‘culmination of [...]the exploitation of Old Norse myth and Early Icelandic poetry for the purpose of establishing a new Romantic ideal, that of the Nordic Sublime’.¹³⁹

Wagner has not been the only classical composer to generate discussion over potential differences between the conception and reception of their work in a nationalist context. The output of Finland’s Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) was so significant in this regard that he has become to be perceived as the country’s ‘national composer’, indeed going so far as having ‘significance in the formation of a Finnish musical identity’:¹⁴⁰

Sibelius’s early masterpieces of the 1890s were strongly national in character, and, even if he later attempted to distance himself from the national romantic idiom, he remained strongly associated with the idea of the national composer.¹⁴¹

Whilst it is not possible here to examine the multiple examples within Sibelius’s canon of the use of mythological material and the National Romantic elements in his work, there is no better demonstration of his continuing importance within Finnish culture than James Hepokoski’s description of Sibelius’s 1899 tone poem *Finlandia* as not only his ‘most widely known composition’ but as ‘a national emblem’.¹⁴² Indeed, he goes on to describe the piece’s ending in unambiguous terms:

The moment of closure is [surely intended as] a declaration of the identity of tonal and national attainment, and as a launch into the new century of the now-realised spirit of a fully ‘awakened’ Finland.¹⁴³

This type of impact, much like the bands that will be examined in subsequent chapters, was not restricted to musicians from the Scandinavian and Nordic region. Prominent examples include the Czech composer Bedrich Smetana (1824-84) with music such as his set of six symphonic poems *Má Vlast (My Homeland)*, the Englishman Ralph Vaughan-Williams (1872-1958) and his use of folk song in his compositions,¹⁴⁴ and a group of Russian composers sometimes referred to as ‘The

¹³⁸ Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era* (London, J.M. Dent and Sons, 1947), p. 235.

¹³⁹ Lönnroth, *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁰ Matti Huttunen, ‘The national composer and the idea of Finnishness: Sibelius and the formation of Finnish musical style’, in Grimley, ed., p. 8.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁴² James Hepokoski, ‘*Finlandia* awakens’, in Grimley, ed., p. 81.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁴ See Alain Frogley, ed., *Vaughan Williams Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Russian Five’ or ‘The Mighty Handful’ who worked as a collective during the 1860s to try and create music that could be categorised as specifically Russian, creating ‘a truly national school of Russian music’.¹⁴⁵ The group comprised Borodin, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui, and Balakirev. All of these composers and many more like them have seen their music become synonymous with the identity of their nation, providing a context within which to understand more recent developments in the world of heavy metal.

1.6: Conclusion

As can be seen, due to the extensive range of subject matter relevant to the topic of my thesis, my research necessitates a sound working knowledge of this variety of content to provide the context in which it can be situated. The cultural narrative created by the artists referenced here is worthy of the detailed analysis that follows as it provides clear evidence of what can be termed ‘cultural revisiting’. The notion that styles, forms or trends can return to popularity is a familiar one in many areas of modern life. Here we have the genre and the surrounding culture of heavy metal, or at least participants within a particularly active subgenre situated within, creating output that shares at its core the same desires, motivations and inspirations that artists, writers and musicians did some two hundred years earlier during the National Romanticism movement, and it is clear that participants from the northern and eastern regions of Europe have been especially prevalent in both instances.

The comparatively small amount of writing on this group of musicians has to date primarily focused on either the lyrical content or the sometimes more extreme political connections or viewpoints that can be associated with matters of national identity.¹⁴⁶ It is evident that the work of these artists provides rich source material for this style of academic analysis. However, whilst there can be no doubting the relevance and significance of this writing, by making either brief passing reference or (worse) ignoring entirely the wide-ranging musical substance being presented by protagonists in this field, we are doing a vibrant and creative cultural movement a huge disservice.

¹⁴⁵ See Stephen Walsh, *Musorgsky and His Circle: A Russian Musical Adventure* (New York: Knopf, 2013).

¹⁴⁶ See Sanna Fridh, ‘In Pursuit of the Vikings: An Anthropological and Critical Discourse Analysis of Imagined Communities in Heavy Metal’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Gothenburg, 2012).

Such an approach also fails to acknowledge the multiple layers of identity portrayal, that can at times be simultaneously regional, national and transnational. By examining the European regions outlined, both recurring themes and breadth of variety will be identified, with demonstrative musical examples and analysis fulfilling a prominent role where appropriate.

The musical examples contained throughout the thesis were carefully chosen as the result of extensive listening to a wide spectrum of heavy metal over a period of more than twenty years. My career as a professional musician has encompassed an unusually broad range of styles and environments, following on from considerable instrumental and academic musical training. These experiences have, in combination, allowed me to draw conclusions from the material being produced and select demonstrative excerpts. All transcriptions and notations are my own unless noted.

Chapter 2: The Genre of Metal and Its Meanings in Popular Music

2.1: Genre and its Importance in Popular Music

The concept of genre and how music is classified and labelled has become fundamental to the language of popular music to such an extent that it can sometimes be difficult to discuss or describe the music of an artist without resorting to a genre label or other artists that share genre characteristics. The language used provides a critical starting point as to how a piece is understood, and forms the crux of expectation for the listener; it has therefore been the subject of a considerable amount of musicological writing. Of particular relevance to my research is the writing of Jeffrey Kallberg on genre where he asserts:

[The meaning of a term] is connected to the willingness of a particular community to use that word and not another [...] Hence the need for studies of genre to look away from the immanent characteristics of the music.¹⁴⁷

Heather Dubrow suggests that a genre ‘functions much like a code of behaviour established between the author and his reader’.¹⁴⁸ Whilst she is predominantly referring to genre in written texts, the same is certainly the case for music as a whole, and specifically popular music. Brazilian musicologist Franco Fabbri wrote in 1981 that genres are constructed based on a variety of types of what he termed ‘generic rules’:¹⁴⁹ formal and technical, semiotic, behaviour, social and ideological, and economical and juridical. Simon Frith refers to the role of labels in popular music and ‘the seemingly inescapable use of generic categories in the organization of popular culture’¹⁵⁰ in his seminal work *Performing Rites*. He goes on to discuss how the construction of genre labels is intertwined with aspects of the needs and expectations of the business side of the music industry such as sales and market presence:

¹⁴⁷ Jeffrey Kallberg, ‘The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin’s Nocturne in G Minor’, *19th-Century Music*, 11.3 (1988), p. 243.

¹⁴⁸ Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (Oxon: Methuen & Co., 1982), p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Franco Fabbri, ‘A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications’, in *Popular Music Perspectives*, ed. by D. Horn and P. Tagg (Gothenburg and Exeter: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 1981), p. 54.

¹⁵⁰ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 75.

[By asking] what *sort* of music is it [...] it integrates an inquiry about the music (what does it sound like) with an inquiry about the market (who will buy it) [...] Genre is a way of defining music in its market or, alternatively, the market in its music.¹⁵¹

Drawing on Theodor Adorno's Frankfurt School of cultural thinking (and his declaration that 'The whole structure of popular music is standardized, even where the attempt is made to circumvent standardization'),¹⁵² Dominic Strinati's comments on the music industry's involvement in genre categorisation are somewhat cynical, placing business at the core of the dialogue:

Genres are produced according to the criteria of profitability and marketability, and provide what audiences are familiar with, although not in ways which are completely predictable. The profitable market for genres is met by a product which balances standardisation and surprise, not standardisation and pseudo-individualisation.¹⁵³

Whatever the root cause of the need for this form of evaluation, it is evident that the use of genre labels provides a starting point both for the discussion of popular music specifically, and for other examples of popular culture in general. When discussing the range of conflicting labels that have been applied to Swedish band Amon Amarth, Sanna Fridh asks 'does this mean that it is not possible to classify [genre] at all?'¹⁵⁴ Roy Shuker states that 'analysis of rock texts necessitates the use of genre as an analytical tool'.¹⁵⁵ There is often a perceived need for both senders and receivers of popular music to possess a working knowledge of the necessary genre-based terminology in order to interact with the popular music that they come into contact with. Intrinsicly, this knowledge is an historical one as it is constructed around bands who have gone before and how they relate to any artist being discussed. The writing of Fabbri is again relevant here:

A new genre is not born in an empty space but in a musical system that is already structured. Therefore a considerable part of the rules that define it are common to other genres already existing within the system, those that individualize the new genre being relatively few.¹⁵⁶

Genre boundaries are fluid in nature, and are regularly revisited, often primarily as a means of communication by record labels, magazines, fans, and indeed the musicians

¹⁵¹ Frith, 1996, pp. 75-6.

¹⁵² Theodor Adorno, 'On Popular Music', in *On Record*, ed. by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 301.

¹⁵³ Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 77.

¹⁵⁴ Fridh, *ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ Shuker, p. 136.

¹⁵⁶ Fabbri, *ibid.*, p. 60.

themselves. Keith Negus discusses how ‘ongoing dynamic genre practices continually confront their translation into codified rules’.¹⁵⁷

Interestingly, Shuker comments how ‘the arrangement in retail outlets also suggests that there are clearly identifiable genres of popular music, which are understood as such by consumers’.¹⁵⁸ Whilst I would agree that high-level genre terminology such as ‘Rock and Pop’ or ‘Jazz’ may provide a very basic guide to a customer, it would be difficult to establish that the myriad of more detailed genre labels that are part of the lexicography of popular music are ‘clearly identifiable’ or widely ‘understood’. Indeed, Frith’s observations as to how it would be useful if all stakeholders could solidify an agreed definition of a genre produce a much more satisfactory argument about the fluidity at play, ironically using a similar example to Shuker, but here identifying the complexities present when record shopping:

[Retailers] don’t always organize their stock in the same way as record companies organize their releases [...] Sounds seem to fit into several categories at once [and] different shops therefore shelve the same record under different labels.¹⁵⁹

The world of heavy metal is no exception to this dialogue. Indeed Allan Moore questions ‘to what extent do the subtle differences between different brands of “metal” (about which fanatics make great play) equate to differences of musical style’, and wonders if sometimes it is more about the ‘significance for the styles’ of their respective audiences?¹⁶⁰ David Brackett identifies the role that the listener plays in genre construction, going so far as to state that there is the need for ‘listener competence’,¹⁶¹ whilst Frith had previously suggested that ‘different people use different music to experience (or fantasize) different sorts of community’.¹⁶² Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy comment as to how fans have ‘ongoing contestation [...] as to what constitutes [heavy metal] and which acts should be included under its banner’.¹⁶³

Fabian Holt attempts to distinguish the path that a genre takes from initial development to a discernible construct of features and characteristics. In order for this

¹⁵⁷ Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 30.

¹⁵⁸ Roy Shuker, *Key Concepts in Popular Music* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 145.

¹⁵⁹ Frith, 1996, p. 77.

¹⁶⁰ Moore, p. 151.

¹⁶¹ Brackett, p. 26.

¹⁶² Frith, 1988, p. 121.

¹⁶³ Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy, *Popular Music Genres* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 138.

to happen, he identifies two key stages or processes. '[Genres are] founded (and codified) in what I call "center collectivities", [and then] changed through *further negotiations*'.¹⁶⁴ Holt acknowledges that it is often very difficult to categorically detect the exact moment of the beginning of genres, 'because they have emerged out of various existing musical formations'.¹⁶⁵ What Holt calls 'early negotiations' then result 'in a set of shared ideas about the music and its values and origins, and in the hegemony of a single term'.¹⁶⁶ What all of these discussions of genre demonstrate is that the specific discernible qualities of a particular genre can be seen to be transient in both time and nature, and so can be on occasion almost impossible to identify categorically; whilst Richard Middleton states that genres define 'what can and cannot be said, and in what ways',¹⁶⁷ Kahn-Harris argues that 'genres are not and cannot be static'.¹⁶⁸

2.2: Metal to Extreme Metal

During Deena Weinstein's 2013 exploration of the origins of the heavy metal genre, she comments on the significance of a genre's name:

Under another name, would it have been the same music, let alone the same fan base, that gathered under the name "heavy metal"? A genre's name denotes the genre itself, and serves as a shorthand for the genre's rules. But it does more than that; it calls attention to how to hear the genre, what feeling is appropriate to hearing it. That is, the genre's name connotes a sensibility. What if punk had been called teen rock or trash rock, or if grunge was called Seattle rock or complainer rock? Not only is a genre by any other name another genre, but even when it corrals the very same music, that music is appreciated with a different sensibility.¹⁶⁹

As has been established, like many other genres, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of heavy metal. Lilja attempts to distinguish the early developments of the term itself:

In its early phase heavy metal was not identified as a genre, but rather the terms "heavy" and "metal" seem to be attempts to describe the new emerging style in the late 1960s [...] The term first appeared in the rock press as an adjective, and only in the early 1970s as a noun, by which time [...] it had become a distinctive musical genre.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 20.

¹⁶⁵ Holt, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Richard Middleton, 'Modes of Representation', in Middleton, ed., 2000, p. 232.

¹⁶⁸ Kahn-Harris, p. 12.

¹⁶⁹ Deena Weinstein, 'Just So Stories: How Heavy Metal Got Its Name — A Cautionary Tale', *Rock Music Studies*, 1.1 (2013), pp. 48-9.

¹⁷⁰ Lilja, p. 21.

When discussing the historical development of heavy metal, Joshua Green asserts how it has long since splintered into a ‘startling array of sub-genres’.¹⁷¹ Borthwick and Moy agree, suggesting that ‘One of the reasons for metal’s longevity [...] has lain its ability to mutate and develop subgenres’,¹⁷² and present their overview of heavy metal by referring to ‘a small number of tracks exhibiting considerable diversity in historical, musical and cultural terms’.¹⁷³ Borthwick and Moy then attempt to codify what they term ‘European metal’ by looking at the German band Rammstein. They correctly identify how a number of features of Rammstein’s work suggest ‘linguistically, historically and culturally the connotations that the German tongue and identity imbues’.¹⁷⁴ However, their assertion that the ‘vocals often resemble military orders [which] places the sound within the European [territory]’,¹⁷⁵ is unsatisfactory, and does not produce a convincing argument that the label ‘European metal’ has been conclusively demarcated.

Since the 1980s and as heavy metal’s soundscape has become steadily more extreme, terms such as speed metal, death metal, black metal, thrash metal and grindcore have become established within the lexicon of the metal industry the world over. We now see labels such as these each hide within them a further plethora of sub-sub-genre titles; the definitions of these differ incessantly according to the individual. ‘Extreme metal’ has become a commonly accepted umbrella term that encompasses many of the artists relevant to this study.¹⁷⁶ As Allett observes, ‘Extreme metal presents the listener with an extremity of sound and content [...] When they emerged, the extreme metal genres functioned outside the corporate structures of the music industry’.¹⁷⁷

As the musical soundscape has developed and splintered, so too has the number of writers that have chosen these extreme artistic creations to be the subject of their studies (see Chapter 1 for a review of this literature). During the embryonic and adolescent stages of heavy metal’s formation, few gave the genre credence as a subject for academic study. Perhaps the public positioning of some of heavy metal’s earliest

¹⁷¹ Joshua John Green, *Music Making in the Faroes* (Vestmanna: Sprotin, 2013), p. 126.

¹⁷² Borthwick and Moy, p. 145.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 146.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 148.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ E.g. Kahn-Harris’s book of the same name.

¹⁷⁷ Nicola Allett, ‘The extreme metal “connoisseur”’, in Hjelm and others, eds, p. 167.

icons did not assist in suggesting that the music was worthy of a more sincere reception, such as Alice Cooper declaring that his band ‘were more interested in comic books and drinking beer than spiritual pursuits’.¹⁷⁸ Whilst Borthwick and Moy note that ‘It would be wrong to entirely identify metal and its followers as merely escapist and hedonistic’, they suggest that when metal musicians do choose to deal with serious issues, be they cultural or political, it is ‘often in a fatalistic and pessimistic manner’.¹⁷⁹ It was not until writers such as Deena Weinstein and Robert Walser published their observations of the culture and fandom of heavy metal that the genre began to demonstrate any signs of being taken more seriously.¹⁸⁰ However, as Lilja identifies, ‘While heavy metal has been under little academic scrutiny, even less work has been done from the point of view of music theory and analysis’.¹⁸¹

Weinstein, a Professor of Sociology, has continued to play a particularly prominent role in heavy metal academia, but even so, in terms of the more extreme sub-genres that began to develop in the early 1980s, there was not really another serious academic study to add to the field until the advent of Keith Kahn-Harris’ *Extreme Metal* in 2006. This is not to dismiss entirely the work of Moynihan and Söderlind on black metal in 1998. However, whilst there can be no disregarding the impact of *Lords of Chaos* in terms of the worldwide exposure it brought the music and its surrounding culture, as suggested in Chapter 1 there was no little element of sensationalism contained within; this did little to quell the increasing moral panic in mainstream culture, or to present a well-reasoned academic analysis.¹⁸² Furthermore, many of the musicians referenced in *Lords of Chaos* have since criticised the book for its factual inaccuracies, and the authors’ use of black metal as a commercial opportunity to further their own careers; Burzum musician Varg Vikernes suggests:

The vast majority of all the statements made in this book are either misinterpretations; taken out of context; misunderstandings; malicious lies made by enemies; a result of ignorance; extreme exaggerations; and/or third-hand information at best. [...] [The

¹⁷⁸ Borthwick and Moy, p. 145.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p146.

¹⁸⁰ Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1991), Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

¹⁸¹ Lilja, p. 10.

¹⁸² Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 1998).

authors] want to sell books and most likely they have their own political or religious agenda.¹⁸³

Since the mid 2000s, the study of the extreme areas of the heavy metal musical landscape has expanded considerably but before we can begin to analyse the bands most relevant to this study, first we must establish how some of the main sub-genres have differed in terms of their key musical characteristics. It will become clear, however, that even completing this task only sets the scene for the plethora of splinter movements that have developed, and that I do not intend the styles mentioned to be exhaustive or comprehensive.

In order to demonstrate the complexities contained within, let us take the examples of two of the most fundamentally distinct strains, death metal and black metal. Whilst the musical features the labels infer have continued to evolve since their embryonic stages, the first uses of the terms themselves are commonly agreed. Jeff Becerra of American band Possessed is ‘widely credited with actually coining the term death metal, writing *Seven Churches*’ closing song, simply titled “Death Metal” in 1985.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, Venom from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England had both an album and song entitled ‘Black Metal’ in 1982,¹⁸⁵ and so ‘Venom’s influence on black metal is especially clear [...] although the playfulness of Venom’s ‘Satanism’ was largely lost in the work of black metal bands whose music it influenced’.¹⁸⁶ To an experienced member of the heavy metal community, death metal has become no longer sufficient as a standalone descriptor; does this mean death metal of the Stockholm Sound, the Gothenburg Sound and subsequent melodic death metal movement, the tech-death style which owes much to the Tampa Bay, Florida and San Francisco Bay Area scenes of the 1980s, the slam or brutal death movement, death-doom, blackened-death metal, or deathcore? Similarly, black metal has become a vague genre name that often requires further explanation as to which of a range of musical splinter movements is being referred to, such as first or second wave black metal, Norwegian black metal, National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM), symphonic black metal, Cascadian black metal, funeral black metal, post black metal and so on. As Michelle Phillipov suggests:

¹⁸³ Varg Vikernes, ‘A Review of M. Moynihan & D. Söderlind’s “Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of The Satanic Metal Underground”’, June 2004, http://www.burzum.org/eng/library/lords_of_chaos_review.shtml [Accessed 13 May 2016].

¹⁸⁴ Albert Mudrian, *Choosing Death: The Improbable History of Death Metal and Grindcore* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2004), p. 70

¹⁸⁵ Venom, *Black Metal* (Neat Records, 1982).

¹⁸⁶ Michelle Phillipov, ‘Extreme Music for Extreme People? Norwegian black metal and transcendent violence’, in Hjelm and others, eds, p. 154.

Contemporary black metal now encompasses a diverse range of styles, ranging from commercially popular symphonic black metal to drone and noise, but it is the genre's incarnation in the early 1990s that is still the most well known.¹⁸⁷

Whatever is being conveyed by the speaker the genre names accepted within the language of the field here have, in the vast majority of cases, come to represent a particular group of musical characteristics or features, at least to those members of the community experienced enough to be able to distinguish the differentiations, although in some areas of black metal, discussions of the meaning of the term has connotations of certain attitudes and belief systems (such as misanthropy or Satanism), rather than the musical features alone.

When focusing on the music, the primary distinguishing features of many of the sub-genres of metal tend to focus on matters of vocal style, guitar tone, riff or chord construction, drum patterns, tempi, or styles of overall production. Many of the core strains of black metal rely on guitar tones that are often not only heavily distorted, but are commonly particularly harsh in terms of extreme amounts of treble. The playing style often involves guitar melodies that use tremolo picking – an extremely quick alternate picking style of playing lead guitar. These melodies are regularly based on minor arpeggios, mirroring the sub-genre's tendency towards minor-based harmony. Vocal styles are predominantly screamed at a higher pitch than other extreme metal vocal styles, whilst drum patterns often involve what has become known as the 'blast beat' – an extremely fast alternating of bass and snare drums with various cymbals also keeping time, often at speeds of 180-220 beats per minute and more. As Ross Hagen notes, 'The harmonic changes in black metal also generally move at a slower pace than in death metal, so speed alone does not obscure perceptions of tonality'.¹⁸⁸

Sharing some musical features with black metal such as the use of the blast beat, the main differences with forms of death metal are a more riff-based, commonly atonal or chromatic-based style of guitar playing, and a lyrical fascination with horror, gore and the occult. The production values of death metal often focus on a thicker, fuller tone, particularly with regard to the type of guitar distortion used. The guitars are also tuned down from standard tuning more frequently by death metal artists than their black metal counterparts. Death metal also has a 'tendency towards completely inharmonic,

¹⁸⁷ Phillipov, *ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁸⁸ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 185.

unpitched (growled) vocals',¹⁸⁹ that are much lower than black metal, and are almost guttural in performance style. Indeed, the characteristics of the vocals has taken on fundamental importance when categorizing music as death metal:

In society at large, Death Metal is probably best known for its vocals. Those who are outside of the scene typically classify it according to the vocals, ignoring the definite trends in the instrumental music itself. (Such classification might irk some metal fans, who are insulted whenever pop music with growling vocals is labeled Death Metal).¹⁹⁰

As mentioned previously, whilst these two fundamental sub-genres have both splintered significantly and have also seen frequent overlaps, for the majority of seasoned heavy metal listeners or active participants the core musical features defined above are usually identifiable as a particular band's starting point without any significant difficulty. However, there have been other attempts to classify groups of extreme metal bands relevant here using terminology that can, upon examination, seem at best vague or even inaccurate; these often focus on lyrical content alone, rather than musical soundscape.

2.3: Vikings, Warriors or Pagans?

One of the terms most frequently utilised to label bands relevant to this study, is Viking metal, and a range of bands with very different sounds have found themselves categorised in this way. This can be clearly demonstrated by the Viking metal bands Wikipedia page, which whilst being far from an ideal source of academic research material, is able to show how significant this term has become when describing a vast range of bands.¹⁹¹ For example, the Swedish band Amon Amarth (a band that exhibits many of the musical hallmarks of a Gothenburg-style melodic death metal band), are listed alongside Enslaved from Norway, whose sound has been increasingly influenced by the progressive rock sounds of the 1970s as their career has developed, but who began very much as a black metal band in the early 1990s. The list also includes other musically diverse bands such as Týr from the Faroe Islands (a band that combines elements of traditional heavy metal, progressive rock and folk music with no extreme metal vocal styles of any kind), Heavy Load (formed in Sweden in 1979 portraying

¹⁸⁹ Green, p. 126.

¹⁹⁰ Natalie J. Purcell, *Death Metal Music: The Passion and Politics of a Subculture* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), p. 9

¹⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Viking_metal_bands [Accessed 15 February 2013].

clear influences from acts such as Judas Priest and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal pervasive at the time), and Leaves' Eyes with members from both Germany and Norway, fronted by Liv Kristine, a soprano singer with an operatic vocal style. Even the *Orange County Weekly* published its '10 Best Viking Metal Bands' in 2014 and listed a similar range of artists, including everything as musically diverse as Swedish death metal band Unleashed, and the American self-proclaimed 'Kings of Metal' Manowar.¹⁹²

There seems to be little attempt in the formulation of lists such as these (and there are plenty of other examples, especially online) to do anything other than try to present these bands as a cohesive whole, as Viking metal. However, as can be easily demonstrated, the common thread between many of the bands is often solely a lyrical connection, with subjects of Norse mythology, pagan religion, Viking history, and themes such as battle and honour, set to a range of musical approaches. There is no intention on my part to diminish the importance of lyrical content in genre construction; clearly the lyrics, and their method of performance, is significant. Indeed, Lars Eckstein establishes how song lyrics 'rely on the embodiment of language in specific situations of performance, and their meaning is affected by generic conventions'.¹⁹³ It is these 'specific situations of performance' to which Eckstein refers, such as how the lyrics are positioned in the context in the context of the backing of a given musical landscape, that should be given equal significance. In the case of Viking metal, we are often seeing a musical genre constructed purely on the basis of lyrical content, yet it would be difficult to imagine a similarly artificial construction on the basis of themes of falling in love, unrequited emotions, political beliefs, or any other of popular music's frequently visited topics.

Curiously, although not uniquely, genre (or indeed sub-genre) titles that refer to geographical areas or populations (be they recent names or historical) have become commonplace in the world of heavy metal. At one time or another over the last 30 years, metal fans have become accustomed to terms including the Bay Area or German thrash scenes, Norwegian black metal, and the death metal movements of the

¹⁹² <http://www.ocweekly.com/music/the-10-best-viking-metal-bands-6585877> [Accessed 20 January 2016].

¹⁹³ Eckstein, p. 67.

Gothenburg and Stockholm ‘sounds’.¹⁹⁴ As previously mentioned, one of the crucial difficulties in this instance, is that unlike the other examples given, here is an attempt to create a genre based on lyrical content and not on musical identifiers. Furthermore, the term ‘Viking’ refers to a population and not a place, and in this instance we have a people whose historical reputation is fundamentally based on their travels and conquests. Therefore, this not only fails to reveal the vast range of musical variety present, but in turn can potentially lead to confusion for both those who wish to consume or interact with the materials being created, and to inaccurate labelling from an industry keen to present a cohesive whole in order to facilitate easier promotion and marketing, to echo both Frith and Strinati’s earlier arguments.

The German writer Imke von Helden believes that Viking metal is ‘defined by topics rather than music’.¹⁹⁵ In addition, there is the added complication that the term Viking metal is sometimes being applied to people for whom (away from the world of popular music) the label ‘Viking’ would not normally apply, such as those from Finland (e.g. Turisas or Korpiklaani) or Germany (e.g. Falkenbach). Finland did not become an independent nation until 1917. This was preceded by a little more than a century of Russian reign, and prior to that centuries of Swedish domination since the Middle Ages. It is not always easy to be certain about the origins of travellers who came east through this area and down to the Baltic, and the name used to refer to them. However, it is common consensus that the Varangian emanated from Sweden, and that this was a term used ‘only of the Swedes in Russia, never of the Swedes in Sweden’.¹⁹⁶ Whilst writers such as Derry often refer to modern-day Finland as being part of Scandinavia (as Chapter 1 noted, there is debate over this), it is less precise to refer to Finnish musicians as Vikings.¹⁹⁷

However, is it too prescriptive to suggest that we should only allow bands or artists with Viking heritage to use the term Viking metal to describe their music? If the sarcastic tone of a small article in the extreme metal magazine *Terrorizer* in April 2010

¹⁹⁴ For further information on examples, see work such as Daniel Ekeröth, *Swedish Death Metal* (Johannesov: Tamara Press, 2006), and Harald Oimoen and Brian Lew, *Murder In The Front Row: Shots From the Bay Area Thrash Metal Epicenter* (Brooklyn: Bazillion Points, 2011).

¹⁹⁵ Imke von Helden, ‘Scandinavian Metal Attack: The Power of Northern Europe in Extreme Metal’, in *Heavy Fundamentalisms: Music, Metal and Politics*, ed. by Rosemary Hill and Karl Spracklen (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010), p. 34.

¹⁹⁶ Jones, p. 247.

¹⁹⁷ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979).

is anything to go by, it seems so. A thinly-disguised April Fool's piece told the story of how an alleged Swedish pressure group called Inte Överbevisning had 'proposed radical limits on the use of the phrase "Viking metal"', and that music should be protected as "cultural produce" in the same way they protect food such as ... Mowbray Pork Pies.' According to the piece, under the headline 'From Bard to Norse: Viking Metal to be Protected?', there was outcry from bands who would have to reclassify themselves as '8th-12th Century historical re-enactment metal', and who were quoted as saying that 'Anyone who places this much importance in a genre definition deserves to be trampled to death under the eight mighty hooves of Sleipnir'.¹⁹⁸

Alternative terms to Viking metal have been added to the lexicography of metal fans and the industry alike, apparently used interchangeably. Battle metal has become one of the most common of these alternatives, and it was around 2004 that the term started to be used more regularly. Finnish band Turisas adopted the phrase as the title of their debut album, released in July 2004.¹⁹⁹ Containing a track of the same name, and musically combining elements of black metal along with power metal and folk influenced melodies, the lyrical content portrayed a clear influence of their native mythologies:

The heart of Turisas was forged by four winds
 In a smithy high up in the skies
 On an anvil of honour, with a hammer of blood
 The Four Winds pounded.
 Battle Metal!
 As the battle rages the dearest to you, you hold in your hand –
 And stick in their lungs!²⁰⁰

Within months, the term had been adopted by international metal magazine *Metal Hammer* for a cover-mounted compilation CD, also entitled *Battle Metal*, on the February 2005 issue.²⁰¹ This again contained such musically wide-ranging artists as power metal acts Rhapsody, Angra and Sonata Arctica, and those who, like Turisas, had more of a black metal and folk influence, such as Ensiferum and Finntroll. More striking was the inclusion of two tracks from heavy metal originators Judas Priest, that were obviously included for their battle-based lyrical themes rather than any more substantial musical connection ('Battle Hymn' and 'All Guns Blazing'), although there

¹⁹⁸ 'From Bard to Norse: Viking Metal to Be Protected?', in *Terrorizer Magazine* Issue 195, April 2010, ed. by Louise Brown (London: Dark Arts, 2010), p. 8.

¹⁹⁹ Turisas, *Battle Metal* (Century Media, 2004).

²⁰⁰ Turisas, 'Battle Metal', *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Metal Hammer*, Issue 135 (Future Publishing, February 2005).

is an undeniable connection from the beginnings of the heavy metal canon and other acts included such as Dream Evil and 3 Inches of Blood. *Metal Hammer* has continued to produce the *Battle Metal* compilation CDs to accompany its magazine, although in recent years the frequency has diminished; eight appeared between February 2005 and July 2009, with no further examples until June 2015. Each CD collected a similar variety of artists under the battle metal banner. Whilst the style of presentation has varied from time to time, most commonly the artwork has contained imagery of warriors in battle in some way, and included phrases such as that on *Battle Metal VI*, ‘15 axe-wielding tracks!’.²⁰²

The confused position of those trying to describe or present the concept of battle metal as a musical genre is no better demonstrated than on the well-known online dictionary of slang words *Urban Dictionary*. A posting by user named poindexter pencilpecker from 2008 clearly reveals the conflicting understandings in use:

By one definition, battle metal is a fusion of melodic death metal and power metal [...] By the other definition, battle metal is a sub-genre of black metal, closely related to epic metal and drawing on themes of medieval or fantasy battle and fighting [...] Bolt Thrower is considered to be a pioneer in this genre [...] Most bands who play battle metal also contribute to other sub-genres of black metal: for instance, Bathory are prominent in the Viking metal sub-genre, and Waylander are pioneers of three sub-genres of black metal: battle metal, folk metal and Celtic metal [...] The band Turisas is considered to be the band who gave the genre its name by mixing all the previously mentioned styles and much more [into Battle Metal] even though Bolt Thrower has been together and performing since the mid-1980s.²⁰³

This ‘explanation’ certainly provides more confusion than answers and leaves the impression that it is an attempt to demarcate boundaries where no precise ones exist; even an experienced extreme metal listener would find difficulty in trying to convince contemporaries that Turisas and Bolt Thrower belong to the same musical genre. In comparison to Viking metal, this presents an even less successful alternative. Whilst a recurring theme of much of the northern mythologies is the idea of the battle (and on a wider spectrum ‘metal’s preoccupation with history has mostly been with its more violent aspects’)²⁰⁴ it would be remiss to suggest that such a description could be accurately all-encompassing, as this would mean that the multitude of examples of tales of magic, journey and the creation of the universe amongst others that also feature were

²⁰² *Metal Hammer*, Issue 175 (Future Publishing, February 2008).

²⁰³ ‘Battle Metal’, *Urban Dictionary*, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Battle+Metal> [Accessed 20 January 2016].

²⁰⁴ <http://www.ztmag.com/blog/extra-features/zt-interrogation-review-winterfylleths-new-album-is-put-under-the-spotlight/> [Accessed 13 January 2016].

ignored. It would be even more prescriptive to name a genre based on a narrative event. Its use in this context seems, in the main, to be down to the images that can be created in the listener's mind by the repeated use of some driving rhythmic devices that have been prevalent in the canon of heavy metal bands the world over since the days of Iron Maiden's arrival on the musical scene with their debut album in 1980.

The term Pagan metal, another alternative, in many ways presents similar problems. This is little more successful or appropriate as a recognisable label, as away from the world of heavy metal, the term 'pagan' can mean a huge variety of things to different people, and tends to be utilised as an umbrella-term for numerous religious or spiritual lifestyles or beliefs. Whilst there are examples of bands that have concord in this aspect of their work and personal lives, it becomes less of a reliable identifier for a musical genre given that it has been applied to bands as musically diverse such as the Finnish band Amorphis, Sweden's Bathory, and Forefather from England, none of whom have referenced a pagan belief system. This is unsurprising, as Holt reminds us that 'Definitions and categories serve practical purposes and tell us something about how people understand music. But we should be suspicious because they create boundaries, because they have a static nature'.²⁰⁵ It is self-evident that a term such as Pagan metal is, like Viking metal and battle metal before it, designed to be constructed on a lyrical basis rather than a musical one, and Weinstein acknowledges it as such, whilst attempting to make sure that the variety contained within does not detract from the links she wishes to establish:

[Pagan metal] is not characterized by a cohesive musical style. Sonically, Pagan metal draws from a wide variety of metal styles, typically incorporating additional features of pre-modern instrumentation, rhythms and melodies. Textual elements, from the specific Pagan references in lyrics to the language in which they are expressed, also diverge widely. What Pagan metal bands mean by the term "Pagan" varies wildly.²⁰⁶

Weinstein goes on to present an incisive analysis of some of the basic threads that run throughout a number of bands relevant to this study, correctly identifying many recurrent characteristics; indeed, she is one of the few authors to highlight the significant musical variety present. However, her attempts to categorise the bands she discusses as belonging to a coherent whole of Pagan metal fails to take account of the range of lyrical content and presentation style. Amon Amarth, for example, apart from

²⁰⁵ Holt, p. 8.

²⁰⁶ Deena Weinstein, 'Pagan Metal' in *Pop Pagans, Paganism and Popular Music*, ed. by Donna Weston and Andy Bennett (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 81.

the musical differences they have with the majority of bands that Weinstein discusses, do not present themselves as having any kind of pagan intent. At the root of the issue in this aspect of Weinstein's analysis, is that her starting point is a dataset taken from the online *Encyclopedia Metallum* and the 1538 bands (at the time of her writing) categorized there as Pagan metal.²⁰⁷ Whilst this website is a hugely useful source of discographical information, the plethora of permutations and extensions of sub-genre terminology presented there makes drawing tangible conclusions difficult at best. As Weinstein remarks:

Given the diversity of extreme metal sub-genres in the bands initiating Pagan metal, plus the practice of metal bands since the turn of the current century creating their signature sound as an admixture of two sub-genres, it is not surprising that the metal of Pagan metal bands is varied.²⁰⁸

Returning to the problematic association of Finnish bands with Viking metal, in 2004, Matti Riekkki suggested an alternative genre marker — Kalevala metal, proposing a genre identity based entirely upon a literary source. Here he states that 'welding the Kalevala to heavy metal was the Finnish response to "Viking metal", the Scandinavian concept that seeks inspiration in paganism and the ancient Nordic warrior tradition'.²⁰⁹ By describing this as a 'response', not only does Riekkki suggest a sense of timeline to proceedings, but he also insinuates that there are distinctions to be drawn between the output of active scene participants from different regions or nations. An urge to group unrelated elements together as part of a 'scene' can be appealing to journalists and record labels alike as it can make artists and their commercial output easier to label and market. Indeed, facets of the concept of 'scene', 'tribe' or 'community' have been the focus of a considerable volume of academic writing on heavy metal by authors such as Keith Kahn-Harris and Robert Walser.²¹⁰

What is significant about all of the alternative terms in this field is that they do not represent, whether in the terms themselves or in their usage, a specific set of musical identifiers or signifiers, unlike many other fields of popular music. In *Interpreting Popular Music*, David Brackett referred to how pieces of music 'are "understood" by

²⁰⁷ Weinstein, 'Pagan Metal', 2013, p. 86.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

²⁰⁹ Riekkki, *ibid.*, p. 139.

²¹⁰ See works such as Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), and Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

their references to genre [which occur] through activating codes in certain ways'.²¹¹

What is interesting to the musicologist is that here is a genre name that has been created and used more on the basis of the band in question's lyrical content or style of presentation in their artwork, image or costume, rather than their music.

The difficulty in trying to assimilate such a huge variety of musical and lyrical content under one satisfactory umbrella term, and the interchangeable way that all of the attempts thus far have become part of metal lexicography without any academic challenge, means that there is a need for an acknowledgment that the range of work being created is too vast to satisfactorily fall into any of the genre titles that are currently in use. It would be inaccurate to suggest that there are not any recurring musical identifiers and lyrical styles, as well as visual presentation features, and these will be examined in the subsequent chapters; however, in order to reach any conclusions about the material being discussed, it is first worth looking at the origins of this movement.

2.4: The Origins of Northern European National Identity in Metal

Whilst Dayal Patterson attaches an importance to Swedish band Bathory's fifth album *Hammerheart*, where band mainman Quorthon 'created the blueprint for what became the Viking metal genre',²¹² like many others he pinpoints the beginnings of the sub-genre one album earlier. An interest in mythology from heavy metal bands, most commonly Norse, (and the birth of the term Viking metal) is traced by the majority of writers to the release of Bathory's fourth album *Blood Fire Death* in 1988. Keith Kahn-Harris calls it a 'pioneering album',²¹³ Nick Richardson cites it as 'the beginning of their Viking period',²¹⁴ and whilst describing the impact of the album, Patterson calls Bathory 'the very godfathers of Viking metal':

Though heavy metal bands had hinted at pre-monotheistic themes of paganism and witchcraft before, this was the first point at which historical and folk influences really began to filter into extreme metal consciousness. [... *Blood Fire Death*] marks the introduction of localized folklore (in this case Northern European mythology) into a

²¹¹ Brackett, p. 26.

²¹² Patterson, p. 35.

²¹³ Kahn-Harris, p. 105.

²¹⁴ Nick Richardson, 'Looking Black', in Howells, ed., p. 156.

culture which until then had largely been preoccupied with inversions of Christian mythology.²¹⁵

Patterson does not make it clear what form the ‘historical and folk’ influences he is referring to, took, although it seems that in a similar manner to many, his primary focus is lyrical content. His use of the term ‘localized folklore’ is interesting, though, as it references the importance to the genre of the folkloric or pre-monotheistic themes being local to the artists using the material. Weinstein calls this ‘a deconstruction of globalized metal, which traditionally was transnational [...] bands in various areas began to localize their work’.²¹⁶ As will become clearer (discussed further in Chapter 3), this has not stopped the record-buying public or the music industry increasingly receiving it as the representation of a transnational identity, without recognising or feeling the need to recognise specifically local identifiers.

Without diminishing the importance of *Blood Fire Death*, it is too simplistic to isolate this one release as the first collision of the seemingly disparate cultures of mythology and heavy metal, as there are multiple prior examples. Manowar included the clearly Norse-influenced song ‘Gates of Valhalla’ on their 1983 album *Into Glory Ride*,²¹⁷ and the Swedish band Heavy Load had references to Thor in their lyrics in 1978 (‘Thor is riding the sky again [...] when we hear the heathen cry we draw our swords and the Christians will die’).²¹⁸ However, some would argue that this trend can be found even earlier in Led Zeppelin’s 1970 single ‘Immigrant Song’, with its references to Viking conquests, as well as to Valhalla itself.

We come from the land of ice and snow
 From the midnight sun where the hot springs flow
 The hammer of the gods will drive our ships to new lands,
 To fight the horde, singing and crying: Valhalla, I am coming!²¹⁹

Despite the significance of *Blood Fire Death* that many attach to the birth of what has become known as Viking metal, other than the title of the opening instrumental track, ‘Oden’s Ride Over Nordland’, and the striking front cover with its depiction of the valkyries of Asgard collecting those chosen warriors who have fallen in battle and taking them to Valhalla, there is little in the way of explicit reference to Norse mythology. Even Patterson acknowledges that ‘the compositions themselves owe more

²¹⁵ Patterson, pp. 389-390.

²¹⁶ Weinstein, ‘Pagan Metal’, 2013, p. 88.

²¹⁷ Manowar, ‘Gates of Valhalla’, *Into Glory Ride* (Megaforce Records, 1983).

²¹⁸ Heavy Load, ‘Son of the Northern Light’, *Full Speed at High Level* (Heavy Sound, 1978).

²¹⁹ Led Zeppelin, ‘Immigrant Song’, *Led Zeppelin III* (Atlantic, 1970).

to Wagnerian classical influences than actual folk music' which simply by his seemingly interchangeable use of the terms 'folk' and 'Viking' only further demonstrates the difficulty of quantifying the defining characteristics of the relevant musical output.²²⁰ Mulvany inadvertently highlights the kind of ambiguity present by initially commenting that 'Bathory was recording and releasing Viking metal by 1990',²²¹ then stating soon after that Norway's Enslaved are 'probably the first truly "Viking" metal band'.²²²

If we are to accept the existence of a musical genre that can be demarcated and identified, what are those defining characteristics and how can such a range of musically different sounds be explained as being part of the same collective? Is the extensive use of the terms Viking, battle and pagan, alongside other alternatives, clouding discussion and analysis of the field in a similar fashion to Borthwick and Moy's use of 'European metal' discussed previously? After all, we have seen a movement far more widespread than just musicians with Viking heritage and personal connection: the historical and mythological subject matter that they are tackling is not restricted to Nordic mythologies, battles or paganism, and, as has been demonstrated, it clearly is not possible to categorise the music itself in any of these ways. The bands from across Europe relevant to this study require a far more in-depth examination of their work, and where differences of style and content appear, they should be recognised and acknowledged rather than attempting to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Identifying commonly recurring characteristics and features is naturally an essential part of genre classification and I will focus on the visual, textual and musical in the following chapters, but ignoring significant amounts of variation within does the material a disservice.

²²⁰ Patterson, p. 390.

²²¹ Mulvany, *ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.* p. 34.

Chapter 3: Artwork and Fashion

3.1: Introduction

As has already been established, the terms Viking, battle and pagan metal, and the wider world of metal bands portraying national identity have been presented as a cohesive whole, yet hide a spectrum of differences from musical to ideological. This movement has gathered pace as a popular musical illustration of the erosion of regional diversity in aid of an identity construction that can both successfully resonate with the instinctive pull of a native's heritage and culture, as well as act as an enticing, romantic, 'other' to the outsider. Recording musicians present the listener or (to use a term from semiotics) the receiver, not just with the opportunity to deduce meaning from the lyrics of a song, but in addition meaning can be sent and received visually through the accompanying artwork, as well as promotional photographs and videos.

Semiotics is the study of signs and the meanings that they convey, and was referred to significantly for the first time by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure (1857-1913) when he suggested that there was a need for a science to study the signs in society, in his posthumous 1916 book *Course in General Linguistics*. Other key figures in the field include the Americans Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and Charles William Morris (1901-1979). It was not, however, until the late 1950s and the writings of the French structuralist Roland Barthes such as *Mythologies*,²²³ that semiotics began to gain in popularity and extend its area of focus, primarily from areas related to linguistics to 'become associated largely with the increasingly serious study of various forms of popular culture'.²²⁴ Since then, terms such as 'sender/receiver' or 'encoder/decoder' have become more commonplace when discussing the meaning or the message of a sign, or in the case of this particular study, the recordings and accompanying packaging of contemporary metal musicians.

Inherent in the terms 'encoder/decoder', as explained by John Fiske, is the suggestion that a message or meaning has 'an abstract existence to which encoding gives a concrete form [...] Decoding can then restore it to its original abstract content of

²²³ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973).

²²⁴ John Hartley in Tim O'Sullivan, and others, *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 281.

meaning'.²²⁵ Furthermore, and crucial to the work of the artists relevant to this study, the cultural experiences of the decoder play a significant role in the meaning decoded. As a musical movement that has an intrinsic national(ist) element, and is both produced and received across the world, cultural experiences and identities cannot fail to affect both the intention of the encoder and the conclusions drawn by the decoder. As Fiske suggests, 'The reader is as creative as the author, and both bring to the text their cultural experience via the codes that they use'.²²⁶ By emphasising the importance of the role of the reader or listener, Fiske is in debt to the writings of both Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault.²²⁷ In fact, it is also pertinent here to remember the work of Allan Moore, who asked 'Can we believe the self-expression of a musician, or is that expression something that listeners actually construct on the basis of their own experience?'²²⁸ What range of conclusions, for example, could be drawn from the potentially (perhaps deliberately) confusing use of the Anglo-Saxon Sutton Hoo helmet on the cover of the 1994 album *Vikingr Veldi* by the Norwegian band Enslaved,²²⁹ a title that loosely translates as *World of the Vikings*? By presenting a unified concept of Viking metal, the metal community has formed and accepted a manifestation and application of the kind of transnational theory espoused by writers such as Ulf Hannerz, as discussed later.

Our understanding of the meaning of any form of text is, to use the language of Sean Hall, 'framed by [...] a paradigm', which he defines as 'a way of seeing the world through a highly structured framework of concepts, procedures and results'.²³⁰ As our framework will itself have been structured by the culture in which it was created (and will often be 'other' in relation to the culture the band is writing about), it is possible that both the author and reader may be susceptible to what Hall calls a 'paradigm shift', when learning to interpret a text through 'a new set of concepts, results and procedure',²³¹ that of a culture that is not their own.

²²⁵ John Fiske, in O'Sullivan, and others, p. 283.

²²⁶ Ibid. p. 284.

²²⁷ Roland Barthes writes how the author is 'conceived as the past of his own book'. 'The Death of The Author', in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 145. Similarly, Foucault discusses the relationship between the author and their text, and how the author is a 'figure who is outside and precedes it'. 'What Is An Author?', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 101-120.

²²⁸ Allan Moore, *Critical Essays in Popular Musicology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p. xiv.

²²⁹ http://userserve-ak.last.fm/serve/_/84228169/Vikingligr+Veldi+cover.jpg [Accessed 26 March 2013].

²³⁰ Sean Hall, *This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2012), p. 168.

²³¹ Ibid.

By using images of landscapes (actual or imaginary) or symbols sometimes synonymous with particular nations but more commonly an ambiguous reference to an unspecific and often a partly imagined Nordic region, Viking metal bands (and others who are part of a wider trend of national identity in metal) are presenting a visual representation of place,²³² the intentions behind which can vary and are for the reader to decode. It is possible that the band may only be providing a simplistic context for the music in terms of where it was created, or where the musicians originate from (for example *Vinter ved Sognefjorden* (1827) by the Norwegian Johan Christian Dahl, used by Windir from Sogndal, Norway on their 2001 album *1184*), although there may be an underlying political, religious or nationalist message. Whether the meaning is held in the surface or deep structure,²³³ there is a rich opportunity for interpretation and discussion. Indeed, specifically in relation to musical and lyrical analysis, Robert Walser states:

A variety of interpretations of musical texts is always possible [...] signs are always susceptible to various interpretations because meaning can never be absolutely fixed [...] so while meanings are negotiated, discourse constructs the terms of the negotiation.²³⁴

As with all popular music, the multiple protagonists involved in the production and consumption of Viking metal create a complex example of such a negotiation, especially when considered in the context of the issues of the both national and transnational identity construction playing a fundamental role within this particular discourse.

3.2: National Romanticism

The National Romanticism movement (or Romantic Nationalism) was at its height from 1780-1920. During this period, in Europe especially, the formation of nation states and matters of national identity were prevalent, although there had been what O'Donoghue calls 'competitive nationalist interest throughout Scandinavia in the origins and early history of the Scandinavian countries' in the seventeenth century.²³⁵ Romanticism in the arts and intellectual thinking had helped to create an environment

²³² Mark Deeks, 'Nordic Heavy Metal as a Representation of Place', in Brown and Fellezs, eds, pp. 51-63.

²³³ Hall, *ibid.*

²³⁴ Walser, p. 33.

²³⁵ O'Donoghue, p. 108.

where artistic works and thoughts had strived to provoke strong emotional responses such as fear, awe and wonder. One tool commonly used was to attempt to visually demonstrate the power and beauty of nature (the sublime) in relation to the comparative insignificance of man,²³⁶ and artists of this style ‘generated traditions of painting that celebrated the landscape in its sublime and pastoral modes’.²³⁷

Significant Norwegian artists included Johan Christian Dahl, Knud Baade (e.g. *Scene From The Era of Norwegian Sagas*, 1850), and Peder Balke (e.g. *Gaustatoppen*, 1858), although others also played important roles, including their contemporaries such as Alexandre Calame and François Diday from another country full of striking natural landscapes, Switzerland, and Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840) from Scotland. Despite efforts by the Scottish National Galleries to suggest that Scottish artists were unique in their initiatives (‘That landscape painting helped to define the nation is an artistic accomplishment unique to Scotland’),²³⁸ there is clear evidence that this trend and the role it played was much wider spread. Furthermore, we can draw direct similarities to the artwork of many bands relevant to this study such as the examples shown in Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1: National Romanticism art / National identity metal comparisons



a) *The Lower Falls of the Labrofoss* (Johan Christian Dahl, 1827)²³⁹



b) *Scene From The Era of Norwegian Sagas* (Knud Baade, 1850)²⁴⁰

²³⁶ <http://archive.artsmia.org/mirror-of-nature/nordic-sublime.cfm?lng=0.html> [Accessed 1 May 2015].

²³⁷ Christopher Riopelle, and Sarah Herring, *Forests, Rocks, Torrents: Norwegian and Swiss Landscape Paintings From The Lunde Collection* (London: National Gallery Company, 2011), p. 9.

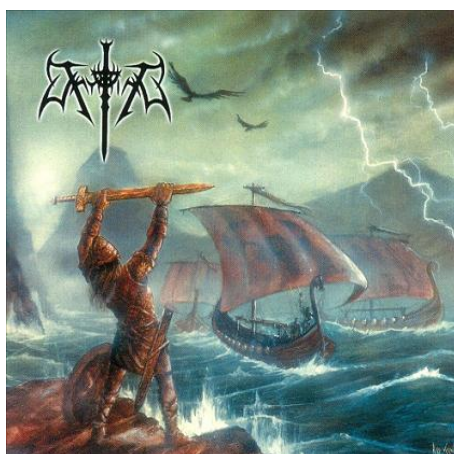
²³⁸ <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/themes-in-scottish-art/landscape> [Accessed 26 September 2014].

²³⁹ <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/custom/ng/tile.php?id=vvRKaOpvvvR> [Accessed 1 May 2015].

²⁴⁰ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/BreTp7BCcAAQ8EP.jpg> [Accessed 1 May 2015].



c) *Fimbulvinter* (Kroda, 2007)²⁴¹



d) *Thyrfing* (Thyrfing, 1998)²⁴²

National Romanticist artists were often intent on producing visual representations of actual landmarks and areas that could be recognised by those who saw them. The issue for many fans of the bands relevant to this study is that they are often presented with imagery that is, by nature of its ‘otherness’, unspecific in its location or origin, thus tending towards the possibility for a further perpetuation of vague transnational identities. As Christopher Riopelle suggests, ‘The connoisseur of national landscape painting was looking for specific mountains, identifiable villages, waterfalls whose names he knew’,²⁴³ and it was this key aspect of particular landscapes being presented and received that began to play a role in the burgeoning nationalism movements across Europe, adapted by those who wished such romanticist tendencies to be combined with the drive towards the creation of national identities. Anthony Smith describes how natural scenes and landmarks were

Historicized by their associations with communal myth and endeavour [...] For composers, artists and writers, the nationalist myth of poetic landscapes evoked powerful sentiments of nostalgia and identification, which they amplified and diffused through their art.²⁴⁴

National Romanticism saw numerous adaptations of cultural and artistic trends gathered with one shared intention – to bring together the people (*Volk*),²⁴⁵ and to emphasise a common heritage and identity. With this new accentuation, the nation became a significant consideration in the formation of social institutions and cultural expressions; as Thomas Nipperdey suggests, ‘Literature and the arts were viewed as

²⁴¹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/1/4/1/6/141660.jpg?3440> [Accessed 1 May 2015].

²⁴² <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/1/2/6/0/1260.jpg> [Accessed 1 May 2015].

²⁴³ Riopelle and Herring, p. 13.

²⁴⁴ Smith, p. 127.

²⁴⁵ See Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution* (London: Phoenix, 2010), pp. 111-112.

products of the national mind'.²⁴⁶ However, whilst the commonality of the people was important, of equal if not greater weight were the characteristics of the people that made them different from their neighbours: 'There was now an emphasis on the singular, the particular, the individual'.²⁴⁷ As Anderson points out, 'No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind';²⁴⁸ difference and 'the other' is as intrinsic a dimension of national identity formation as that which is the same.

Alongside this, many National Romantic artists demonstrated a fascination with Norse mythology. Hans Kuhn's suggestion of how images of a Nordic past 'increasingly came to be seen as part of national history',²⁴⁹ has been developed by O'Donoghue:

In both literature and the visual arts, the fashion for Norse subjects in the late eighteenth century invigorated and was invigorated by parallel developments [...] in aesthetic taste and sensibility. The thrill of the weird and the warlike, for terrors of the imagination and awesome shocks to the senses, made for an extravagant reaction to classical restraint, and Norse themes were the perfect vehicle.²⁵⁰

A connection between German culture and Norse was, by this period, not a new idea; *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, the opera cycle by Richard Wagner, was first performed in its entirety in 1876. Loosely based on a range of characters from Norse mythology, the titles of two of the operas from the cycle are *Die Walküre (The Valkyrie)* and *Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods)*. Unsurprisingly, (as shown in Figure 3.2), Scandinavian artists also demonstrated a similar enthrallment with Norse mythology, with Danish examples including Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg's *The Death of Balder*, and the work of Lorenz Frølich such as *Three Norns*. As Gunnar Eriksson suggests:

Pride in the purity and profundity of Nordic myth was essential to Romantic nationalism in Scandinavia. As the myths stemmed from the past, this kind of nationalism was also historical, and it had an important aesthetic dimension.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Thomas Nipperdey, 'In Search of Identity: Romantic Nationalism, its Intellectual, Political and Social Background', in Eade, ed., p. 2.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

²⁴⁸ Anderson, p. 7.

²⁴⁹ Hans Kuhn, 'Greek Gods in Northern Costumes: Visual Representations of Norse Mythology in 19th Century Scandinavia', 11th International Saga Conference, University of Sydney, 2-7 July, 2000, p. 216.

²⁵⁰ O'Donoghue, p. 123.

²⁵¹ Gunnar Eriksson, 'Romanticism in Scandinavia' in Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, eds, *Romanticism In National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 186.

Figure 3.2: Norse mythology in art



a) *Der Asen Untergang*
 (*The Downfall of the Aesir*)
 (Carl Ehrenberg, 1882)²⁵²



b) *Beginn des Weltunterganges*
 (*Beginning of Armageddon*)
 (Ernst Hermann Walther, 1897)²⁵³



c) *Kampf der Untergehenden Gotter*
 (*Battle of the Doomed Gods*)
 (Friedrich Heine, 1882)²⁵⁴

3.3: Heavy Metal Artwork

In *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*, Deena Weinstein points out:

Heavy metal crystallized in the era when the album was the major medium for recorded music and when the album cover [...] served as part of the total aesthetic experience [...] Had the genre crystallized in the mid-1980s when audio cassettes, with their much smaller surface area, supplanted albums, an important part of the genre would never have emerged.²⁵⁵

²⁵² http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/db/Der_Asen_Untergang_by_Karl_Ehrenberg.jpg [Accessed 1 May 2015].

²⁵³ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/6/6c/Beginn_des_Weltunterganges.jpg [Accessed 1 May 2015].

²⁵⁴ <http://mittelaltergazette.de/mag/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/kampf-der-untergehenden-goetter.jpg> [Accessed 1 May 2015].

²⁵⁵ Weinstein, 1991, p. 28.

Metal has long had a fascination with dramatic artwork, often straying into the worlds of fantasy, nightmare, science fiction, history, and mythologies from around the world. Due to the focus given to artwork outlined by Weinstein, some covers have become almost as iconic as the music they accompanied. There are numerous examples of recurring themes, of which it is only possible to give a brief overview here.

Perhaps the most common of all images seen in heavy metal artwork has been the use of inverted crucifixes and pentagrams. Whether displaying a serious affinity with Satanism, an anti-Christian sentiment, or being little more than an attempt to attract young fans to its potentially evil content, symbolism of a dark nature has become a mainstay of heavy metal imagery, including the cover of Venom's *Welcome to Hell* (1981),²⁵⁶ and the inverted crucifix that adorns *Antichrist* (1996) by Norway's Gorgoroth.²⁵⁷ The inverted crucifix has also become an intrinsic part of the logos of a large number of bands, such as those in Figure 3.3, as well as other examples including Possessed (America), and Horna (Finland).

Figure 3.3: Logos with an inverted crucifix



Skulls and skeletons have been used repeatedly, from Black Sabbath's *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*,²⁵⁸ to *Pleasure to Kill* by Germany's Kreator,²⁵⁹ and *Epicus Doomicus Metallicus* by Sweden's Candlemass.²⁶⁰ Images of Egyptology have not been uncommon, such as Iron Maiden's *Powerslave*²⁶¹ and multiple examples by the American band Nile, such as *Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka*.²⁶² A penchant for scenes of war can be typified by such memorable covers as Metallica's *Master of Puppets* showing a cemetery full of nameless crucifix-shaped gravestones,²⁶³ or *Panzer*

²⁵⁶ Venom, *Welcome to Hell* (Neat Records, 1981).

²⁵⁷ Gorgoroth, *Antichrist*, (Malicious Records, 1996).

²⁵⁸ Black Sabbath, *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* (Vertigo, 1973).

²⁵⁹ Kreator, *Pleasure to Kill* (Noise Records, 1986).

²⁶⁰ Candlemass, *Epicus Doomicus Metallicus* (Black Dragon Records, 1986).

²⁶¹ Iron Maiden, *Powerslave* (EMI, 1984).

²⁶² Nile, *Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka* (Relapse Records, 1998).

²⁶³ Metallica, *Master of Puppets* (Elektra, 1986).

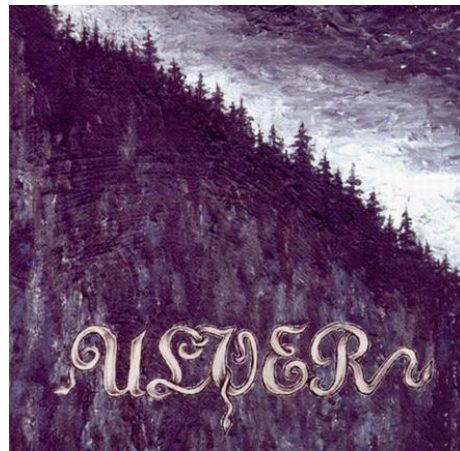
Division Marduk by Marduk from Sweden, with a close up of a large tank pointing its cannon at the reader.²⁶⁴ Fantastical scenes of strange, demonic creatures have included Dio's *Holy Diver*,²⁶⁵ *Reign in Blood* by Slayer,²⁶⁶ *Diabolis Interium* by Sweden's Dark Funeral,²⁶⁷ and *Zos Kia Cultus* by Poland's Behemoth,²⁶⁸ warriors ready for battle or wielding some form of weaponry are also commonplace, from *Persecution Mania* by the German thrash band Sodom,²⁶⁹ to *Kings of Metal* by the Americans Manowar.²⁷⁰

Increasingly, there has been widespread use by bands from numerous countries using images of landscape on their album artwork much like the National Romanticism movement, and whilst Scandinavian bands have again played a prominent role, this trend has become far more wide spread. Figure 3.4 focuses on examples from the Nordic region, whilst Figure 3.5 shows how the same dramatic and powerful imagery of skies, landscapes and coastlines has appeared on album covers from Eastern Europe such as those from Ukraine, Romania, Latvia and Russia. Furthermore, Figure 3.6 shows how similar themes have graced the covers of bands from across the U.K.

Figure 3.4: Nordic landscape artwork examples



a) *Frost* (Enslaved, 1994)²⁷¹



b) *Bergtatt* (Ulver, 1995)²⁷²

²⁶⁴ Marduk, *Panzer Division Marduk* (Osmose Productions, 1999).

²⁶⁵ Dio, *Holy Diver* (Mercury Records, 1983).

²⁶⁶ Slayer, *Reign In Blood* (Def Jam, 1986).

²⁶⁷ Dark Funeral, *Diabolis Interium* (No Fashion Records, 2001).

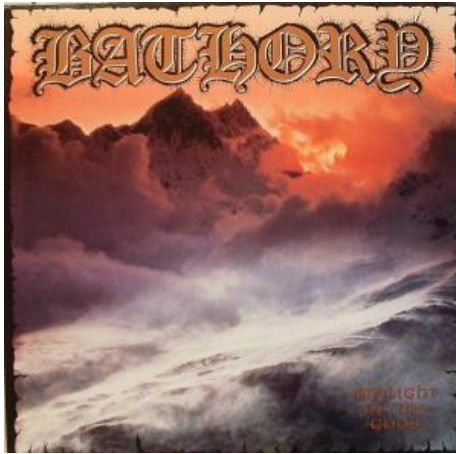
²⁶⁸ Behemoth, *Zos Kia Cultus*, (Avantgarde Music, 2002).

²⁶⁹ Sodom, *Persecution Mania* (Steamhammer, 1987).

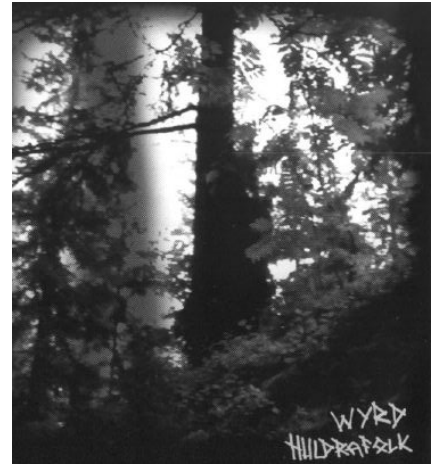
²⁷⁰ Manowar, *Kings of Metal* (Atlantic Records, 1988).

²⁷¹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Enslaved/Frost/1100#> [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁷² http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Ulver/Bergtatt_-_Et_Eeventyr_i_5_Capitler/3609# [Accessed 5 May 2015].



c) *Twilight of the Gods* (Bathory, 1991)²⁷³



d) *Huldrafolk* (Wyrds, 2002)²⁷⁴

Figure 3.5: Eastern European landscape artwork examples



a) *Forgotten Legends* (Drudkh, 2003)²⁷⁵



b) *n Crugu Bradului* (Negură Bunget, 2002)²⁷⁶



c) *Zobena Dzieszma* (Skyforger, 2003)²⁷⁷



d) *Goi! Rode! Goi!* (Arkona, 2009)²⁷⁸

²⁷³ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Bathory/Twilight_of_the_Gods/418247# [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁷⁴ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Wyrd/Huldrafolk/8781#> [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁷⁵ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Drudkh/Forgotten_Legends/29104# [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁷⁶ [http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Negură_Bunget/n_crugu_bradului/15670#](http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Negur%C3%A2_Bunget/n_crugu_bradului/15670#) [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁷⁷ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Skyforger/Zobena_dzieszma/32305 [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁷⁸ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Arkona/Гой%2C_Роде%2C_рой%21/247637 [Accessed 5 May 2015].

Figure 3.6: U.K. landscape artwork examples

a) *Loss* (Wodensthroner, 2009)²⁷⁹b) *The Giants of Auld* (Cnoc an Tursa, 2013)²⁸⁰

An emphasis on the beauty and power of nature is undoubtedly a recurring theme, and is well suited to a musical form rooted in a powerful soundscape. There is also an undoubted connection with Smith's description of how 'many landscape and genre painters contributed to a populist nationalism in a manner that was more evocative than deliberate',²⁸¹ and the suggestion that this style of art's primary impact was to stir up or evoke rather than explicitly reference seems relevant. Certainly the use of landscape imagery is so prevalent here that it is unrealistic to expect that receivers could have enough background knowledge to accurately pinpoint any specific visual signifiers that have deliberately been utilized from across a country, let alone a continent.

When discussing some recurring themes and concepts within the wider black metal movement, Dayal Patterson raises a pertinent point:

There are many who will still find the concepts of misanthropy/elitism and patriotism/nationalism to be somewhat at odds [...] After all, if you recognise that only a small number of your surrounding citizens are worthy individuals, it seems odd to want to champion as a whole the society and nation that you exist within. And while one may feel a romantic nationalism for the land itself, the power of nature is surely as universal as the qualities (and flaws) in mankind's own nature.²⁸²

By challenging the Polish musician GrimSpirit of the band Evilfeast on these issues, Patterson gets him to reveal an interesting combination of theories as to why nature works so well in conjunction with, in his case, black metal. In doing so GrimSpirit

²⁷⁹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Wodensthroner/Loss/241841#> [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁸⁰ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Cnoc_an_Tursa/The_Giants_of_Auld/366011 [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁸¹ Smith, p. 92.

²⁸² Dayal Patterson, *Black Metal: The Cult Never Dies Volume One* (London: Cult Never Dies, 2015), p. 182.

describes where the possible collision between images of nature and matters of nationalism and national identity may lie:

[Patriotism / nationalism is] affection to my soil, its landscapes, forests, mountains. [My connection with nature] is largely unexplainable, but essentially I just see holding intercourse with nature as [a form of] mysticism, transcendence.²⁸³

Nature, whether purely as an inspiration or through the use of the type of imagery examined here, is evidently providing inspiration in a variety of forms. It could be interpreted that some senders are content with nothing more precise than the suggestion of a regional identity at most, with non-specific dramatic landscapes doing nothing more than being in keeping with the style. Whilst some are paying little (if any) regard to any individualistic or defining features, others are keen to make geographical references more specific to their work, such as English band Winterfylleth (see Figure 3.7). Winterfylleth have used a range of specifically Northern English locations for the photographs on their album artwork. Peveril Castle (Castleton, Peak District), Ullswater (Lake District), Snowdonia, and Wastwater looking towards Great Gable and Scarfell Pike (Lake District) have contributed to a series of dramatic images for their four album releases to date. As the band's lyrical content focuses primarily on Anglo Saxon history and poetry, and the band members themselves have personal connections to these areas, the stirring visuals in this example perfectly demonstrate how there are varying layers of semiotic sending and receiving at play here. Fiske's assertion that 'The reader is as creative as the author',²⁸⁴ is as encapsulated in the visual presentation of Winterfylleth as in any of their contemporaries from across Northern Europe. With no knowledge of the English countryside, it is possible that the (what to some may be) quintessentially English qualities in the pictures may go unnoticed. Certainly the precise locations of the photographs could easily be unknown, even to the band's compatriots. Without the desire to discover, the receiver could alternatively categorise the images as simply being in keeping with the genre's aesthetics, make an assumption of identity based on any knowledge of the origin of the band, or even (consciously or not) form an imagined transnational identity. In reality, there may well be multiple identities or imagined identities at play.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Patterson, 2015, p. 184.

²⁸⁴ Fiske, *ibid.*, p. 283.

²⁸⁵ Karl Spracklen, Caroline Lucas, and Mark Deeks, 'The Construction of Heavy Metal Identity Through Heritage Narratives: A Case Study of Extreme Metal Bands in the North of England', in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 37, No. 1, (Routledge, 2014), p. 61.

Figure 3.7: Winterfylleth album artwork

a) *The Ghost of Heritage* (2008)²⁸⁶b) *The Mercian Sphere* (2010)²⁸⁷c) *The Divination of Antiquity* (2014)²⁸⁸d) *The Threnody of Triumph* (2012)²⁸⁹

3.4: Transnational Identity

In the fields of national identity and identity formation there has been much written since the significant works in 1983 by Hobsbawm and Ranger and Benedict Anderson.²⁹⁰ Their theories are important here, as the notion that both nations (and some of the traditions held as integral therein) are man-made constructions rather than historical facts, encourages us to question whether today's metal bands are in some way representing their nation or revisiting its ancient cultures. Anderson cites as one of his

²⁸⁶ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Winterfylleth/The_Ghost_of_Heritage/205340 [Accessed 5 May 2015].

²⁸⁷ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Winterfylleth/The_Mercian_Sphere/275109 [Accessed 7 May 2015].

²⁸⁸ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Winterfylleth/The_Divination_of_Antiquity/439830# [Accessed 7 May 2015].

²⁸⁹ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Winterfylleth/The_Threnody_of_Triumph/346688 [Accessed 7 May 2015].

²⁹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).

starting points the thoughts of Ernest Gellner, the French philosopher, who wrote that ‘Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: “it invents nations where they do not exist”’.²⁹¹ In common with many other arts, popular music’s creators and listeners are able to play a part in the forming of a national identity through lyrics, artwork, promotional material, merchandise, or through the music itself; according to Philip Bohlman, ‘the use of music to shape an image of the nation is conscious’.²⁹² This identity formation can be based on authentic characteristics, or there may be an element of the kind of process labelled by Eric Hobsbawm as an invention of tradition, where ‘traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented’.²⁹³ This theory is especially relevant here as Hobsbawm expands upon how ‘[Invented traditions] are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, ‘the nation’, with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest’.²⁹⁴ It seems possible that, by the presentation and reception of Viking metal as a regional Nordic whole, we have moved from matters of national identity to the formation of a transnational identity.

Mulinari *et al* state, ‘The notion of transnationalism has been developed to better our understanding of the multiple ways people live their lives’.²⁹⁵ An individual may have several identities that are national or ethnic in nature. For those living in Britain this may be a consideration of what it means to be English, (even just Northern) British or European, whilst for those from Norway the identities may include Norwegian, Nordic, Scandinavian and Viking, as well as European. The explosion of the internet and social media such as MySpace in the 1990s, more recently Facebook and Twitter, have all added to the ease with which identities may be formed in ways that are no longer restricted by national borders or geographical constraints, thus facilitating an increased likelihood of transnational identities being created. When discussing notions of Scandinavian ‘one-ness’, Gwyn Jones suggests that there is much sound factual basis for such a transnational identity to be accepted as historically accurate, although, as is significant regarding Viking metal, there is no mention here of the Finnish people:

²⁹¹ Ernest Gellner cited by Anderson, p. 6.

²⁹² Philip V. Bohlman, *Focus: Music, Nationalism, and The Making of The New Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 58.

²⁹³ Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds, p. 1.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁹⁵ Diana Mulinari, and others ‘Post Colonialism and the Nordic Models of Welfare and Gender’, in *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*, ed. by Suvi Keskinen, and others (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p. 13.

In many decisive respects, the Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians were closely bound together. They shared the same language, religion, law, social organization, art, and general culture. And they shared the same heroic tradition, the same legendary and part-historical past.²⁹⁶

I would argue that, specifically through the use of the term Viking metal, a pan-Nordic identity and a pan-Nordic place have been presented and received. Bands that have referenced mythology, history or heritage, in one form or another, are often grouped together under this label regardless of country of origin, despite the fact that the specific musical styles of these bands actually represent a variety of approaches within the metal genre that such an umbrella term conceals. As a result, the term is sometimes being used to refer to people for whom the label 'Viking' would not normally apply, such as the Finnish (the tendency to refer to Ensiferum as Viking metal seems problematic as both the musicians and the Finnish mythology they reference would not be considered Viking),²⁹⁷ but in a more extreme sense, bands as widespread as America (Hammer Horde), Italy (Gjallarhorn, Vinterblot, Valtyr) and even Brazil (Hugin Munin).²⁹⁸

In 1996, Ulf Hannerz predicted that nations would be 'seen as perhaps offering some resistance to, but mostly retreating before, adapting to, or being absorbed or dislocated by a new supranational restructuring'.²⁹⁹ However, because it seems unlikely that each individual nation can be strictly defined both culturally and territorially, it could be argued that this restructuring creates a more accurate picture. In fact, Hannerz goes as far as to say that such an idea 'never really corresponded with reality'.³⁰⁰ By presenting a unified concept of Viking metal, the metal community has formed and accepted a manifestation and application of this transnational theory. According to Gibson and Connell, 'local musical differences have been appropriated and transformed [...] as part of the trend toward exoticising culture';³⁰¹ Anderson and Hilson added that 'just like national self-images, the eye of the observer is always selective'.³⁰²

²⁹⁶ Jones, p. 69.

²⁹⁷ <http://www.examiner.com/article/ensiferum-is-viking-metal-at-its-best> [Accessed 20 February 2013].

²⁹⁸ http://www.metal-archives.com/reviews/Hugin_Munin/Ravens_Empire/219091/ [Accessed 20 February 2013].

²⁹⁹ Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 81.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ C. Gibson, and J. Connell, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 125.

³⁰² Anderson, Jenny and Mary Hilson, 'Images of Sweden and the Nordic Countries', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 34.3 (2009), p. 221.

With the music industry constructing a collective image of Viking metal, the labelling of the genre thus far can (by ignoring implicit inaccuracies) further perpetuate stereotypes of both pan-Nordic identity and place, as well as the concept of ‘Vikingness’, in the non-Nordic world. Does the label make reference to the personal origin of those creating the material, or is it a description of the subject matter being discussed, regardless of who is presenting it? The way in which these bands are representing their place of origin in visual terms shows little attempt to differentiate between separate geographical areas within the Nordic landscape. Instead, what has been created is a combination of the transnational theories espoused by Hannerz *et al*, with Anderson’s ‘imagined community’. This is especially the case for many within the metal community, as their image of the Nordic region is often the ‘other’ and therefore (to at least some extent) imagined. The Faroese band Týr ‘have come to fully embrace the Viking label by employing iconography typically associated with a sort of pan-Scandinavian Viking era’.³⁰³ Furthermore, these issues are not only raised when the subject matter of a band’s material is the Nordic region; they are equally applicable to the Eastern European and UK bands referenced in this study.

3.5: Recurring Themes

As well as the prevalence of images of landscape, other symbolism and visual signifiers have become commonplace, some of which have further perpetuated ideas of transnational identity. Whether a form of iconography or related to weaponry, transport, costume or fashion, we can see a variety of recurring themes. The longship has long been one of the enduring images of the Viking people, and their connection to the sea is immeasurable, with the word Viking itself accepted to have originated from the Old Norse word ‘vik’ meaning creek or bay.³⁰⁴ The sea (and authority over it) was fundamental within Viking culture, especially to those who wished to rule over others. A king’s prestige ‘consisted in sea-power and the ability to employ this for conquest and profit. Command of the sea-lanes ensured exaction and tribute, and these in their turn brought loyalty and service’.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Green, p. 133.

³⁰⁴ Cohat, p. 11.

³⁰⁵ Jones, p. 152.

The far-reaching Viking voyages across much of Europe and beyond, with the intent to both trade as well as raid, have been written about extensively elsewhere, and there is not the space here to cover them in detail. However, longships and Viking-style war ships with their imposing dragon heads have now begun to regularly appear on the artwork of a wide range of metal bands, again demonstrating a regional Nordic identity construction.

Figure 3.8: Viking longship artwork examples



a) *Across the Open Sea* (Unleashed, 1993)³⁰⁶



b) *Blodhemn* (Enslaved, 1998)³⁰⁷



c) *Land* (Týr, 2008)³⁰⁸



d) *The Varangian Way* (Turisas, 2007)³⁰⁹

Given that ‘the gods held that the hammer was the best of all their treasures’,³¹⁰ it is no surprise that Thor’s hammer Mjölnir has also become a symbol of considerable significance in the context of Viking history, Norse mythology and subsequently contemporary Nordic culture such as Viking metal. Wilson states that the symbol ‘was

³⁰⁶ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Unleashed/Across_the_Open_Sea/1322# [Accessed 5 May 2015].

³⁰⁷ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Enslaved/Blodhemn/447#> [Accessed 5 May 2015].

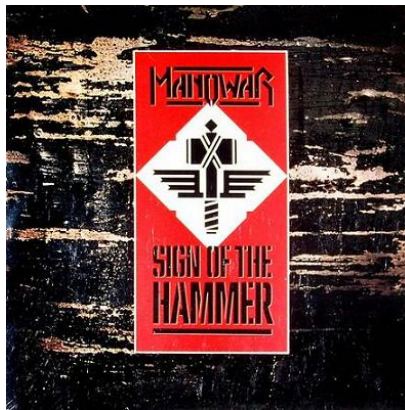
³⁰⁸ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Týr/Land/192631#> [Accessed 5 May 2015].

³⁰⁹ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Turisas/The_Varangian_Way/149993# [Accessed 5 May 2015].

³¹⁰ Ellis Davidson, p. 43.

very popular as an amulet in Scandinavia',³¹¹ and Jennings adds that, 'Like the Christian cross, the sign of the hammer was at once a protection and a blessing to those who used it'.³¹² Mjölnir has gone on to adorn front covers of albums by numerous metal bands. This includes *Sign of the Hammer* by America's Manowar, a band who whilst they may not have a great deal in common musically with the majority of bands relevant to this study, are certainly significant for their comparatively early combination of Norse mythology and heavy metal. Figure 3.9 demonstrates a striking example of a transnational identity being received in despite of national differences, as rather than Mjölnir, the Amorphis album cover actually depicts Ukonvasara, the hammer of the Finnish thunder god Ukko, a distinction that many fans could easily fail to detect.

Figure 3.9: Thor's hammer artwork examples



a) *Sign of the Hammer*
(Manowar, 1984)³¹³



b) *Leve Vikingånden*
(Einherjer, 1995)³¹⁴



c) *Tales from the Thousand Lakes*
(Amorphis, 1994)³¹⁵



d) *Twilight of the Thunder God*
(Amon Amarth, 2008)³¹⁶

³¹¹ David, M. Wilson, *The Vikings and Their Origins* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p. 41.

³¹² Pete Jennings, *Heathen Paths: Viking and Anglo Saxon Pagan Beliefs* (Milverton: Capall Bann, 2007), p. 158.

³¹³ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Manowar/Sign_of_the_Hammer/578# [Accessed 6 May 2015].

³¹⁴ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Einherjer/Leve_vikingånden/14621# [Accessed 6 May 2015].

³¹⁵ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Amorphis/Tales_from_the_Thousand_Lakes/294# [Accessed 6 May 2015].

³¹⁶ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Amon_Amarth/Twilight_of_the_Thunder_God/205093# [Accessed 6 May 2015].

Some bands have even incorporated the hammer into their actual logos, including Borknagar (Sweden), Falkenbach and XIV Dark Centuries (both from Germany), and Hammer Horde (USA); Hagen also highlights how ‘Enslaved’s logo is centered over a Thor’s hammer and its ornamentation is reminiscent of Viking carvings’.³¹⁷ Furthermore many in the metal community have accepted this pan-Nordic symbol through the wearing of jewellery and merchandise bearing the same symbol:

Figure 3.10: Logos with hammer examples



a) Borknagar

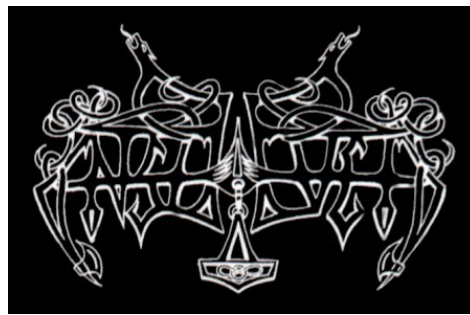


XIV Dark Centuries

b) XIV Dark Centuries



c) Hammer Horde



d) Enslaved

The origins and meaning of the word ‘rune’ have been widely discussed and a varying range of theories presented. For many writers such as Yves Cohat, the runes have a connection with an element of magic and secrets to be learned. ‘The word *rúna* may be traced to a Germanic root from which the German word *raunen*, “to whisper” is derived. Thus the runes are thought to convey a secret message’.³¹⁸ This is heightened by Wilson’s suggestion that ‘runes are widely considered to be endowed with magical significance’.³¹⁹ It is unsurprising in this context that for some there is a clear connection between these magical powers and the major figures of the Norse pantheon where ‘Odin was renowned for his discovery or invention of the runic letters, which for the Germanic peoples before their conversion represented both learning and magic’.³²⁰ These connections are, however, not universally accepted:

³¹⁷ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 189.

³¹⁸ Cohat, p. 150.

³¹⁹ Wilson, 2003, p. 27.

³²⁰ Ellis Davidson, p. 140.

In spite of the modern associations of runes with magic and mystery, the vast majority of runic inscriptions are either secular – nothing to do with magic or religion at all – or straightforwardly Christian, such as the gravestones.³²¹

The runic alphabet known as the futhark (due to this being what the first six letters combine to spell, with one rune Thurisaz providing the ‘th’ sound) has gone through several stages of development and modification. The Elder Futhark had twenty-four symbols, and was used primarily by North-West Germanic tribes during the Iron Age. This was then extended to contain anything from twenty-six to thirty-three symbols, and was used by the Anglo-Saxons and Frisians from the late fifth century. A slightly simplified sixteen-letter Younger Futhark was used throughout Scandinavia from the late eighth century onwards, and there was an extended version of this called the futhork (or sometimes medieval runes) that had twenty-seven letters, and where each rune only represented one phoneme as opposed to the previous system where some runes could correspond to more than one.

As a result of the lack of one, fixed, codified system, combined with the range of suggestions as to the intent behind and origin of these alphabetic schemes, there is clear room for individual interpretation and an element of mystery to come to the fore, although as Michael Barnes writes, ‘it must be counted one of the prime tasks of those editing epigraphic texts to distinguish as rigorously as they can between observation and interpretation’.³²² There is not room here to produce an overview of the considerable wealth of material written on the subject. However, one example particularly relevant to this study due to its author, is the 2011 book *Sorcery and Religion in Ancient Scandinavia*. Written by convicted murderer and sole musician of the influential Norwegian black metal band Burzum Varg Vikernes, the possibility for wildly varying interpretation of the subject is plainly demonstrated in the prologue as he boldly declares that ‘much of what you think you know already is in fact not correct’ and explains his lack of references by stating, ‘I cannot list sources when the ideas are my own’ — indeed the book is entirely devoid of academic reference.³²³

³²¹ O’Donoghue, p. 147.

³²² Michael P. Barnes, ‘Runes and Editors: The Changing Face of Corpus Editions’, *Futhark: International Journal of Runic Studies* 1 (2010), p. 7.

³²³ Varg Vikernes, *Sorcery and Religion in Ancient Scandinavia* (London: Abstract Sounds Books, 2011), p. 6.

As with Mjöllnir, visual references to runic lettering have become prevalent throughout heavy metal. Weinstein has noted how ‘much of the iconography of heavy metal is related to northern European pagan cultures’³²⁴ and pointed out that the logos of some metal bands ‘resemble runic, Teutonic lettering’.³²⁵ Bands incorporating symbols of this style into their logos include Wodensthroner (England), Falkenbach (Germany), Baldrs Draumar (Holland), and Hin Onda (Finland) (see Figure 3.11). In addition, the Norwegian band Taake have runes on their shield, often present on artwork and promotional materials.

Figure 3.11: Logos with runic lettering



a) Wodensthroner



b) Falkenbach



c) Baldrs Draumar



d) Hin Onda

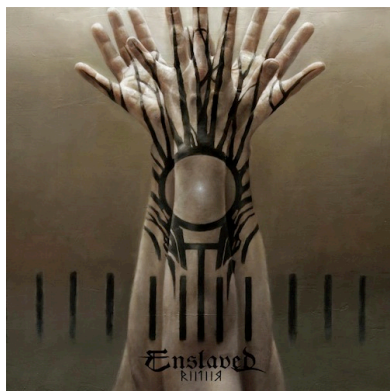
Figure 3.12 reproduces some of the multiple examples of runic style lettering that appear on album artwork. Also shown is *Secrets of the Runes* by the Swedish band Therion which, as well as having runic lettering on the artwork and multiple references to Norse mythology in the lyrics, included the book *Uthark - Nightside of the Runes* by their lyricist Thomas Karlsson, the grandmaster of the ‘esoteric society’ and ‘magical order’ Dragon Rouge as part of its limited edition pressing.³²⁶ All of these bands have become part of the wider trend in metal of musicians, like the National Romanticists before them, to use an art form to assist in the construction of both national and (more frequently here) transnational and regional identities.

³²⁴ Weinstein, 1991, p. 120.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

³²⁶ <http://www.dragonrouge.net/english/general.htm> [Accessed 6 November 2012].

Figure 3.12: Runic artwork examples

a) RIITIIR (Enslaved, 2012)³²⁷b) *Pagan Prophecies* (Fortid, 2012)³²⁸c) *Secrets of the Runes* (Therion, 2001)³²⁹d) *Urkraft* (Thyrving, 2000)³³⁰

3.6: Art in Artwork

When he was just 18, the front-man of Norwegian band Satyricon who goes by the stage name Satyr, explained that their 1994 album *Dark, Medieval Times* ‘has a medieval concept influenced by Norwegian nature, mythology and moods, is fascinated by the Vikings, death and the black plague’.³³¹ [Satyr] mentions specifically the Norwegian romantic artist Theodor Kittelsen (1857-1914) as a great source of inspiration. Kittelsen is something of a ‘national treasure’ in Norway and most Norwegian children are familiar with his detailed and fantastic drawings and paintings of trolls, the lake demon ‘nøkken’, and unicorns.³³² In fact such is the familiarity with and acceptance of Kittelsen’s work within black metal, that Dayal Patterson wrote a

³²⁷ <http://www.metalsucks.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Enslaved-RIITIIR.jpeg> [Accessed 11 May 2015].

³²⁸ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/3/4/6/9/346943.jpg?3721> [Accessed 11 May 2015].

³²⁹ <http://www.progulus.com/pictures/therion-secrets.jpg> [Accessed 11 May 2015].

³³⁰ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Thyrving/Urkraft/1263#> [Accessed 11 May 2015].

³³¹ Viggo Vestel, ‘Breakdance, Red Eyed Penguins, Vikings, Grunge and Straight Rock ‘n’ Roll: The Construction of Place in Musical Discourse in Rudenga, East Side Oslo’, *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 7.2 (1999), p. 12.

³³² *Ibid.*

whole chapter entitled ‘Theodor Kittelsen and Black Metal Aesthetics’. Attempting to explain the reasons for this perhaps seemingly unlikely cultural collision, Patterson notes how Kittelsen’s art ‘mirrors the artistic values of the early Norwegian black metal movement itself, emphasising a rich, immersive atmosphere whilst offering a similarly distinct impression of a lost time and place’.³³³ Amongst other examples, Kittelsen’s art was used by Burzum for the iconic album *Filosofem* (Figure 3.13). The cover shows a woman in traditional Norwegian dress, blowing a horn that looks like what is known as a wooden or Viking lur which is similar to a birch trumpet, and is native to Sweden.

Figure 3.13: Art in artwork (1)



a) *Filosofem* (Burzum, 1996)³³⁴ b) *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* (Theodor Kittelsen, 1900)³³⁵

More generally, ‘black metal’s aesthetics have always tended to invoke the traditional and historic, the movement maintaining an intense fascination with the past – real or imagined’.³³⁶ Many paintings from the National Romanticism period have begun to serve multiple purposes and ‘themselves became sources for concepts of the Viking Age through the medium of the printed book’,³³⁷ and indeed ‘Kittelsen’s work was itself already a product of the past from a black metal perspective’.³³⁸ A form of cultural revisiting where bands can not only represent location, but also historical period and matters of nation and identity formation, has become commonplace through the use of specific artworks that themselves are already symbols of national identity. Bands have taken a variety of approaches with this cultural revisiting as not all examples involve the

³³³ Patterson, 2015, p. 120.

³³⁴ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Burzum/Filosofem/382> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³³⁵ <http://uploads3.wikiart.org/images/theodor-severin-kittelsen/op-under-fjeldet-toner-en-lur-1900.jpg> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³³⁶ Ibid. p. 118.

³³⁷ David M. Wilson, *Vikings and Gods in European Art* (Højbjerg: Moesgard Museum and Aarhus University Research Foundation, 1997), p. 10.

³³⁸ Patterson, 2015, pp. 120-121.

original paintings being replicated in full, and some have even made subtle modifications to the art itself, hinting at an alternative meaning.

The use of scenes from Norse mythology has been particularly commonplace. The cover of Bathory's *Blood Fire Death* (Figure 3.14) replicates the majority of an 1872 painting called *Åsgardsreien* (*Asgard's Army*) by the Norwegian artist Peter Nicolai Arbo, a 'specialist in Norse myths and history'.³³⁹ An album cover exploring similar visual themes is ... *En Their Medh Riki Fara...* by Germany's Falkenbach, which reproduces a large portion of *Wodan's Wilde Jagd* (1882) by the compatriot of sole songwriter Vratyas Vakyas, Friedrich Hein (Figure 3.15). In this instance, however, the dimensions are somewhat distorted vertically, as well the original image being cropped.

Figure 3.14: Art in artwork (2)



a) *Blood Fire Death*
(Bathory, 1988)³⁴⁰



b) *Åsgardsreien*
(Peter Nicolai Arbo, 1872)³⁴¹

Figure 3.15: Art in artwork (3)



a) *Wodan's Wilde Jagd*
(Friedrich Hein, 1882)³⁴²



b) ...*En Their Medh Riki Fara...*
(Falkenbach, 1996)³⁴³

³³⁹ <https://eclecticlight.co/2016/05/09/the-story-in-paintings-peter-nicolai-arbo-valkyries-and-mermen/> [Accessed 10 August 2016]

³⁴⁰ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Bathory/Blood_Fire_Death/758# [Accessed 12 May 2015].

³⁴¹ http://asset-d.soup.io/asset/2192/6852_dee7_960.jpeg [Accessed 12 May 2015].

³⁴² http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1a/Wodan's_wilde_Jagd_by_F._W._Heine.jpg [Accessed 12 May 2015].

³⁴³ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Falkenbach/...en_their_medh_r%C3%ADki_fara.../2867# [Accessed 12 May 2015].

Other mythological examples (see Figure 3.16) have included Burzum's *Umskiptar* and (whilst rooted in a very different style of metal) Finnish doom band Reverend Bizarre on their E.P. *Harbinger of Metal*. In the first we see Nótt riding the horse Hrimfaxi, who it was believed pulled the chariot of night across the sky, chasing Skinfaxi, the horse who pulled the chariot of Dagr (Day). Reverend Bizarre, despite being a Finnish band, used the painting *Thor's Battle With The Ettins* by Swedish artist Mårten Eskil Winge (1825-96), the Ettins being a type of giant:

Figure 3.16: Art in artwork (4)



a) *Nótt* (Peter Nicolai Arbo, 1887)³⁴⁴



b) *Umskiptar* (Burzum, 2012)³⁴⁵



c) *Tors strid med jättarna*
(*Thor's Battle With The Ettins*)
(Mårten Eskil Winge, 1872)³⁴⁷



d) *Harbinger of Metal*
(Reverend Bizarre, 2003)³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ <http://www.theequinest.com/images/peter-nicolai-arbo-4.jpg> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³⁴⁵ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Burzum/Umskiptar/328487#> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³⁴⁶ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Reverend_Bizarre/Harbinger_of_Metal/34061# [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³⁴⁷ <http://nyskapande.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Thor333.jpg> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

Returning to the theme of landscape discussed earlier, *1184* by Windir (Figure 3.17) used *Vinter ved Sognefjorden* (1827) by the Norwegian Johan Christian Dahl, an artist described by Neil Kent as one of the ‘leading proponents of the artistic resurrection of the wild beauty of the Nordic countries’.³⁴⁸

Figure 3.17: Art in artwork (5)



1184 (Windir, 2001)³⁴⁹

Here we see how a metal band is revisiting the use of place as a means of identity construction; the painting itself was already a representation of place and this has been rekindled more than 150 years later. As a result of artists such as these ‘the wild mountains became an important part of Norwegian national consciousness’.³⁵⁰ However here, rather than national identity, the band attempts to construct a more specific, regional identity – that of the village of Sogndal on the northern shore of the Sognefjorden, the album combining not only the Dahl painting, but the title referring to the year of a significant event in the history of the region, the Battle of Fimreite, between King Magnus Erlingsson and Sverre Sigurdsson. Bassist Hvàll explains the significance of the prominent regional figures to their work (Arntor was also the name of Windir’s previous album in 1999):

The people of Sogndal were tired of all the taxes from King Sverre. When he raised them again before Christmas 1183, a group of men in Sogndal, led by Arntor (a local farmer) killed the priests and men that served Sverre, as a protest for his tyrannical regime. Sverre was furious and ordered his army to burn Sogndal to the ground and kill the guilty ones. Another local king, Magnus Erlingsson, heard that Sverre was on his way to punish us and saw an opportunity to defeat him in a battle and become the sovereign king of Norway. The two armies bashed together in the fjord here in Sogndal, 2000 men died and sadly our "king" Magnus fell in the battle. As a punishment Sverre

³⁴⁸ Neil Kent, *The Triumph of Light and Nature: Nordic Art 1740-1940* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 61.

³⁴⁹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/1/3/4/7/1347.jpg?4258> [Accessed 13 May 2015].

³⁵⁰ Tarjei Rønnow, *Saving Nature: Religion As Environmentalism – Environmentalism As Religion* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), p. 226.

burned Sogndal to the ground. He confiscated Arntor's farm, and made it a seat for his men. So our lyrics are made in honour of our local hero Arntor, and is in total hatred against Sverre. (sic)³⁵¹

As already illustrated in Figure 3.8, the theme of ships and the sea plays an important role. This is again demonstrated by the use of a portion of another Hans Gude painting, on Falkenbach's ...*Magni Blandinn Ok Megintiri*... (...*Mixed With Strength and Glory*...) (Figure 3.18):

Figure 3.18: Art in artwork (6)



a) ...*Magni Blandinn Ok Megintiri*... (Falkenbach, 1998)³⁵²



b) *Viking Ships Under Sail in Sognefjord* (Hans Gude, 1889)

Following their adaptation of the work of their compatriot Arbo for *Blood Fire Death*, Bathory used English Victorian Sir Frank Dicksee's dramatic painting *The Funeral of a Viking* for the cover of *Hammerheart* in 1990 (Figure 3.19). The painting is used in full, wrapped around the fold of CD the booklet with the image depicting a 'splendidly somber representation'³⁵³ of the Viking tradition of a ship funeral for leaders or kings, where 'the journey to the otherworld [is] dramatically enacted: the funeral ship

³⁵¹ <http://www.voicesfromthedarkside.de/Interviews/WINDIR--7149.html> [Accessed 13 May 2015].

³⁵² http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Falkenbach/...magni_blandinn_ok_megint%C3%ADri.../2868# [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³⁵³ Wilson, 1997, p. 62.

is sent out to sea, burning'.³⁵⁴ The striking nature of the image suited the music's 'powerful and majestic energy [...] mighty and magnificent, like the Viking warriors themselves'.³⁵⁵

Figure 3.19: Art in artwork (7)



a) *Hammerheart* (Bathory, 1990)³⁵⁶



b) *The Funeral of a Viking* (Sir Frank Dicksee, 1893)³⁵⁷

Funeral traditions also play a central role in the front cover for the curious example of *Likferd* by the Norwegian band Windir (2003). The album liner notes simply 'Artwork by Tidemand and Gude',³⁵⁸ with no indication that they are prominent Norwegian National Romanticist artists from 150 years earlier. Further online information widely credits the cover as featuring the painting *Likferd Pa Sognefjorden* (*Funeral Procession at Sognefjord*, 1853). Indeed, first impressions can easily suggest that the Windir cover is merely a cropped version of Tidemand and Gude's work.

³⁵⁴ O'Donoghue, p. 70.

³⁵⁵ http://www.metal-archives.com/reviews/Bathory/Hammerheart/759/Braided_Binky/324452 [Accessed 13 May 2015].

³⁵⁶ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Bathory/Hammerheart/759> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³⁵⁷ <http://www.illusionsgallery.com/Funeral-Viking-L.jpg> [Accessed 12 May 2015].

³⁵⁸ Windir, *Likferd* liner notes (Head Not Found, 2003).

However, further research shows that there are multiple versions of the original painting with numerous subtle differences between them. Figure 3.20 shows the Windir artwork, a rare version of the painting that the Windir cover was taken from, followed by another version of the same painting that is much more accessible online. There are a number of variations, such as the differing angles of the boat in the foreground, in the first version making the coffin underneath the Norwegian flag more apparent, a greater amount of blue sky on the right hand of the picture, as well as the people in the boat on the same side being dressed differently in seemingly more traditional outfits. The cropping of the Windir cover draws focus to the people being taken on board, emphasising the personal nature of the forthcoming journey:

Figure 3.20: Art in artwork (8)



a) *Likferd* (Windir, 2003)³⁵⁹



b) *Likferd Pa Sognefjorden Version 1*³⁶⁰



c) *Version 2*³⁶¹ (Gude and Tidemand, 1853)

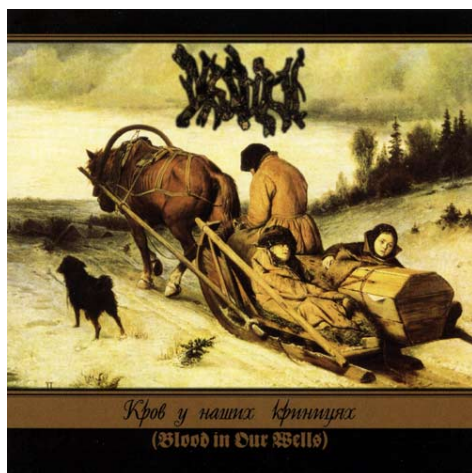
³⁵⁹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Windir/Likferd/18781> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³⁶⁰ <http://www.ovaering.no/filer/ImageArchive/image.asp?imageid=182901> [Accessed 12 May 2015].

³⁶¹ <http://www.museumsyndicate.com/images/5/42664.jpg> [Accessed 13 May 2015].

Whilst it is clear that Nordic bands are playing a prominent role here, there is a striking similarity with Drudkh (Ukraine) and the cover for *Blood In Our Wells* (2006), which uses in full *Last Journey*, an 1865 painting by the Russian artist Vasily Perov (Figure 3.21):

Figure 3.21: Art in artwork (9)



Blood In Our Wells (Drudkh, 2006)³⁶²

As with the previous examples, themes of death and sadness are again present, with a coffin being pulled by a horse driven by a hooded figure, as two small children ride on the sleigh with it. The stooped heads of the driver and horse, as well as the facial expressions of the children depict a sense of weariness as well as sorrow. In a similar manner to the *Likferd* cover, everything from the demeanour and clothing of the people to the autumnal colour scheme suggests a strong desire for the audience to identify with the figures as common people, as Volk; this is ‘a painting that sums up feelings of hardship, dogged work ethic, nature that is at once bleak and beautiful, and pride in all the above’.³⁶³

It would be inaccurate to assume that this kind of art was restricted to Europe. The series of four paintings *The Voyage of Life* by American artist Thomas Cole (1842) bears many similarities by depicting the human journey (childhood, youth, manhood and old age), all using the image of a figure travelling on a boat set against the dramatic backdrop of the American wilderness. The Swedish doom metal band Candlemass used

³⁶² http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Drudkh/Кров_у_наших_криницях_%28Blood_in_Our_Wells%29/112304# [Accessed 15 May 2015].

³⁶³ http://www.maelstromzine.com/ezine/review_iss50_3674.php?sid=voker92e37a0gilvtb1ouksfk4 [Accessed 15 May 2015].

two of the series to accompany albums early in their career, although obviously for them there could not be said to be a personal national connection (Figure 3.22):

Figure 3.22: Art in artwork (10)



a) *Nightfall* (Candlemass, 1987)³⁶⁴



b) *The Voyage of Life: Old Age* (Thomas Cole, 1842)³⁶⁵



c) *Ancient Dreams* (Candlemass, 1988)³⁶⁶



d) *The Voyage of Life: Youth* (Thomas Cole, 1842)³⁶⁷

It is clear that art of this style played a significant role in an increasing trend during the 1800s where national identity formation was gathering pace, and visual representations of landscape, journey, mythology, and the ordinary people, had become part of many artists' expanding influence. Indeed, Christopher Riopelle suggests that 'just about every modern nation, especially as political independence loomed, or in its optimistic wake, saw the virtue of depicting its own landscape'.³⁶⁸ The dramatic nature of the landscapes and the use of powerful imagery and symbolism has provided heavy metal bands with the opportunity to create a strongly visual representation of place and

³⁶⁴ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Candlemass/Nightfall/124#> [Accessed 16 May 2015].

³⁶⁵ <http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Candlemass/Nightfall/124#> [Accessed 16 May 2015].

³⁶⁶ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Candlemass/Ancient_Dreams/125# [Accessed 16 May 2015].

³⁶⁷ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/61/Thomas_Cole_-_The_Ages_of_Life_-_Youth_-_WGA05140.jpg [Accessed 16 May 2015].

³⁶⁸ Riopelle and Herring, p. 9.

identity that is easily fitting with the textual and musical styles that are used in collaboration with them. Some of the different ways that the continually developing connection between heavy metal and nature is manifest, is discussed further in Chapter 5.

3.7: Strengthening Old Roots

Cultural revisiting through an art form is clearly not a new concept, as I have demonstrated by looking at the National Romanticism movement. As Egilsson suggests:

Admiration of the medieval age had been a strong element in European romanticism from the outset [...] In many places it was synonymous with a ‘return to the roots’ in various forms. People felt they could come closer to themselves and their own origins by going back in time or venturing into pristine nature, or both.³⁶⁹

What often seems to be behind such trends is an intent to portray some kind of glorious, pure past, where the ‘original’ character of a nation was created and existed in a form untainted by external influences, be they those with whom they traded and actively encouraged, or those who were the by-product of invasion and thus unwelcome. Calling nationalism ‘one of the most popular and ubiquitous myths of modern times’, Smith states that ‘central to this myth is the idea that nations exist from time immemorial, and that nationalists must reawaken them from a long slumber’.³⁷⁰ In fact, in the 1931 *Journal of Modern History*, when describing the official birth of the Norwegian nation in 1814, Andreas Elviken suggests that the constitution created by the Norwegian Constituent Assembly (including the philologist Georg Sverdrup) ‘was characterized by emphasis on what seemed old rather than on what was new’, and that those who formally drew up those documents ‘romantically felt that their chief accomplishment was nothing but a vindication of an old Norway’.³⁷¹ In a clear reference to the period before King Olaf Tryggvason’s Christianisation of Norway in 995, and using language especially pertinent here, he further describes this fledgling nationalism as including the ‘romantic glorification of the peasants as the true bone and sinew of Norwegian nationality’.³⁷² A sentiment of returning to basics or fortifying the connection of an

³⁶⁹ Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, ‘Eddas, Sagas and Icelandic romanticism’, in Sigurðsson and Ólason, eds, p. 109.

³⁷⁰ Smith, pp. 19-20.

³⁷¹ Andreas Elviken, ‘The Genesis of Norwegian Nationalism’, *Journal of Modern History*, 3.3 (1931), p. 380.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 381.

author or receiver with their heritage is often pervasive in matters of national identity formation.

A particularly explicit musical example of this is the self-proclaimed ‘Norwegian musical constellation’ Wardruna. Whilst not connected to the world of metal in terms of the music that they create, the two principal musicians involved in the project have histories in prominent black metal bands. Both the artwork of their debut album *Runaljod – Gap Var Ginnunga* (2007) and their website proclaim their ‘whole concept and purpose’ as ‘sowing new seeds and strengthening old roots’.³⁷³ Within the liner notes of the album, alongside explanations of the history of the runes, the concept of the album and a ‘recommended literature’ list, the founding member Einar “Kvitrafn” Selvik states:

Wardruna search in the scattered ruins of Norse history and use the runes as a tool to understand and evoke the depths of the old Nordic pagan beliefs. Musically, the main focus is on recreating the Norse cultic musical language.³⁷⁴

He also details how he has made extensive use of old, traditional instrumentation, utilised the sounds of ‘trees, stones, bones, water and fire’, as well as carrying out recordings ‘outdoors at locations relevant to the different runes’. In a 2008 interview with the Russian Magazine *Dark City*, Kvitrafn talks about his intention for Wardruna being to ‘revitalize old traditions’.³⁷⁵ This bears a great deal of similarity to the work of Susan Denyer when discussing the writings of Frantz Fanon on post-colonialism, and the need, during the process of decolonisation, for a nation’s ‘reclamation and reconstruction of their own history and culture as the basis for the new post-colonial forms of nation and national identity’,³⁷⁶ as well as Belsey asking ‘Don’t nationalists identify with the nation as it once was?’³⁷⁷ Whilst Wardruna are not unusual in terms of their reference to a more favoured past privileging traditional Nordic pagan culture over the arrival of Christianity in Scandinavia,³⁷⁸ the project is certainly unusual in the depth of runic research that is presented both in the artwork and online, especially within the field of popular music.

³⁷³ Wardruna, *Runaljod – Gap Var Ginnunga* CD booklet, (Indie Recordings, 2007).

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ <http://www.wardruna.com/about/darkcity.html> [Accessed 15 October 2012].

³⁷⁶ <http://www.photoinsight.org/theory/theory.pdf> [Accessed 15 October 2012].

³⁷⁷ Belsey, p. 65.

³⁷⁸ e.g. The unification of Denmark and Norway, and the acceptance of the new religion on behalf of the people by King Harald Bluetooth in c. 965AD, was commemorated by one of the Jelling runestones.

3.8: National Identity in Heavy Metal Fashion

Heavy metal has long been obsessed with the band T-shirt; Seb Hunter called it part of the ‘standard metal uniform’,³⁷⁹ and insisted that ‘The T-shirts have to be black’.³⁸⁰ Whether it be through the use of spectacular logos, images of impressive landscapes or the fantastical world of mythology, this dark background colour presents the opportunity for dramatic and striking images to have an appropriately blank canvas for maximum impact, and they often make use of a wide-ranging palette of contrasting bold and bright colouring. Most relevant to my own work is how bands use the full range of the visual aspects of their work, including their merchandise, to represent place, and using fashion and costume to do so is not limited to the use of the humble black T-shirt (Figure 3.23):

Figure 3.23: Wardruna *Odin* shirt design³⁸¹



Many bands have extended the application of the recurring themes of nature, landscape, iconic symbols and artwork examined so far, to include various aspects of their merchandising, replicating album covers in full. This style of merchandising ensures that the band’s chosen representation of place becomes part of the identity formation of people worldwide, regardless of the individual’s own genealogy and heritage, as an observation of any metal festival crowd can demonstrate. A popular, now sold out shirt design from Wardruna (Norway, Figure 3.23), involved a wood carving-style drawing of the one-eyed chief Norse god Odin. Wardruna actually take their clothing representations of place a stage further with another aspect of their output

³⁷⁹ Seb Hunter, *Hell Bent for Leather: Confessions of a Heavy Metal Addict* (London: Fourth Estate, 2004), p. 25.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁸¹ <http://www.wardruna.com/shop/9-CLOTHING-01/men.jpg> [Accessed 12 March 2013].

being seen in the band's online shop that also stocks woolen tunics and handcrafted pendants made out of deer teeth and antlers, each with runic symbols on them.

Much the same as with the artwork itself, the trend of using mythology, national identity or heritage as the basis for heavy metal fashion has extended well beyond the borders of the Nordic countries. For example, the English black metal band Winterfylleth used a large image of the famed early 7th-century Sutton Hoo helmet on the front of a shirt that on the back had the slogan 'When shield and hand defend their crown',³⁸² as well as on a shirt design for their 2012 album *The Threnody of Triumph*, using an image of a section of a belt buckle that was also part of the Sutton Hoo horde (Figure 3.24):³⁸³

Figure 3.24: Winterfylleth shirt designs



Wodensthorne are a comparable band from the North East of England, who in a similar style to Wardruna have used images of Woden (the Anglo Saxon name for

³⁸² http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-rv4SIUTEthE/TuOBMkGuLrI/AAAAAAAAAMM/yfBHkIkbw8w/s1600/Winterfylleth_SuttonHoo_TS_Visual.jpg, [Accessed 12 March 2013].

³⁸³ http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-d4Rm5KiWFiw/UFBbe_mCScI/AAAAAAAAASI/YIP7NARDTys/s1600/PHXXX_Winterfylleth_TheThrenodyOfTriumph_TS_HiRes.jpg [Accessed 13 March 2013].

Odin) on a T-shirt design,³⁸⁴ although on this occasion, they showed Woden with blue paint over one eye, partly in reference to Odin sacrificing one eye for wisdom and knowledge, but also in relation to the debated belief that ancient Britons, and indeed many of the Celtic peoples, used blue dye from the woad plant as warpaint.³⁸⁵ In addition, the members of Wodensthroner make use of the paint in this way for the majority of live performances. The use of face paint in the style of what is known as corpse paint has a long history in black metal but this is almost always only black and white in colour, so the use of the blue paint is both distinctive and in keeping with the narrative of the primary genre from which they take musical influence. As Nick Richardson suggests:

For a genre so hung up on authenticity, Black Metal wears a lot of make up [...] Black Metallars don spikes [...] they wear armour and paint their faces, they howl like wolves and shriek like banshees.³⁸⁶

This mention of armour introduces another aspect of a clothing-based representation of place that has seen numerous examples of heavy metal bands presenting themselves dressed in this way or holding weaponry. Connections between many of the recurring themes identified, both in heavy metal as a whole as well as within the specifics of the bands most relevant here, are noted by Laura Wiebe Taylor, in relation to Norwegian black metal:

Black metal's appropriations of Nazism, along with Satanism and Norse paganism, are also related to the scene's propensity for misanthropy – its celebrations of violence and war [...] Even images of nature take on an especially harsh or threatening guise [...] Black metal band photos and promotional shots of musicians in absurd re-creations of Viking armour often provide visible manifestations of this violent masculine archetype.³⁸⁷

Whilst Taylor's conclusions are successful in terms of her classification of habitual elements of transgression (and so can be seen to have much in common with the writing of Keith Kahn-Harris in *Extreme Metal* who examines these themes in some detail), her dismissive comments towards bands who choose to be photographed with armour or weaponry are less useful, and do little to legitimize her arguments.

Hagen points out that bands across black metal 'frequently pose with weaponry ranging from swords and axes to spiked clubs, torches, pikes, and the occasional

³⁸⁴ <http://bindrunerecordings.com/distro/Wearables/shirtWODENSTHRONEhoodiepic.JPG> [Accessed 12 March 2013].

³⁸⁵ <http://www.woad.org.uk/html/britain.html> [Accessed 26 March 2013].

³⁸⁶ Richardson, *ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁸⁷ Wiebe Taylor, in Scott, ed., 2012, pp. 188-189.

revolver’.³⁸⁸ The explanation for the considerable quantity, and for the widespread acceptance of such imagery, can at least be in part connected to heavy metal’s long fascination with the worlds of fantasy, war, and violence mentioned earlier. This type of illustration has become so commonplace during the first forty or so years of the history of this style of music, that nobody expresses surprise if bands themselves choose to pose with swords, axes or shields for promotional materials. Figure 3.25 shows how Amon Amarth (Sweden), Týr (Faroe Islands), Ensiferum (Finland), Graveland’s Rob Darken (Poland), Meads of Asphodel (England), and Arkona (Ukraine), have all played an active role in this kind of imagery. These costumes and weaponry are carefully selected to be an additional representation of both the place and historical period relevant to their output. However, much like the matters of listener response discussed earlier with the paintings of landscape or some of the recurring iconic symbols outlined, there is a considerable possibility that imagined communities and transnational identities could easily be constructed in the mind of the listener. Here we see that it would take at least some, specialist knowledge to distinguish between the cultures being represented by the differing bands, if they are attempting to do so in the first place themselves:

Figure 3.25: Weaponry promotional pictures



a) Amon Amarth³⁸⁹



b) Týr³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁸⁹ <http://userserve-ak.last.fm/serve/500/28561319/Amon+Amarth+AAvikings.jpg> [Accessed 26 March 2013].

³⁹⁰ http://wallpaperscraft.com/image/tyr_warriors_band_mountains_bald_14531_1920x1080.jpg [Accessed 26 March 2013].

c) Graveland³⁹¹d) Ensiferum³⁹²e) Meads of Asphodel³⁹³f) Arkona³⁹⁴

One of the most extreme examples of costume seeping into international heavy metal consciousness is where bands involve Viking re-enactment groups to perform on stage with them in their larger-scale concert and festival performances. The most prominent of the re-enactment groups to do so is the Jomsvikings, who have branches worldwide, and have performed with the Swedish band Amon Amarth, and Manowar from America (Figure 3.26). This has involved both reconstructions of battles in full regalia as well as large scale Viking longships forming a prominent part of stage designs, such as during Amon Amarth's performance at the Wacken Open Air festival near Hamburg, Germany in 2006. Furthermore, during Amon Amarth's set at the Bloodstock festival of 2009, they encouraged fans to pretend that they were rowing a Viking longship whilst forming a line sitting down in the middle of the crowd. Video footage online shows fans enthusiastically taking part whilst waving replica axes and drinking horns.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ <http://todestriebrecords.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/rob-darken-graveland.jpg> [Accessed 2 June 2014].

³⁹² <http://www.globaleastfan.com/images/bands/ensiferum.jpg> [Accessed 26 March 2013].

³⁹³ <http://cdn0.lostateminor.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/meads-of-asphodel-band.jpg> [Accessed 2 June 2014].

³⁹⁴ <http://www.audiotrip.me/Files/7b0e0d57-b839-4a7e-a6a9-6a8b8fd8388f.jpg> [Accessed 2 June 2014].

³⁹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPkc24pptIY> [Accessed 11 March 2013].

Figure 3.26: Jomsvikings with Amon Amarth³⁹⁶

The Viking style drinking horn has become a familiar sight throughout metal culture (see the logo of the Dutch band Heidevolk in Figure 3.27), especially at festivals with their large scale gatherings of market stalls selling not only the horns, but also replica swords, shields, jewellery made out of materials such as wood, leather, and imitation bone, as well as helmets, and even chain mail.

Figure 3.27: Heidevolk logo³⁹⁷

The infiltration into the heavy metal community of both musicians and fans dressing in costumes or with armour from a variety of historical periods, has long straddled a fine line between issues of authenticity and fancy dress. On viewing a band appearing in promotional materials clothed in fashions relevant to a culture or time referenced in their work (perhaps lyrically, via artwork, or more rarely through the music itself), a fan is faced with the often subconscious decision as to what (if any)

³⁹⁶ http://img.rp.vhd.me/4607991_11.jpg [Accessed 13 March 2013].

³⁹⁷ [http://www.bestrockpics.com/data/media/265/Heidevolk%20wallpaper%20\(1\).jpg](http://www.bestrockpics.com/data/media/265/Heidevolk%20wallpaper%20(1).jpg) [Accessed 11 March 2013].

impact this has on the material, and how it is to be interpreted. Does this additional visual feature add further weight to a band presenting work that is serious in attempting to produce historically accurate representations of a cultural heritage, or are they creating something that aims purely to entertain with little regard for anything other than a vaguely imagined past that provides a convenient excuse to dress up?

Treated in isolation, it seems unlikely that the outfits worn by artists would be solely responsible for how their work is viewed in terms of accuracy and authenticity, although some metal fans have dismissed the self-proclaimed 'Pirate Metal' band Alestorm from Scotland simply on the basis of their pirate costumes ('a shit novelty joke').³⁹⁸ The issue of authenticity is frequently debated in popular music and cultural studies; as Allan Moore suggests, 'Authenticity is so powerful a concept as to be disabling, to totally inhibit academic work. The necessity, then is to conceive it as an emergent, rather than an inherent, property'.³⁹⁹ If bands choose to ignore modern day clothing in favour of historical costume, this can only really be appreciated as one aspect of a more complete combination of artwork, lyrics, music, live performances, and interviews. Furthermore, reactions to the same material will vary greatly, often being affected by the cultural experiences and history of the receiver.

Obviously, fans of bands are not restricted to the same countries as the artists themselves. Therefore, when a fan purchases and wears a piece of merchandise that bears a symbol, image, or landscape synonymous with or representative of another national or transnational identity, it raises questions regarding how, or even whether, the fan can have any affinity with what they are publicly supporting, or whether this is even an issue. This would be an interesting area for future study. Furthermore, as is easily demonstrated, there have been numerous examples of bands that have represented either in their artwork, lyrics or promotional materials, a national or transnational identity very different to their own. It seems difficult to imagine these bands, or indeed the worldwide fans of this music (if they are conscious or aware of the question at all) can be treating the material as anything other than such 'anthropological curiosities'.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ User simon_b, <http://www.wereallneighbours.co.uk/idlechat/message.php?id=25150&page=927> [Accessed 19 May 2015].

³⁹⁹ Moore, 2007, p. xv.

⁴⁰⁰ O'Donoghue, p. 2.

3.9: Conclusion

As can be seen, the strong imagery of the Nordic region has much to offer a musical genre that has a long history of making use of striking illustrations and symbolism. Tales of gods, magic, war, mythical creatures, mysterious writings and inscriptions, presented in a language alien to much of the metal community, set long ago in landscapes, for most, unvisited and very much in the realm of ‘other’, are ripe for the minds of creative musicians and their collaborating visual artists to let their imaginations take hold: the ‘romance of otherness’ is an appropriate term in the world of Viking metal,⁴⁰¹ but it is clear that the fascination in heavy metal with this type of imagery is not restricted to the Nordic countries with multiple examples across Northern Europe and beyond.

What is of primary interest here is the seeming lack of attempt in the majority of cases to distinguish between specific places of origin, and a much more common reliance on a transnational, pan-Nordic identity, not only on the part of the many ‘receivers’, but possibly more surprisingly on the part of the artists and musicians themselves. In the case of the Nordic bands, perhaps this is due to the historical similarities between much of the peoples and cultures of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and how the separate national identities are comparatively recent constructions. However, we see consistent examples of visual and textual representations of Finland being received by much of the metal community as Viking metal. This is despite the best efforts of some of the bands concerned; Ensiferum and Amorphis have gone to considerable trouble to specifically represent the national epic *The Kalevala*, with Väinämöinen (the old man and the central character) appearing on every Ensiferum album cover, and the hammer of the Finnish thunder god Ukko, Ukonvasara, appearing on the cover of both *Tales From the Thousand Lakes* (1994)⁴⁰² and *Far From the Sun* (2003).⁴⁰³

As von Helden states, ‘There is still discordance’ as to what Viking metal represents; it ‘might contribute positively to a cultural examination of one’s own or even others’ national history and thus play a vital part in identity construction in a

⁴⁰¹ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture v. 1* (New York: Verso Books, 1994), p. 247.

⁴⁰² Amorphis, *Tales From the Thousand Lakes* (Relapse Records, 1994).

⁴⁰³ Amorphis, *Far From the Sun* (EMI, 2003).

globalised world'.⁴⁰⁴ Whilst bands from other countries such as England (Winterfylleth), Drudkh (Ukraine) and Arkona (Russia) have presented imagery more specific to their place of origin by using landscapes with which their work has an affinity, the visual aspects of the work of those from the northern European territories seems to continue to be mostly received, if not always sent, as a transnational identity that the majority of the metal community and industry seem unwilling or unable to differentiate. When seen in the wider context of the international trend for the kind of imagery relevant here, the concept of an imagined community has focussed on the historical or heritage rather than geographical aspects; landscape is seen to be old, immortal, traditional, the heritage of the individual. The presentation of periodic costume or weaponry creates a comparable narrative of the suggestion of history and 'returning to roots', without necessarily requiring audiences to engage in specificities unless they wish to. Therefore, by engaging in this form of imagery, not only are bands often portraying a transnational identity, but in many ways they are also helping to craft a pan-historical equivalent, connecting with the desire of many to participate with 'tradition'. For as Hobsbawm states, 'all invented traditions, so far as possible, use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion'.⁴⁰⁵

It is clear that the imagery examined here, as well as the cultures that they are taken from, has begun to play a significant part in the fashion of both heavy metal musicians and audiences. There is often little connection between the heritage of the person wearing the costume or merchandise and the origins of the image on the merchandise itself; there is obviously the potential for further research here: Do those that choose to sport such imagery (both musicians and fans) feel any connection with these representations of place, and if so is this enhanced if they share a personal genealogy with the place itself? If the place or culture portrayed is one other than their own, do fans consider this aspect of their identity formation when deciding to purchase or wear these items, and how do they judge issues of authenticity when they see bands dressed in costume? Whilst for many the primary concern will remain the music, it is evident that there are multiple layers of identity formation at play. The following chapters examine how both textual and musical elements are incorporated alongside the visual representations.

⁴⁰⁴ von Helden, *ibid.*, pp. 33-41.

⁴⁰⁵ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *ibid.*, p. 12.

Chapter 4: Text and Lyrics

In this chapter I turn my attention to the textual subject matter of bands from the regions relevant to this study, tracing source materials wherever possible and looking at how the writers have chosen to position themselves in terms of regional, national, or transnational identity formation. As the construction of the term Viking metal has demonstrated, Scandinavian bands (or bands from elsewhere who focus on Scandinavian topics in their lyrical content) tend to receive the predominance of attention. However, as will be demonstrated, the extent of the contribution from bands elsewhere also deserves recognition and is equally extensive. Countless individual texts, or those from larger collections, ensure that nations with a turbulent history or a vast mythological tradition, provide a rich source of material for bands in the heavy metal community. Regions such the UK and the eastern European and Soviet nations have as much to offer lyric writers as their Nordic counterparts, whether the intent of the lyricist is to create an original narrative or to paraphrase or quote from historical texts.

4.1: The Nordic Region

Amorphis (Finland) is a band that has spent much of their twenty-year career adapting passages of the Finnish national epic *The Kalevala* in their lyrics, presenting material clearly intended as a faithful representation of the original text, work that ‘became a rallying flag for national aspirations’.⁴⁰⁶ Their discography also contains several examples of lyrics inspired by *The Kalevala*, as well as songs or albums referring to specific characters. A strong sense of national identity and awareness, and the strong role played by a national epic is perhaps not surprising in Finland; as a comparatively young country formed around the peak of the popularity of National Romanticism in the 1800s, the ideas of philosophers such as the German poet Johann Herder (1744-1803) found a receptive audience.⁴⁰⁷ As Simon During notes, in Herder’s work he argued that ‘the notions “culture” and “nation” align, early-nineteenth-century Europe becoming a scene of individual cultures chasing after nationhood’.⁴⁰⁸ In this

⁴⁰⁶ Bosley, trans., p. xiii.

⁴⁰⁷ Significant Herder publications include *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (published 1772), and *On the Knowledge and Sensation of the Human Soul* (1774).

⁴⁰⁸ Simon During, ‘Literature — Nationalism’s Other? The Case for Revision’, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 139.

theory of cultural nationalism there could only be the formation of a nation if its cultural identity used the language and oral tradition of the ordinary common folk, or as Brennan suggests, for Herder, ‘each people was now set off by the “natural” characteristics of language’.⁴⁰⁹ F.M. Barnard takes issue with the commonly perceived distinction between Herder’s cultural nationalism position and the political nationalism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that ‘while Herder identified the source of national belonging with sharing a common language, Rousseau equated it entirely with the articulation of a common will. There is clearly more to it’.⁴¹⁰ Barnard proceeds to challenge the idea that the two schools of thought are as clearly separated as many perceive, a notion echoed by Allan Patten:

Berlin and others are right to notice the relatively apolitical character of Herder’s nationalism compared with later forms of nationalism. However, a singular emphasis on the non-political character of Herder’s nationalism risks pushing into the shadows the important passages where he *does* make political claims relating to the nation. Berlin exaggerates when he writes that Herder’s nationalism was ‘never’ political.⁴¹¹

The importance of language and literature to Herder is however undeniable, as suggested by Keith Bosley:

Herder’s ideas about national identity had their greatest impact among nations with little by way of recorded history or literature [...] In such nations a rising educated minority was inspired to return to its roots.⁴¹²

Amorphis’ first releases had matters of national identity at the heart of their work, through the appropriation of their national poetry and mythology. Their debut album *The Karelian Isthmus* (1992) opens with a short introductory track entitled ‘Karelia’ which, whilst instrumental, had accompanying lyrics in the liner notes: ‘The sound of thousand warriors, The fields of thousand battles, Still, in our hearts we can hear, the great hymn of Karelia’.⁴¹³ The region of Karelia, sometimes referred to as the Karelian Isthmus, is an area of some historical dispute between modern-day Finland and Russia, and is currently part of the latter; as Mimi Daitz suggests ‘Karelia is an area tremendously rich in culture and song, an area from which contemporary Finnish culture, too, has gained a great deal’.⁴¹⁴ Karelia is also the region that was referenced in

⁴⁰⁹ Timothy Brennan, ‘The National Longing For Form’, in Bhabha, p. 53.

⁴¹⁰ F.M. Barnard, *Herder on Nationality, Humanity and History* (Quebec: MQUP, 2003), p. 38.

⁴¹¹ Alan Patten, ‘The Most Natural State: Herder and Nationalism’, *History of Political Thought*, 31.4 (2010), 658.

⁴¹² Bosley, p. xvi.

⁴¹³ Amorphis, *The Karelian Isthmus* (Relapse Records, 1992).

⁴¹⁴ Mimi S. Daitz, *Ancient Song Recovered: The Life and Music of Veljo Tormis* (New York: Pendragon Press, 2004), p. 246.

the subtitle of *The Kalevala*, being ‘old Karelian poems about ancient times of the Finnish people’.⁴¹⁵ Somewhat confusingly however, the album also contained a track called ‘Exile of the Sons of Uisliu’, with lyrics based on a section of an 8th-century Irish tale of the same name,⁴¹⁶ and ‘Sign From the North Side’ which opens with the line ‘True Celtic power from the Cape of Cornwall’.

Their following album *Tales From The Thousand Lakes* (1994) again clearly had Finnish national identity as a primary concern (the land of a thousand lakes being the affectionate nickname given to the band’s home country). Here the band makes use of direct quotations from *The Kalevala* in a number of places. For example, the first verse of ‘In the Beginning’ is taken directly from the first four lines of *The Kalevala* (‘I have a good mind, take into my head, to start singing, begin reciting’).⁴¹⁷ The acts of singing and reciting are clearly innate within many oral cultures, with the importance of the role of the poet or songsmith a recurring theme. The lyrics of ‘To Fathers Cabin’ quotes part of section 28 of *The Kalevala*, ‘Into Hiding’, a plea to Väinämöinen, the ‘old man’ and central character of *The Kalevala*, omitting only the italicised phrase from the original:

O old man, good god careful man of heaven
Keeper of stormclouds (*and governor of vapours*), make misty weather
And create a tiny cloud in whose shelter I may go.⁴¹⁸

Indeed, Amorphis’ use of *The Kalevala* on *Tales From The Thousand Lakes* is so extensive that their official website describes the lyrics for the whole album as being ‘based on [*The Kalevala*] except where otherwise indicated’;⁴¹⁹ it is only ‘First Doom’ and ‘Forgotten Sunrise’ that eschew this textual source. The choice of Amorphis to reference Väinämöinen in ‘To Fathers Cabin’ is far from unique. In fact, their contemporaries and compatriots Ensiferum dedicated two songs to him on their debut album, in ‘Old Man (Väinämöinen)’ and ‘Little Dreamer (Väinämöinen Part II)’:

The stars fell from the night sky
as he reached his hands in the air
As the sun peeked between the trees
the Old Man burst to tears⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁵ Bosley, *ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁴¹⁶ Vernam Hull, ed., *Longes mac n-Uislenn: The Exile of the sons of Uisliu* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1949), p. 67.

⁴¹⁷ Bosley, *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴¹⁸ Bosley, *ibid.*, p. 393.

⁴¹⁹ http://amorphis.net/?page_id=24 [Accessed 10 August 2015].

⁴²⁰ Ensiferum, ‘Old Man (Väinämöinen)’, *Ensiferum* (Spinefarm Records, 2001).

On the 1996 album *Elegy*, Amorphis turned their attention from *The Kalevala* to the other collection of poetry fundamental to Finnish culture, and what the Finnish Foreign Affairs Ministry calls The Kalevala's 'companion work'.⁴²¹ Published in Helsinki in 1840-1, *The Kanteletar* was again compiled by Elias Lönnrot. *Elegy* incorporates multiple references, including a song that would become one of the most popular of Amorphis' career, 'My Kantele' (a kantele being a zither style instrument native to Finland); this again makes use of direct quotations from an original text:

So it will not play will not rejoice at all
 Music will not play to please
 Give off the right sort of joy
 For it was fashioned from cares
 Moulded from sorrow.⁴²²

Amorphis have continued to draw inspiration from Finnish mythology throughout their career with releases including *Tuonela* (the Finnish name for the realm of the dead),⁴²³ and their 2009 album *Skyforger* that concentrates on the character Ilmarinen, the blacksmith famed for creating the arc of the sky, as well as the Sampo,⁴²⁴ a magical artefact for which 'more than 30 different theories have emerged over the concrete nature' of what it actually is.⁴²⁵ The forging of the Sampo appears in section 10 of *The Kalevala*. By focusing on a particular mythological character, lyrically if not musically, some of Amorphis' albums could be defined almost as 'concept albums', the style of lyric writing which could perhaps be traced to the progressive rock movement of the 1970s where a whole album is unified by a recurrent lyrical theme; examples include the 1973 album *Tales From Topographic Oceans* by Yes, or Genesis' *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* from 1974.⁴²⁶

Then the smith Ilmarinen
 the everlasting craftsman
 he hammers away
 he tap-taps away
 He forged the Sampo with skill⁴²⁷

⁴²¹ <http://finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=160079&> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

⁴²² Amorphis, 'My Kantele', *Elegy* (Relapse Records, 1996).

⁴²³ Amorphis, *Tuonela* (Nuclear Blast Records, 1999).

⁴²⁴ Amorphis, *Skyforger* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2009).

⁴²⁵ <http://www.finnishmyth.org/FINNISHMYTH.ORG/Sampo.html> [Accessed 10 August 2015]. An in depth discussion of the identification of the Sampo can be found in Emil Nestor Setälä, *Sammon Arvoitus (The Riddle of the Sampo)* (Helsinki: Otava Publishing, 1932).

⁴²⁶ For further studies of these progressive rock concept albums, see Kevin Holm-Hudson, *Genesis and The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* (Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2008), and Jennifer Rycenga 'Tales Of Change Within The Sound: Form, Lyrics, and Philosophy in the Music Of Yes' in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, ed. by Kevin Holm-Hudson (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 143-166.

⁴²⁷ Bosley, *ibid.* p. 116.

Figure 4.1: Amorphis 'Beginning of Time' lyrical comparison

Original Pekka Kainulainen poem 'The Beginning Of Time' ⁴²⁸	Amorphis 'Beginning of Time' ⁴²⁹
<p>I have a wish to sing now Of time before the beginning when nothing was all there was but how to sing of nothing? So I sing of the beginning the birth of all creation the borders of nothingness the substance of inception The solitude of space my mother my father salt of the sea infinity had no end time had no beginning Still unborn I remained still unopened the narrow gate still unborn in my hiding place still no release bestowed upon me Wrapped around my darkness I knew my time was waiting I felt the days pass by, and nights, and the way of the northern stars</p> <p>The songs were born into my mind the knowledge of the stars the stories before and after the spells of war, and peace The birth of the world was my birth too I found the land, began the time from shorelessness of sea from underneath the space</p>	<p>I have a wish to sing Of time before the beginning When nothing was all But how to sing of nothing? So I sing of the beginning The birth of all creation The borders of nothingness The substance of inception The solitude of space my uncaring mother My father salt of the sea</p> <p>Still unborn I remained Unopened the narrow gate Unborn in my hiding place No release by my maker Wrapped around my darkness I knew my that time was waiting I felt the passage of days and nights And northern stars The solitude of space my uncaring mother My father salt of the sea The void and infinity were never ending Time had no beginning The songs were born into my mind The knowledge of the stars The stories before and after The spells of war and peace The birth of the world was my birth too I found the land, began the time From shorelessness of the sea From underneath the space I have a wish to sing Of time before the beginning...</p>

Amorphis are not the only modern day writers to use the Finnish national epics as their inspiration or source material. Poets such as Paavo Haavikko and Pekka Kainulainen have done likewise, and Amorphis have in turn used these poems for lyrics on albums such *Eclipse* (2006, Haavikko),⁴³⁰ and *Silent Waters* (2007, Kainulainen).⁴³¹ The latter is taken from a cycle of poems based on the character Lemminkäinen, the

⁴²⁸ Examples of these can be seen on the Amorphis website http://amorphis.net/?page_id=1107 [Accessed 10 August 2015].

⁴²⁹ Amorphis, *The Beginning of Times* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2011).

⁴³⁰ Amorphis, *Eclipse* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2006).

⁴³¹ Amorphis, *Silent Waters* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2007).

shamanistic hero of *The Kalevala*. Following this collaboration, Kainulainen became the sole lyric writer of subsequent releases such as *Skyforger* and *The Beginning of Times* (2011) as the band adapted large sections of Kainulainen's original poem cycles. Figure 4.1 demonstrates how Amorphis adopted the original Kainulainen text for the lyrics to 'Beginning of Time'.

Umskiptar,⁴³² the ninth album by the Norwegian band Burzum (2012), is textually unusual, in that the lyrics are a complete replication of all sixty-six verses of 'Volüspá' ('The Prophecy of The Seeress'), the first poem of *The Poetic Edda*. The text is performed by sole band-member Varg Vikernes in its Old Norse tongue, and Vikernes describes the vocals on this album as 'more important than any other Burzum album'.⁴³³ In some of the online publicity surrounding its release, the album was referred to as 'skaldic metal'.⁴³⁴ A skald was a poet whose 'complex, sophisticated verses [...] were very fashionable at the courts of kings and in the halls of cultured men' during the Viking age.⁴³⁵ The work of the skaldic poets has become a primary source for our written knowledge of the period's history and mythology, due to their being the carriers of oral traditions. Burzum is not the only band to have used the word 'skaldic' in connection to their output; the German band Falkenbach not only has a popular merchandise design that bears the inscription 'skaldic art' on the rear side,⁴³⁶ but Skaldic Art Productions is also the name of the record label belonging to mainman Vratyas Vakyas that in 2006 released the album *An Homage to Falkenbach*.⁴³⁷ With its inclusion of particularly explicit textual references to Norse mythology, *Umskiptar* was a lyrical departure for Vikernes. Despite previous allusions to some of the folklore that his country is well-known for ('We heard elvensong and water that trickled'),⁴³⁸ much of his writing had been cloaked in an atmosphere of philosophy and existentialism, along with an evident National Romanticist yearning for a previous age ('One day will the grave be unlocked and the soul must return to his world').⁴³⁹

⁴³² Burzum, *Umskiptar* (Byelobog Productions, 2012).

⁴³³ http://www.burzum.org/eng/discography/official/2012_umskiptar.shtml [Accessed 11 March 2014].

⁴³⁴ <http://www.burzum.org/eng/news.shtml> [Accessed 11 March 2014].

⁴³⁵ Ellis Davidson, p. 23.

⁴³⁶ <http://shop.napalmrecords.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/500x500/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/8/6/8676.jpg> [Accessed 13 March 2014].

⁴³⁷ Various Artists, *An Homage to Falkenbach* (Skaldic Art Productions, 2006).

⁴³⁸ Burzum, 'Det Som En Gang Var', *Hvis Lyset Tarr Oss* (Misanthropy Records, 1994).

⁴³⁹ Burzum, 'A Lost Forgotten Sad Spirit', *Burzum* (Deathlike Silence Productions, 1992).

Whilst Vikernes' hypnotic style of black metal has been extremely influential musically ('I wouldn't care if someone were to call Xasthur a Burzum clone'),⁴⁴⁰ for some this has been surpassed by the notoriety that his words and actions have received. These included his convictions for the murder of Øystein Aarseth of the band Mayhem in 1993, his role in the church burnings that afflicted Norwegian culture around the same period, and seemingly interchangeable labels of Satanist, Nazi and Odinist. However, more recently Vikernes has attempted to reposition himself in a variety of ways. Firstly, both in print and in online blogs,⁴⁴¹ he has presented his theories as a revolutionary academic:

Accept that much of what you think you know already is in fact not correct [...] Academics tend to disregard every book written without references to specific sources. This book is probably such a book, but I have to defend it by saying that I cannot list sources when the ideas are my own, the interpretations my own and the conclusions my own.⁴⁴²

As well as making public statements as an Ôðalist,⁴⁴³ in 2012 he also defended his proud racist standpoint ('Fight anti-racism and all those behind it by any and all means available').⁴⁴⁴ In addition, he has been keen to present himself as a misunderstood victim of unfair treatment – whether his 2013 arrest by French police,⁴⁴⁵ or by complaining that the author of a 1998 article in the Portuguese journal *Expresso* 'simply compiled together a number of (mostly inaccurate) quotes [...] and allowed the sensationalism of his subject to cloud genuine socio-political implications of a revolutionary musical movement'.⁴⁴⁶

A self-declared member of The Pagan Front, a website that provides space for a number of record labels and bands to publicise their 'National Socialistic Black Metal',⁴⁴⁷ the Finnish band Stormheit used the poetry of their compatriot Eino Leino (1878-1926) in much of their lyrics. This includes albums such as *Chronicon Finlandie* (2011), based on the poem *Tarina suuresta tammesta* (1896), entirely sung in Finnish, and containing songs such as 'Kalevan kansa' ('The Folk of Kaleva') and 'Heimoni kunnia Pohjola julisti' ('The North Declared The Glory Of My Tribe'). The Pagan

⁴⁴⁰ Malefic, Xasthur, January 2009, <https://wormgearzine.com/2009/01/03/xasthur-interview/> [Accessed 11 August 2016].

⁴⁴¹ http://www.burzum.org/eng/library/the_lords_of_lies13.shtml [Accessed 11 March 2014].

⁴⁴² Vikernes, p. 6.

⁴⁴³ <http://thuleanperspective.com/2013/07/31/why-odalism/> [Accessed 11 March 2014].

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SN1feAGd8sk> [Accessed 11 March 2014].

⁴⁴⁶ <http://www.burzum.com/burzum/library/articles/expresso/> [Accessed 11 March 2014].

⁴⁴⁷ <http://www.thepaganfront.com> [Accessed 11 March 2014].

Front website calls the album ‘Epic Pagan metal dwelling in the deepest national romantic emotions of [the] Finnish mindscape’,⁴⁴⁸ and the lyrics are again performed in Finnish, heightening the sense of other for the majority of listeners. ‘Heimoni kunniaa Pohjola julisti’ contains lyrics that, upon translation, reveal a combined demonstration of a transparent yearning for a glorious past, a strong national pride, and the important role of music in identity construction:

So came the age of Väinämö / The golden age of Finland
An age of wisdom, skills and spells / An age of songs and heroes
When great was the power of my land / A vast land of song and music⁴⁴⁹

Leino is a writer whose output is still widely read and much loved in modern Finland, as well as being highly regarded for its continuation of the *Kalevala* tradition. As Honko notes, ‘Leino in particular revealed the inherent splendor of the ancient tradition with its alliteration and parallelisms’.⁴⁵⁰ Clearly in the tradition of National Romanticism, and illustrative of the influence of folk culture prevalent in the country, Leino’s work would not normally be classified as being of a National Socialist nature. In fact other artists have used his work as inspiration without any kind of suggestion of extreme ideologies being present, such as Kuolemanlaakso, the Finnish band who made use of Leino’s poem collection *Helkavirsiä* early in their career.⁴⁵¹ However, this is not a unique example of writings with a National Romantic style yearning for a past age or culture. It is also not the only example where texts with a Norse mythological basis have been commandeered by those with a political viewpoint that is somewhat more extreme. As Mattias Gardell suggests:

The appropriation of the role of the underdog is a key factor in the process of identity construction in the radical racist culture [...] The romanticized warrior figure is also influential in the construction of an Aryan male identity [...] Frequently illustrated with medieval knights and raging Vikings, Aryan revolutionary papers, web pages, and white power CDs feature bombastic language more suited to heroic legends of the past than to contemporary politics.⁴⁵²

Gardell goes on to discuss the writings of racial occultist and völkisch thinker Guido von List (1848-1919), whose doctrine of Armanism was heavily based on aspects of ancient Germanic cultures and the secrets he claimed were held within the Armanen

⁴⁴⁸ <http://www.thepaganfront.com/totenkopfpropaganda/cd.htm> [Accessed 11 March 2014].

⁴⁴⁹ Stormheit, ‘Heimoni kunniaa Pohjola julisti’, *Chronicon Finlandie* (No Sign of Life Records, 2011).

⁴⁵⁰ Lauri Honko, *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epics: The Kalevala and Its Predecessors* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1990), p. 238.

⁴⁵¹ <http://kuolemanlaakso.net/band/> [Accessed 12 March, 2014].

⁴⁵² Gardell, pp. 69-70.

futhark and runes, concluding that for von List, Aryan man was ‘a reflection of the ancient Norse god/desses and a glimpse of future glory.’⁴⁵³

The Faroese band Týr has made texts and poems from the history and mythology of their country a fundamental part of their creative practice, and are now thought of as ‘the best known popularizers of Faroese traditional music’.⁴⁵⁴ The god from which they take their name is the Norse god of justice and law, a figure who is often portrayed as being one-handed. This is due to the Eddic tale of the wolf Fenris refusing to be bound or shackled by the gods unless one of them was brave enough to put his arm in the wolf’s mouth and, as Týr was known for his courage, he agreed. Sensing he had been tricked, Fenris bit off Týr’s hand. According to mythology, Fenris will remain bound until Ragnarök.⁴⁵⁵

‘Ormurin Langi’, is a track taken from Týr’s debut album *How Far to Asgaard*,⁴⁵⁶ and is an arrangement of a traditional Faroese ballad, the text of which was written by Jens Christian Djurhuus (1773-1853). Said to be the first poet to write in Faroese, Djurhuus was known for writing poems expressing views against the ruling Danish authorities in the Faroe Islands at the time. Translated as ‘The Long Serpent’, the ballad tells the tale of King Olav Trygvasson’s ship that went by the same name and the Battle of Svolder c.999, taking its information from *Heimskringla* the saga by the Icelandic poet and historian Snorri Sturluson, who was also the writer of the *Prose Edda*. Both the original ballad and the Týr track open with the line ‘Viljið tær hoyra kvæði mítt’ (‘Will you hear the ballad of mine?’), situating the text strongly within an oral culture. However, that is of course far from being a specifically Faroese trait, and so increases the likelihood that only a compatriot will be able to detect anything more than a transnational identity from this element of their representation of place alone. The Faroese native will certainly be familiar with the tale of Trygvasson though, as ‘Ormurin Langi’ was commemorated on a set of stamps in the country in 2006.⁴⁵⁷

The track ‘Sinklars Visa’ (‘The Ballad of Sinclair’) from Týr’s 2008 release *Land*, has lyrics taken from a 1781 poem by the Norwegian poet Edvard Storm. As with

⁴⁵³ Gardell, p. 24.

⁴⁵⁴ Green, p. 146.

⁴⁵⁵ Ellis Davidson, p. 31.

⁴⁵⁶ Týr, ‘Ormurin Langi’, *How Far to Asgaard* (Tutl Records, 2002).

⁴⁵⁷ <http://www.postbeeld.com/sfapb0604-ormurin-langi-10v-m-s> [Accessed 11 August 2015].

‘Ormurin Langi’, the original text runs to multiple verses (in this case nineteen, compared to the eighty-six of ‘Ormurin Langi’), but Týr have taken a selection and attempted to keep the original narrative intact. The historical tale behind the poem is one with relevance both in Norway and Scotland.

[‘The Ballad of Sinclair’ is a] Norwegian song about the massacre of Scots mercenaries hired by the Swedish king in a war with Norway and Denmark. Colonel Alexander Ramsay and his men landed at Isfjorden, on the coast of Romsdal and Møre, and were ambushed by Norwegian farmers at Kringen in the Gudbrandsdalen valley on 26 August 1612. Many of the Scots were slaughtered, among them Captain George Sinclair of Stirkoke, who led the Caithness Company.⁴⁵⁸

Týr took a similar approach on their second album *Eric the Red* (2006), when they presented their version of ‘Regin Smiður’ (‘Regin the Smith’, sometimes referred to as ‘The Ballad of Regin’ or ‘Reginsmol’), a traditional Faroese ballad that in its original form had one hundred and twenty-four stanzas. The same album also depicts some of the history of the Faroe Islands themselves by including the tracks ‘Ramund Hin Unge’ (Danish traditional, author unknown) and the well-known ‘The Wild Rover’ (Irish traditional, again author unknown). It is a common theory that the first inhabitants on the Faroe Islands were Irish monks, perhaps as early as the 6th century, and subsequently the islands fell under Danish rule in 1388. This remained the case until the mid 1940s, and whilst the islands have since then been self-governing, they are still considered part of the Danish realm, and Denmark is still responsible for some aspects of Faroese life including the military and the police. As Green suggests:

Scandinavia has a long history of collecting, studying, and publishing the remnants of their ancient oral literature, and the Faroes were no exception [...] it is important to note that well before the beginning of the Faroese nationalist period (circa the end of the 19th century), various Scandinavian (including Faroese) scholars began to recognise the Faroes as a treasure trove of old oral literature.⁴⁵⁹

The faithful representation of historical texts differs in approach from the majority of the career of Sweden’s Amon Amarth. One of the most significant protagonists in the field in terms of profile, popularity, and prolific use of Viking imagery and subject matter, whilst there are some examples of lyrics that are relatively faithful to the original sources, the band’s overall outlook is one of storytelling rather than creating any kind of political or historical document. Many lyrics are openly

⁴⁵⁸ <http://www.sinclairgenealogy.info/sinclairs-ballad> [Accessed 11 August 2015].

⁴⁵⁹ Green, p. 78. For studies of the history of the islands, a region that may have greater significance to the study of Scandinavia national identity than many may recognize, see John F. West, *Faroe: The Emergence of a Nation* (London: C Hurst & Company, 1972), and Jonathan Wylie, *The Faroe Islands Interpretations of History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987).

embellished and expanded upon by their lyric writer and lead singer Johann Hegg. In a 2009 interview he justified this by pointing out that the band did not see their work as in any way religious:

This is not a mission or anything, it's just me writing lyrics and singing about stuff that I find interesting and that's important for me. The only thing I want is to write interesting stories, whether that is bringing a part of my culture, I never thought about that.⁴⁶⁰

Whilst earlier in their career they referred to multiple tales from Norse mythology on almost a song by song basis, on the surface, Amon Amarth have (in a similar fashion to Amorphis) more recently moved towards a concept album style of presentation, with album titles suggesting that each album focuses on one mythological character. In 2006, they released the album *With Oden On Our Side*, which was followed, in 2008, by *Twilight Of The Thunder God* (a clear reference to the Norse god Thor). March 2011 saw the release of *Surtur Rising*, and in much of the press coverage surrounding the album it was billed as a tribute to the leader of the fire giants of Muspelheim and the oldest being in the nine worlds of Norse mythology;⁴⁶¹ the 2013 follow up was *Deceiver of the Gods* that focused upon the trickster god Loki. However, this style of titling is in some ways deceptive, as it disguises the internal themes and references; song titles allude to additional characters from Norse mythology such as 'The Last Stand of Frej' on *Surtur Rising*.⁴⁶² *Twilight Of The Thunder God* actually contains minimal reference to Thor other than in the opening title track, and far more in the way of themes of battle, war, and conflict. On occasion this is clearly positioned within a Norse setting such as the final battle of Ragnarök, ("There comes Lopt, the treacherous, he stands against the gods, his army grim and ravenous, lusting for their blood").⁴⁶³ More frequently, however, Norse references are subtle and can require contextual knowledge, as Hegg uses a lyrical style that means the identity of the warriors of which he writes is less explicit and the sentiment more widely transferable: 'See them gathered on the plains now, see an army strong and vast, as long as one of us remains here, none of them will ever pass'.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶⁰ Johann Hegg, interview with author, University of Northumbria, 29 October, 2009.

⁴⁶¹ <http://www.blabbermouth.net/news/amon-amarth-members-talk-about-war-of-the-gods-track-video/> [Accessed 12 October 2015]

⁴⁶² Amon Amarth *Surtur Rising* (Metal Blade Records, 2011).

⁴⁶³ Amon Amarth, 'Tattered Banners and Bloody Flags', *Twilight Of The Thunder God* (Metal Blade Records, 2008). Lopt is an alternative name for Loki.

⁴⁶⁴ Amon Amarth, 'Free Will Sacrifice', *Twilight Of The Thunder God*.

The German power metal band Rebellion (containing ex-members of bands such as Grave Digger and Annihilator) released a trilogy of albums between 2005 and 2009 each with the subtitle *The History of The Vikings* (volumes 1-3). Devoted entirely to a range of tales from Norse mythology and the Viking period, there could be no doubting the commitment to the topic, although there was no attempt to faithfully reproduce a specific text in the mould of Burzum's *Umskiptar* or Týr's 'Ormurin Langi'. In fact, in the wider context of their discography, it could be suggested that their approach to the Norse texts was more just another example of their treatment of a range of literary and historical tales.; they have also released *Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Tragedy in Steel* (2002), and *Furor Teutonicus* (2012), which focused primarily on the story of the ancient Germanic Chatti tribe and their resistance to the Roman Empire around the time of the first century. However, Rebellion's Viking trilogy is certainly comparable to similar lyrical treatments by contemporaries such as Amon Amarth:

Rebellion:
 To sit with Odin
 His guest and adopted son
 To live in Valhall
 Until Ragnarök may come⁴⁶⁵

Amon Amarth:
 Sword in my hand
 Axe on my side
 Valhall awaits me
 Soon I will die⁴⁶⁶

The self-styled *Kings of Metal*,⁴⁶⁷ Manowar (United States of America) have also made a significant lyrical contribution to the field, and like Rebellion have no personal genealogical connection to the Nordic region. Rather than reproducing national texts, they have instead chosen to create their own lyrics inspired by the mythological tales. Whilst musically they are some distance from what is commonly perceived as Viking metal, they were amongst the very first to make reference to Norse mythology within the hard rock and heavy metal spectrum. *Sign of the Hammer* in 1984, contained not only the title track, but also 'Thor (The Powerhead)', whilst the previous year, they released the song 'Gates of Valhalla':

⁴⁶⁵ Rebellion, 'Einherjar', *Arise: From Ginnungagap to Ragnarök – The History Of The Vikings Volume III* (Massacre Records, 2009).

⁴⁶⁶ Amon Amarth, 'Valhall Awaits Me', *With Oden On Our Side* (Metal Blade Records, 2006).

⁴⁶⁷ Manowar, *Kings of Metal* (Atlantic Records, 1988).

Valhalla the gods await me
 Open wide thy gates embrace me
 Great hall of the battle slain
 With sword in hand
 All those who stand on shore
 Raise high your hands to bid a last
 farewell to the Viking land⁴⁶⁸

Although this was not a subject that they would return to consistently, in more recent years they have revisited it to a far greater extent, making it a focal point of their output. In particular, the album *Gods of War* in 2007 devoted almost its entire content to characters and tales from the Norse mythological canon, including multiple titular references to Odin ('Overture to Odin', 'The Blood of Odin', 'Sons of Odin', and 'Odin'). The themes continued elsewhere with Odin's horse Sleipnir having a song named after him, as well as the trickster god in 'Loki God of Fire'. The lyrics of 'Army of the Dead (Part 1)' contain references to the Valkyries who take the fallen warriors from the battlefield to be taken to Odin's hall Valhalla, and Asgard, home of the gods:

Raise thy weapons on this day ye shall not die alone
 Fight and die let Valkyries fly for they shall take thee home
 I promise thee that on this night ye shall be by my side
 Asgard's halls await with heroes, brothers that have died
 For thee we wait at Asgard's gates come join us by our side
 Valhalla waits, so choose thy fate, for all of us must die.⁴⁶⁹

In 2008-9 the band discussed their intention to explore a multi-media project based on similar topics centering on a collaboration with German fantasy author Wolfgang Hohlbein.⁴⁷⁰ The project website, *The Asgard Saga*, invited fans to suggest ideas for songs and ways to extend the myth-based storylines that the band and Hohlbein were working on. Although the forum, www.asgard-saga.com, is no longer active, it is referred to on the Manowar official website,⁴⁷¹ along with plans for the culmination of the project in the form of an album to be called *Hammer of the Gods*, planned for release at the end of 2009. Subsequently, the only material to be released from the collaboration was the EP *Thunder in the Sky* that came out in the summer of that year. Since then, two of the three full-length releases from Manowar have been re-recordings of albums from earlier in their career (*Battle Hymns MMXI* and *Kings of Metal MMXIV*), commemorating their 30th and 25th anniversaries respectively, and so

⁴⁶⁸ Manowar, 'Gates Of Valhalla', *Into Glory Ride* (Megaforce Records, 1983).

⁴⁶⁹ Manowar, 'Army of the Dead', *Gods of War* (Magic Circle Music, 2007).

⁴⁷⁰ <http://www.blabbermouth.net/news/manowar-s-the-asgard-saga-to-premiere-at-magic-circle-festival/> [Accessed 14 March 2014].

⁴⁷¹ http://www.manowar.com/news_body.php?idnews=320 [Accessed 14 March 2014].

the band's thematic focus has shifted. However, *The Lord of Steel* (2012) did include the song 'Righteous Glory' ('On hooves of thunder her white horse parts the sky, take me to Valhalla, Valkyrie mine').⁴⁷²

4.2: Eastern Europe

As Figes explains, the importance of the written word to the continually developing sense of nationalism in the 1800s was not restricted to northern Europe: 'Most of the national movements in the Tsarist Empire began with the growth of a literary cultural nationalism in the middle decades of the nineteenth century'.⁴⁷³ Many Eastern European countries have a rich heritage in the written word being used as a weapon in the face of oppression, and this is none more the case than in Ukraine. The chronicling of his country's history has led Taras Shevchenko (1814-61) to be thought of there as the father of literature and linguistics.⁴⁷⁴ Furthermore, on the two hundredth anniversary of his birth in March 2014, it was some of the gathered crowds that subsequently became involved in the troubles with the Russian authorities that followed.⁴⁷⁵ Shevchenko's canon contains a fierce desire for independent Ukrainian identity, an undeniable sentiment that was never forgotten during the lengthy periods of Polish and Russian rule in Ukraine. Shevchenko's defiance of suppression continued to make both him and his work powerful symbols during the most recent of conflicts; he was 'a radical social thinker who believed that Ukrainians were a distinct nationality and should be a separate nation',⁴⁷⁶ and so is a 'symbol of resistance'.⁴⁷⁷

Shevchenko was a true people's poet not only because he wrote in the Ukrainian language that was actually spoken by the people, thus laying a solid foundation for the Ukrainian literary language as a whole, and not only by the closeness of the *Kobzar* to the oral Ukrainian folk poetry (that trait was also common to the Ukrainian romanticists), but mainly because he expressed the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of the broadest sections of the Ukrainian people.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷² Manowar, 'Righteous Glory', *The Lord of Steel* (Magic Circle Music, 2012).

⁴⁷³ Figes, p. 71.

⁴⁷⁴ <http://theculturetrip.com/europe/ukraine/articles/taras-shevchenko-and-the-search-for-a-ukrainian-identity/> [Accessed 23 September 2015].

⁴⁷⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26504449> [Accessed 23 September 2015].

⁴⁷⁶ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 41.

⁴⁷⁷ <http://www.pri.org/stories/2014-03-10/19th-century-poet-symbol-resistance-ukraine> [Accessed 19 March 2014].

⁴⁷⁸ <http://www.infoukes.com/shevchenkomuseum/articles.htm> [Accessed 23 September 2015].

References to historical and mythological material in the world of heavy metal have not been restricted to the Nordic countries and its associates, with the nations from the Slavic, Soviet and Baltic regions also being particularly active. Perhaps the most significant of these bands is Drudkh from the Ukraine. With the name meaning ‘wood’ in Romanized Sanskrit, since 2003, band leader Roman Sayenko has ensured that Drudkh have had a prolific career thus far, with ten studio albums released by 2015. Despite having a comparatively high profile, Drudkh have a long adhered to policy of ‘no photos, no interviews, no website, no gigs’.⁴⁷⁹ A desire to cultivate a mysterious persona with a strict control on information that is made public, and interaction with the media that is either heavily restricted or non-existent is not unusual in the world of heavy metal, especially in black metal. Patterson traces the origins of black metal’s fascination with this method of presentation to the artwork of Bathory’s self-titled debut album in 1984. Featuring no band photos at all, the cover only mentioned Quorthon (vocals, guitars, lyrics) and Boss (producer, label boss) by name.

[This] meant that the element of mystery and anonymity had now well and truly been added to the black metal formula, a mystery made easier to retain due to the decision to keep the band as a studio-only project.⁴⁸⁰

Drudkh’s discography is littered with references to events from Ukraine’s tumultuous past, often with a theme of exalting those who have fought (either literally or otherwise) for the independence of the country; songs are nearly all performed in their native tongue, heightening the sense of ‘other’ for many metal fans. The third album *The Swan Road* makes extensive use of the poetry of Shevchenko, taking sections of the epic poem ‘Гайдамаки’ (‘Haydamaky’) (1841) to form the lyrics for ‘Eternal Sun’, ‘Glare of 1768’ and ‘Fate’, and using ‘Ой чого ти почорніло, Зелене поле’ (‘Why You Blacken, The Green Field?’) for the song ‘The Price of Freedom’, where ‘the field, blackened by the blood of the fallen Ukrainians, speaks to future generations of the departed’.⁴⁸¹

All bells call
In all Ukraine
Haydamarky shouted:
“Nobles are perishing, are perishing!
Nobles are perishing! We will party
and heat up a cloud”.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ <http://www.season-of-mist.com/bands/drudkh> [Accessed 6 August 2013].

⁴⁸⁰ Patterson, 2013, p. 28.

⁴⁸¹ <http://bandura.org/brothers-we-shall-live/> [Accessed 23 September 2015].

⁴⁸² Drudkh, ‘The Glare of 1768’, *The Swan Road* (Supernal Music, 2005).

I, green, have turned black
 For your freedom.
 I will green again,
 But you will never
 Come back on freedom.
 You will plough me silently
 and damn your destiny.⁴⁸³

The recurring theme throughout these examples is stories of Ukrainian struggles against Polish rule in the 17th- and 18th-centuries near the Dnieper river. Ukrainian Cossacks and peasants staged a rebellion that was designed as an uprising against national oppression but resulted in an almost ethnic cleansing. Despite the records showing that those responsible for the uprising were guilty of horrific atrocities and killing on a huge scale, in some parts of Ukrainian society they are held as heroes and independence fighters. Yekelchuk explains how the impact of the Cossack rebellion spread:

What had started as the Cossacks' rebellion against Polish rule also became a peasant war on the landowners and a religious war of the Orthodox against non-Orthodox (including Catholics, Uniates, and Jews).⁴⁸⁴

In a similar manner to Amorphis' use of the poetry by 19th- and 20th- century writers such as Paavo Haavikko and Pekka Kainulainen discussed earlier, Drudkh's fourth album *Blood In Our Wells* (2006) contains lyrics that are based on the works of a range of Ukrainian poets such as Lina Kostenko (1936-), Oleksandr Oles (1878-1944), and Yuriy Klen (1891-1947), as well as another example from Shevchenko. The writings here further present themes of a yearning for national identity, suffering, or overcoming enemy oppression:

My nation! And you — an eagle that has been wounded at the night
 And you are knight, who has been captured!⁴⁸⁵

With grief I can't summon my destiny
 Because I already don't have it.⁴⁸⁶

The darkness entangles and fights us down
 [...] And we, have woken up from non-existence.⁴⁸⁷

The impact of these sentiments is enhanced as a result of taking texts conceived within the context of previous conflict, and positioning them in the era of another. There is no

⁴⁸³ Drudkh, 'The Price of Freedom', *The Swan Road*.

⁴⁸⁴ Yekelchuk, p. 28.

⁴⁸⁵ Oleksandr Oles, 1908, in Drudkh, 'When The Flames Turn To Ashes', *Blood In Our Wells* (Supernal Music, 2006).

⁴⁸⁶ Taras Shevchenko, 1839, in Drudkh, 'Solitude', *Blood In Our Wells* (Supernal Music, 2006).

⁴⁸⁷ Yuriy Klen, 1929, in Drudkh, 'Eternity', *Blood In Our Wells*.

attempt to edit the narratives of the original poems, using them in full:

In using the works of various Ukrainian poets as lyrics, Drudkh already demonstrates its artistic pursuit of eternity. Lifting these poems, some of which are over a century old, the band places them in a present-day context so perfectly that they could well have been written yesterday. [...] One merely needs to open his ears in order to hear these historical words resound in the haze of the impending downfall that today lurks ominously at the frontiers of the independent Ukrainian nation. Capturing the conflict within Ukraine's soul a century after being written, this acquisition of new-found meaning testifies of the lasting value of Oles's words of warning.⁴⁸⁸

The album ends with a primarily instrumental piece, 'Ukrainian Insurgent Army', that begins with a fragment of what sounds as if it could be a field recording, in which a solemn, baritone voice says in Ukrainian, 'Cossack heads have fallen near the river / The glory about them will not die, will not be forgotten'.⁴⁸⁹ The recording is taken from the film *Mamay*, a Romeo and Juliet style story of the popular Ukrainian folklore character Cossack Mamay, which was Ukraine's submission for an Academy award in 2003. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army itself was a paramilitary organisation involved in conflict during the Second World War with not only Nazi Germany, but also Russia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, the name of the album *Blood In Our Wells* is taken from a poem by Oleh Olzhych (leader of the OUN – Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists – and executed by the Nazis in 1944 for nationalist activities), and the liner notes dedicate the album to Stepan Bandera, who led the OUN in 1933. A combination of this clear nationalist sentiment, and the fact that Drudkh refuse to give interviews or engage in what may be considered standard press and promotional activities, led to widespread accusations of National Socialism and an extreme right ideology. As Benjamin Olsen suggests:

Russia and Ukraine have seen an explosion of fascist, racist and ultra-nationalist activity since the fall of the Soviet Union, with metal, and more recently black metal, playing an important role.⁴⁹⁰

Despite this, in 2008 Drudkh signed France's Season of Mist, one of the biggest independent metal labels in the world. In a move anticipatory of the increased exposure that this would bring, a press release about the signing predicted criticism and attempted to make their position unequivocal:

⁴⁸⁸ Degtyarov, <http://blackivorytower.com/2015/02/21/drudkh-and-our-mythical-origin/> [Accessed 24 September 2015].

⁴⁸⁹ <http://www.zenial.nl/txt/bloodino.txt> [Accessed 19 March 2014].

⁴⁹⁰ Benjamin Olsen, 'I Am The Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music And Culture' (unpublished master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2008), p. 146.

The absence of any comments or information from DRUDKH's side gave an opening to a few ignorant internet warrior-fans to spread rumours, that the band embraces some extreme political views. This is absolutely misleading and a total profanation, since there is nothing in DRUDKH's music or lyrics that would suggest any political outlook. DRUDKH praise individualism, self-improvement and estrangement from modern values.⁴⁹¹

The only possible conclusion is that the band see their output as a desire to return to a previous time, to return to roots, and to be estranged from modern society. Whilst the band's insistence that their position does not equate to 'extreme political views' in the form of racism or National Socialism, it is difficult to ignore the fact that subsequent releases have reinforced the themes and sources discussed above. In relation to Oleska Stefanovych, whilst again replicating the original text in full, Drudkh has changed the title from the original 'Through Death' to 'Towards the Light', hinting at a belief in a victorious Ukrainian spirit. Written in 1933, this was during a period known as Holodomor, or the man-made famine imposed on Ukraine by the Soviet leader Josef Stalin that is thought to have killed seven million peasants:

Their clothes are sodden by blood, Their flags are torn to pieces
But each, each of them, With death has overcame death.⁴⁹²

There is no doubt that lyrics such as these can emphasise perceptions of Drudkh's political stance:

[The poems and lyrics on *Handful of Stars*] form an integral ideational and thematic foundation of this disc which metaphorically immerses us into the atmosphere of turbulent 20th-century Ukraine with its desperate and uncompromising struggle that left no room for romantic doubt.⁴⁹³

North from Ukraine in the Baltic region, Estonia's Metsatöll formed in 1999 and have been incorporating elements of Estonian folklore and mythology in their work ever since. Performing entirely in Estonian, their catalogue is suggestive of 'other', especially when coupled with their prolific use of native folk instrumentation, (discussed in the following chapter). However, on the band's official website they have gone to great lengths to publish all of their lyrics both in Estonian, Finnish and English, making the textual aspect of their work much more accessible than Drudkh.

There are references in Scandinavian sagas to a land called Eistland, such as that in the *Heimskringla* in the saga of Olaf Tryggvason that are now thought to be referring

⁴⁹¹ <http://www.season-of-mist.com/bands/drudkh> [Accessed 19 March 2014].

⁴⁹² Oleska Stefanovych, 1933, in Drudkh, 'Towards the Light', *Handful of Stars* (Season of Mist, 2010).

⁴⁹³ <http://ukrainianweek.com/Culture/49154> [Accessed 19 March 2014].

to modern day Estonia, as well as people who are labelled as ‘Eistr (Estonians)’.⁴⁹⁴ This area has fallen under the rule of many other countries during its history including Denmark, Sweden, Russia and Finland, and it is perhaps the last of these that has left its mark the most, with both Finnish and Estonian belonging to the Uralic linguistic group, and the countries’ mythologies containing several similarities. As already mentioned, the Finnish national epic is *The Kalevala*, whereas the Estonian equivalent is known as *The Kalevipoeg* (first published in 1853).⁴⁹⁵ As with many other European countries, the mid-19th century in Estonia was a significant one in terms of national identity formation:

The term ‘national awakening’ is appropriate to describe the quarter-century from the beginning of the 1860s to the mid-1880s. It was a period of conscious agitation by a growing number of activists who sought to convince others of the merits of a modern Estonian nation and culture.⁴⁹⁶

In identifying themes in the lyrics, one of the most common references concerns iron – a feature of band lyrics from a range of geographical areas. Perhaps the reason for the prominence of iron is the number of tales (historical or mythological) involving a blacksmith (Ilmarinen in Finland, Ilmarine in Estonian), or the forging of metal objects of various kinds such as hammers, weaponry and armory. Examples include:

By the dwelling of the blacksmith, by the fire within the furnace, curses on thee cruel iron.⁴⁹⁷ [Turisas: Finland]
 I only swear an oath to iron because iron is in our force, iron is in ourselves and iron has a voice.⁴⁹⁸ [Metsatöll: Estonia]
 We’ll ride forever cause the iron is stronger than death.⁴⁹⁹ [Ensiferum: Finland]
 Ore of earth, fire of sky, forged is blade of gods, blood and iron.⁵⁰⁰ [Bathory: Sweden]
 Cold iron your ware, Excalibur your pride.⁵⁰¹ [Winterfylleth: England]

In addition, Metsatöll’s 2007 live album was entitled *Curse Upon Iron*, and was a significant release in the context of this study. The album documented a collaborative project between the band and Estonian composer Veljo Tormis, along with the Estonian National Male Voice Choir, culminating in a concert in June 2006 at the Pirita cloister in Tallinn. Born in 1930, Tormis is a highly regarded choral composer whose works are

⁴⁹⁴ Alison Finlay, and Anthony Faulkes, trans., *Heimskringla: Volume 1 – The Beginnings to Óláfr Tryggvason* (London: University College London, 2011), p. 140.

⁴⁹⁵ Madis Arukask, ‘The Estonian National Epic, Kalevipoeg: Its Sources and Inception’, in *The Voice of The People: Writing the European Folk Revival, 1760-1914*, ed. by Matthew Campbell and Michael Perraudin (London: Anthem Press, 2012), p. 128.

⁴⁹⁶ Toivo U. Raun, *Estonia and The Estonians* (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 2001), p. 57.

⁴⁹⁷ Turisas, ‘Cursed Be Iron’ *The Varangian Way* (Century Media, 2007).

⁴⁹⁸ Metsatöll, ‘Rauavanne’, *Hiiekoda* (Nailboard Records, 2004).

⁴⁹⁹ Ensiferum, ‘Iron’, *Iron* (Spinefarm Records, 2004).

⁵⁰⁰ Bathory, ‘Blood and Iron’, *Twilight of the Gods* (Black Mark Production, 1991).

⁵⁰¹ Winterfylleth, ‘Forging The Iron of England’, *The Ghost of Heritage* (Profound Lore Records, 2008).

either in the style of, or are lyrical or musical adaptations of, Estonian folk songs. One of his most significant works is *Raua Needmine (Curse Upon Iron)* (1972), which ‘contains all the primary characteristics of this particular project: shamanic chants, rhymes borrowed from Kalevala, the primeval power of runo-singing’,⁵⁰² another indication of the historical connection between *The Kalevipoeg* and *The Kalevala*. The collaborative project between Tormis and Metsatöll involved material by both parties, with the metal band performing their versions of the choral compositions of Tormis (including the title track), and some of Metsatöll’s earlier catalogue being especially arranged for the performance by the choir’s leader Tauno Aints.

The work of Metsatöll to bring exposure to the culture and language of Estonia has led to great acclaim in their home country. In 2011, they were finalists for the Keeletegu direct linguistic action award organised by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Science, and were ‘commended by the republic’s president for their successful touring abroad, as well as for acquainting the world with the nation and region of Estonia through Estonian-language songs’.⁵⁰³ Metsatöll occupy a distinctive position within the field, both in terms of lyrics and musical setting, by creating original material that could easily be mistaken for arrangements of traditional songs. They have often discussed how lyrically ‘the topics that we sing about are timeless, they are legends and fantasy’,⁵⁰⁴ but state that musically they ‘don’t really need to put the Estonian traditional music in my metal’.⁵⁰⁵

Bordering Metsatöll’s Estonia to the south is Latvia, and the output of Skyforger is steeped in the history and folk culture of their country, performed entirely in their native tongue. The band’s stated aim is to give their nation’s history greater exposure internationally as well as at home, so that their heritage is not forgotten:

What we do is just make songs with all the lyrics about things from our Latvian history, mythology, all these things [...] I tried to put it there and wanted to inform people about them, even our *own* people! The youth here don’t follow much [about Latvian culture] and are not so interested in our history, so I wanted to spread it somehow and let it be known.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰² http://www.metsatoll.ee/en/muusika/raua_needmine.html [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵⁰³ <http://www.metsatoll.ee/en/metsatoll/index.html> [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵⁰⁴ <http://www.metal-experience.com/interviews/2010/Interview%20Metsatoll%202010.htm> [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵⁰⁵ Lauri Öunapuu, Metsatöll, May 2014, <http://bravewords.com/news/metsatoll-be-afraid-of-the-big-bad-wolves> [Accessed 11 August 2016].

⁵⁰⁶ <http://www.invisibleoranges.com/2011/02/interview-skyforger/> [Accessed 21 March 2014].

Much of Skyforger's sound is based in the black metal sound of the mid-nineties, with the influence of folk music in terms of instrumentation and some vocal lines. In addition they also make use of traditional folk songs and what is referred to on their website as 'Ancient Latvian warriorsong',⁵⁰⁷ such as 'Zviegtin' zviedza kara zirgi' ('Neighed the Battlehorses') and 'Kam pūšat kara taures' ('Why The Horns of War Are Blown'), both taken from their debut album *Kauja pie Saules* (*The Battle of Saules*), 1998.⁵⁰⁸ The album's title track is based upon a poem by the Latvian Vilis Plūdonis (1874-1940), a writer known for criticism of the German presence in Latvia at that time. Those who do not wish the Latvian national anthem to include a reference to god ('Dievs, svētī Latviju!', 'God Bless Latvia!', by Baumaņū Kārlis), have proposed Plūdonis' texts as a suitable alternative.⁵⁰⁹ These include hymns such as 'Tev mūžām dzīvot, Latvija' ('You Ever Live, Latvia!'), and the 'Latvian Hymn':

We want to be masters in our native land. We want to make our own rules for ourselves, this land is ours, these cities are ours! We don't want to beg for what is ours but take by our will!⁵¹⁰

'Kalējs kala debesīs' ('Forger Forged Up In The Sky') returns to the recurring theme of earlier of weaponry being forged: 'Forge the swords for ourselves from the nine kinds of steel then go to the land of Jods'.⁵¹¹ The Jods is an evil creature from Latvian mythology that presides over the realm of the dead.

Skyforger's second album was *Latviešu strēlnieki* (*Latvian Riflemen*) (2000),⁵¹² and the lyrics tell the detailed stories of the battalion of the same name, 'stalwart supporters of the Bolshevik regime'.⁵¹³ The Riflemen was a division of the Russian Army during World War 1 that was formed to help defend the Baltic territories against German invasion, and the album focuses specifically on battles during the period of 1915-17. Whilst the majority of the lyrics are written by Skyforger's Pēteris 'Peter' Kvetkovskis, excerpts from the novel *Mūžības skartie* by Latvian poet Aleksandrs Čaks (1901-50) appear in both the title track and 'Kauja pie Plakaniem, kauja pie Veisiem' ('Battle of Plakani, Battle of Veisi'), telling the tale of 1st Daugavgrīva Riflemen battalion's battles in the winter of 1915 where they 'defeated four times larger German

⁵⁰⁷ http://skyforger.lv/en/index.php?main_page_id=45&page_type=text [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵⁰⁸ Skyforger, *Kauja pie Saules* (II Moons, 1998).

⁵⁰⁹ <http://latvianhistory.com/2013/11/04/> [Accessed 24 September 2015].

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Skyforger, 'Kalējs kala debesīs', *Kauja pie Saules* (II Moons, 1998).

⁵¹² Skyforger, *Latviešu strēlnieki* (Folter Records, 2000).

⁵¹³ Figes, p. 667.

forces'.⁵¹⁴ The sentiment of Latvian pride against the German invaders is all too clear, and provides a constant narrative throughout the album, whether original compositions or when using the texts of Čaks:

Proud Riflemen, you guys from Latvian meadows and forests [...]
 You stood against the predominance of German guardsmen
 Dry and thirsty lips of dirty Russian streets
 You kissed with your blood - Just for freedom⁵¹⁵

Yet Riflemen don't weep or wail
 Under grenade fire they jolly laugh
 For they know that their blood is spilled for a right thing⁵¹⁶

In a similar manner to the recognition received by Metsatöll from the Ministry of Education and Science in Estonia, Skyforger collaborated with the Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia in 2003 to create an independent release of traditional Latvian folk songs, *Zobena dziesma (Sword Song)*,⁵¹⁷ including 'Pārkiuns vede vedekļēnu' ('Pērkonš Brought the Bride'), described on the Skyforger site as an 'Ancient Letgallian folk song',⁵¹⁸ referring to a region in Eastern Latvia where the language is spoken only by a small minority but is protected in Latvian law. The album also contained a version of a Lithuanian folk song 'O kai saulutė tekėjo'. In personal correspondence with vocalist and guitarist Pēteris Kvetkovskis in 2014, he identified the work of Lithuanian black metal band Zpoan Vtenz as being an inspiration here, as they also recorded a version of the same source material in 1997 under the name 'Gimę nugalėt'.⁵¹⁹ Here we see examples of not only the use of historical and mythological texts as lyrics, but also their original accompanying musical source material. This style of treatment will be examined further in the following chapter. To assist with the identification of alternative recordings of some of the other folk material on *Zobena dziesma*, Kvetkovskis generously sent copies of a batch of recordings from his personal collection, explaining:

You will hear that some of them are quite similar or exactly the same – of course we did our arrangement, but if we decided that original versions are good enough, then we left them exact the same. For most of those songs lyrics are changed and that was very know practice even in olden times. You can hear same melody with different lyrics or same lyric with many different melodies. I thought that this process is not ended so I dared to do it also myself.⁵²⁰ [sic]

⁵¹⁴ <http://skyforger.lv/en/albums/lyrics/latvian-riflemen/> [Accessed 24 September 2015].

⁵¹⁵ Skyforger, 'Latviešu strēlnieki', *Latviešu strēlnieki*.

⁵¹⁶ Skyforger, 'Nāves sala' ('Death Island'), *Latviešu strēlnieki*

⁵¹⁷ Skyforger, *Zobena dziesma* (Independent release, 2003).

⁵¹⁸ http://skyforger.lv/en/index.php?main_page_id=48&page_type=text [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵¹⁹ Zpoan Vtenz, 'Gimę nugalėt', *Gimę nugalėt* (Dangus Productions, 1997).

⁵²⁰ Pēteris Kvetkovskis, Personal communication with author, March 2014.

After a period of seven years without a release, Skyforger returned in 2010 with the album *Kurbads*.⁵²¹ Here, the lyrics are mostly penned by the band, apart from ‘Tēva dēla pagalmā’ (‘In the Yard of the Father's Son’), described as an ‘Ancient Latvian folksong’.⁵²² As Kvetkovskis explained:

This is ancient tale of our nation, written down 200 years ago, when there were still old people [...] This story is known for most part of Latvians. We heard or read it, when we were kids: some from our grandmothers or in school. It's a popular fairytale.⁵²³

As with Burzum and Stormheit, for some there is often a difficulty in distinguishing between content that has a pride in national identity and more extreme National Socialism.⁵²⁴ In the case of Skyforger, this has been further complicated by the band's use of a Swastika in their logo. In a webzine interview in 2006, Kvetkovskis defended their use of the symbol by explaining that it is ‘An ancient and holy symbol dated back 6000 years [...] In Latvia it is know as Cross Of Thunder or Cross Of Fire meaning fire, wind, energy, thunder’.⁵²⁵ The band has subsequently removed the symbol from their logo as they felt that despite their attempts to distance themselves from National Socialism (even inscribing the rear cover of some releases with the slogan ‘No Nazi stuff here’!), perceived connections were hindering their career.

Another band that has also experienced accusations of this nature is Poland's Graveland. Formed in 1991, mainman Rob Darken has produced a steady output throughout, and since 1999 has been the sole musician involved. Single performers are not infrequent in the world of extreme metal and black metal in particular (Burzum of Norway being another prominent example), and it was the abrasive sound of the early nineties second wave of black metal (as pioneered by many of the significant Norwegian bands such as Darkthrone and Mayhem) that was the biggest influence on Darken's first recordings. The debut album *Carpathian Wolves* (1994) already gave an indication of how Graveland would present elements of national identity and mythology textually.⁵²⁶ The title referenced the Carpathian mountain range that stretches over the southern border of Poland, and the track ‘In The Northern Carpathians’ contained the lyrics ‘Lightning cuts through the dark sky, almighty Perun gave us his sign’, with

⁵²¹ Skyforger, *Kurbads* (Metal Blade Records, 2010).

⁵²² http://www.skyforger.lv/en/index.php?main_page_id=55&page_type=text [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵²³ <http://www.metal-temple.com/site/catalogues/entry/musicians/peter.htm> [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵²⁴ <http://www.metalinjection.net/editorials/if-you-still-dont-think-varg-vikernes-is-racist-after-watching-this-video-youre-either-blind-or-racist> [Accessed 13 October 2015].

⁵²⁵ <http://www.tartareanddesire.com/interviews/skyforger.html> [Accessed 21 March 2014].

⁵²⁶ Graveland, *Carpathian Wolves* (Eternal Devils, 1994).

Perun being the highest god of the pantheon in Slavic mythology. Graveland's third album *Following The Voice Of Blood* (1997) was one of the first to inject a more sinister edge to the lyrical content, increasingly far removed from a purely mythological context.⁵²⁷ Released on the No Colours record label (notoriously associated with the National Socialist Black Metal movement, NSBM), it contained a lyrical contribution from Hendrik Möbus of German black metal band Absurd in the form of 'White Hand's Power' (sample lyric 'White as consciousness of illuminated mind, spirit became flesh, symbolized by the hand. That's true cleanness'). Möbus contributed these lyrics from prison where he was serving time for his part in the 1993 murder of Sandro Beyer, their teenage compatriot.⁵²⁸

Through subsequent releases, Darken's musical progress has paralleled Sweden's Bathory, as he has incorporated an increasing amount of some of the musical identifiers that are discussed in the following chapter that have become representative of the genre known as Viking metal. Lyrically, however, there has been an undercurrent of an extreme right-wing sentiment that in interviews Darken has done little to disguise. Attempting to explain his quest for racial purity in society, in 2010 he stated:

White Beasts of Wotan are warriors who fight for fatherland and freedom of their Folk [...] Racially mixed society is more stupid and easier to manipulate. There is no place for revolt and individual thinking. People deprived of their roots and history, separated from their native traditions and beliefs become vain and idle.⁵²⁹

He goes on to explain how he believes that 'stupid' white women have been falsely convinced that 'hanging about with Blacks is cool'.⁵³⁰ As suggested, this kind of extreme politics is often given tenuous justification via a background of paganism and northern mythologies, regularly mixed with a vociferous anti-Christian standpoint:⁵³¹

In my pagan world there are too [sic] categories of enemies: one fight deceitfully with falsehood and betrayal...poisonous and false ideology is their weapon; the second category of my enemies – they come for Hades, the beasts of darkness and black skin barbarian tribes of night... In my world the warrior does not protect the weak...because according to the Wotanists law, the weak should try to become stronger by themselves and then they should take care of themselves without any help. In my world the warrior fights to protect his family, his land and his Folk.⁵³²

⁵²⁷ Graveland, *Following the Voice of Blood* (No Colours Records, 1997).

⁵²⁸ <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2000/fall/darker-than-black> [Accessed 12 May 2014].

⁵²⁹ <http://frostkamp.wordpress.com/2008/08/05/graveland-interview/> [Accessed 12 May 2014].

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ See Gardell, 2003, for further information.

⁵³² Darken frostkamp interview, 2008.

It would be wrong to suggest that Darken shares no common ground with countless other artists within extreme metal. In fact, his pagan references and comments against organised religion are echoed throughout his chosen musical landscape:

In the pagan (or rather the beliefs of our forefathers which are called pagan because of the lack of the better term) belief, I have found the spiritual power that stimulates my artistic imagination [...] The hatred against Christianity that is so strong in Polish BM underground comes from the everyday conflict and the fight of young revolting generation against the catholic society and the predominant role of the Catholic Church.⁵³³

However, despite Darken's initial attempts to portray Slavic identity and their frequent references to northern European mythologies ('Born to die in Midgard to forever live in Valhalla'),⁵³⁴ for many it is impossible to ignore the extreme political viewpoints of the author, whether explicit in the lyrics of his recorded output or stated in interviews. This has caused much online debate:

Graveland: It's complicated, the lyrics are aggressive, pagan and whatever but definitely not racist, but if you look at interviews with Rob Darken it's very obvious that he is a racist, the problem is, that all these interviews have been done during the mid 90s. So you don't know if this is still his views or not.⁵³⁵

As has been established, distinguishing between national pride and racism as part of a band's intention can sometimes be a challenge. However, defending an artist who states that 'we must reject everything that is strange to our European White native culture' is, even for his supporters, problematic.⁵³⁶

4.3: The United Kingdom

Formed in 1997 and consisting solely of two brothers, the English band Forefather are based in Leatherhead, Surrey, an Anglo-Saxon town with its origins around AD 880. The Anglo-Saxon heritage of the area is of fundamental significance to the band; for example, the advertisement sent out by the band's own label to advertise their 2011 album *Last of the Line* describes them as 'England's finest Saxon warriors', their official website refers to 'Anglo-Saxon Metal' in its title, whilst the site's

⁵³³ http://www.graveland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89:graveland-interview-for-ablaze-mag-december-2003&catid=4:interviews&Itemid=6 [Accessed 12 May 2014].

⁵³⁴ Graveland, 'While I Ride With The Valkyries', *Dawn Of Iron Blades* (No Colours Records, 2004).

⁵³⁵ <http://tshirtslayer.com/forum/topic/racist-metal-bands> [Accessed 13 October 2015].

⁵³⁶ http://www.graveland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89:graveland-interview-for-ablaze-mag-december-2003&catid=4:interviews&Itemid=6 [Accessed 12 May 2014].

biography page states that the brothers ‘frequently look to England’s Anglo-Saxon roots for inspiration’. The same site, however, also suggests that whilst the band feel that their music ‘doesn’t fit easily in any particular sub-genre [...] many people find the pagan metal tag most appropriate’.⁵³⁷ Forefather have even given themselves stage names synonymous with the time period: Athelstan and Wulfstan. It is a common misconception that these pseudonyms refer to Athelstan, King of the West Saxons for a three-year period immediately prior to being appointed King of the English between AD 927-939, and Wulfstan, Bishop of London from AD 996. However, as the band has clarified:

Although there are two famous figures from English history with these names (King Athelstan and Bishop Wulfstan), we didn’t choose them to represent these people. They are just general Old English names. Since after the Norman Conquest in 1066, this type of name became less popular, and now they are almost extinct.⁵³⁸

The career of Forefather (including seven full-length albums at the time of writing) has contained extensive references to their chosen historical period. Whilst such an explicit portrayal of English nationalism can sometimes provoke extreme reactions in this country, and they have periodically faced questions of racism (‘Sometimes we incorrectly get labelled NS [National Socialist] music by some people but it’s no big deal’),⁵³⁹ Forefather have made no attempt to disguise their pride in English history, and the Anglo-Saxons in particular. This has become manifest through multiple references to the period’s history, culture, tales, poetry and mythology appearing primarily in their lyrics, and the titles of both individual songs and complete albums. Wulfstan explained the band’s reasoning in deciding to focus on this time period in an online interview in 2011:

The Anglo-Saxon era may just be one recognised chapter in England’s history, but it’s arguably the most important. It’s the time when the idea of England and the English people was born, and the English language took root.⁵⁴⁰

In a separate interview Athelstan stated that he feels that after more than 600 years of Anglo-Saxon reign, it was the famed year of 1066 that brought the next significant change in the nation’s formation, and his opinion that this was a change for the worse is palpable:

⁵³⁷ <http://www.forefather.net/band.html> [Accessed 2 August 2013].

⁵³⁸ <http://www.metal-observer.com/articles.php?lid=1&sid=4&id=6976> [Accessed 2 August 2013].

⁵³⁹ www.darkmoonzine.net/dmz/history/issues_rtf/forefather.rtf [Accessed 5 November 2013].

⁵⁴⁰ Wulfstan, Forefather, December 2011, <http://www.metalireland.com/2012/03/04/forefather-interview/> [Accessed 2 August 2013].

In 1066, with the Norman invasion [...] England was changed forever. The Norman rule brought in a new era of oppression for the English people, and ever since that date there has been a large degree of separation from our roots.⁵⁴¹

The first Forefather album *Deep Into Time* in 1999 contained a track called 'The Ornamental Sword' which included a translation of part of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, and on the initial pressing bore the band's name in the lettering style of the Anglo-Saxon futhork (also known as Anglo-Saxon runes) over an image of the white cliffs of Dover.⁵⁴² The subsequent album *The Fighting Man*, released the following year, bore the inscription 'The Fighting Man is dedicated to Harold Godwinson and all the English who fell on Senlac Hill. Your Honour lives on!' in the artwork;⁵⁴³ Senlac Hill was the ridge from which Harold Godwinson and his army fought the Normans at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The band's third album was entitled *Engla Tocyme (The Coming Of The English)*,⁵⁴⁴ a reference to the arrival of the Angles and Saxons in Britain dated as AD 449 by the venerable Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁵⁴⁵ This album contains another quotation from the poem *Beowulf* (in the track 'The Fate of Kings'), and from Wulfnoth Godwinson (Harold's younger brother) in the song 'Forever in Chains', as well as a number of references to prominent characters from the Anglo-Saxon period such as Offa, King of Mercia (and an Angle) and his war with the Myrging tribe, who were Saxons (especially in the song 'Fifeldor'):

Fifeldor! Where Myrging blood was poured
 Fifeldor! Where Angeln was secured
 Fifeldor! Where Offa made his stand
 Fifeldor! To hold the English land⁵⁴⁶

The final verse of the album's title track is also written in Anglo Saxon with a translation provided in the liner notes into modern-day English. This obsession with Anglo-Saxon history has continued throughout the band's career, including 'Rebel Of The Marshlands' (from their fourth album *Ours is the Kingdom* in 2004) forming 'a tribute to Hereward the Wake who resisted the Norman occupation of England in the years following the Battle of Hastings',⁵⁴⁷ and the track 'Brunanburh' from 2008's *Steadfast*, referencing the battle of Brunanburh of AD 937, an English victory led by King Athelstan against Olaf Guthfrithson, the King of Dublin from 934-941.

⁵⁴¹ <http://www.metal-observer.com/articles.php?lid=1&sid=4&id=6976> [Accessed 2 August 2013].

⁵⁴² Forefather, *Deep Into Time* (Angelisc, 1999).

⁵⁴³ Forefather, *The Fighting Man* (Angelisc, 2000).

⁵⁴⁴ Forefather, *Engla Tocyme* (Angelisc, 2002).

⁵⁴⁵ Amodio, p. 78-86.

⁵⁴⁶ Forefather, 'Fifeldor', *Engla Tocyme*.

⁵⁴⁷ <http://www.metal-observer.com/articles.php?lid=1&sid=4&id=6976> [Accessed 2 August 2013].

Significantly here we are seeing the band make a point of referencing historical English victories, providing additional weight to their discussion of English national identity formation. A poem that immortalises Brunanburh can be found in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, a collection of manuscripts detailing English history that was first begun in the late ninth century.⁵⁴⁸

A.D. 937. This year King Athelstan and Edmund his brother led a force to Brumby, and there fought against Anlaf; and, Christ helping, had the victory: and they there slew five kings and seven earls.⁵⁴⁹

As noted in relation to Drudkh, many extreme metal bands cultivate an air of mystery regarding their existence by (for the early part of their career, if not throughout) releasing recordings that are severely limited in the number of pressings, in an attempt to increase their scarcity and create demand for a rare product in the ‘underground’. The English band Ildra, for example, have no official website or social media presence. They have so far released three demos between 2004-7 (the third of which was re-released by the Dutch Heidens Hart Records) and one full-length album in 2011,⁵⁵⁰ and are described in a rare online review as ‘one of the very few black metal bands who sing in the ancient Anglo Saxon language’.⁵⁵¹ Rather than the occasional use of the language in Forefather’s ‘Engla Tocyme’, recording a full album in Anglo-Saxon makes this band a rare proposition indeed; as the reviewer notes, ‘the only other one who I can think of who recorded a full album in Anglo-Saxon [...] is Ealdulf. None have really delved into it though to the extent which Ildra have here on *Eðelland*’.⁵⁵²

As a result of official information on the band being scarce, all the researcher can use in order to identify and expand upon the themes being covered within Ildra’s work is refer to the brief information given in the album’s liner notes, and a summary of the CD on the Sonnenrune Records website, which only amounts to two sentences, describing the album as ‘An accomplished work of anthemic Anglo-Saxon pagan black metal, interspersed with traditional folk instrumentals, lyrics entirely composed in the ancestral tongue of the Anglo-Saxon past’.⁵⁵³ Whether the claim of the use of

⁵⁴⁸ <http://www.archive.org/stream/anglosaxonnorsep00chadrich#page/58/mode/2up> [Accessed 28 October, 2013].

⁵⁴⁹ Bob Carruthers, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Illustrated and Annotated (Military History from Primary Sources)* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2013), p. 132.

⁵⁵⁰ Ildra, *Eðelland* (Sonnenrune Records, 2011).

⁵⁵¹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/reviews/Ildra/Eðelland/297725/Memnarch> [Accessed 6 August 2013].

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ <http://sonnenrune.bigcartel.com/product/ildra-eelland> [Accessed 6 August 2013].

‘traditional folk instrumentals’ is accurate or simply a device to enhance authenticity is difficult to ascertain, as even the identity of the band member(s) is unknown with Ildra referred to as a ‘mystery outfit’.⁵⁵⁴

To help accessibility, the lyrics of the songs on *Eðelland* are presented in the accompanying artwork twice (once in Anglo-Saxon and once in modern-day English), and the lyrics are each given an (albeit brief) explanation as to their source or origin, such as that for the track ‘Rice Æfter Oðrum’ (‘Kingdom After Kingdom’), and the note, ‘Based on the Anglo-Saxon poem “The Ruin”, in parts directly quoting from it’.⁵⁵⁵ However, there is some debate as to the accuracy of translations, and original meanings are ambiguous, partly owing to the physical state of the original manuscripts; as Roy Liuzza states, ‘the pages of the Exeter Book containing *The Ruin* have been damaged, leaving the poem to crumble into incoherence’.⁵⁵⁶ Some apparent carelessness in the copying of the text, and the use of words not known elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon also contribute to the problematic status of ‘The Ruin’.⁵⁵⁷ Other songs on the Ildra album take similar inspiration from Anglo-Saxon poetry, with the liner notes also outlining examples of *Beowulf* for the track ‘Hrefnesholt (Dæl I)’ (‘Ravenswood Part 1’), and *Waldere* for ‘Nu is se Dæg Cumen’ (‘Now the Day is Come’).

Ildra is not the only band to have incorporated or been influenced by poetry from the Anglo-Saxon period. Formed in 2007, compatriots Winterfylleth (‘which translates into Winter Full Moon from the Olde English language’),⁵⁵⁸ have quickly become the highest-profile of the English bands to use Anglo-Saxon history and a sense of National Romanticism as their primary source of material. This is in part due to their signing to the significant European independent record label Candlelight Records since the release of their second album *The Mercian Sphere* in 2010, resulting in them appearing on the front cover of the English extreme magazine *Zero Tolerance* in 2010.⁵⁵⁹ Describing their music on their official Facebook page as being influenced by the ‘history, heritage and landscapes of England’,⁵⁶⁰ the band have also used their album

⁵⁵⁴ Mike, January 2012, <http://www.themodernalternative.co.uk/ildra-edelland/#more-787> [Accessed 11 August 2016].

⁵⁵⁵ Ildra, *Eðelland*.

⁵⁵⁶ Roy M. Liuzza, in *Broadview Anthology of British Literature, vol. 1: The Medieval Period*, 3rd. edition, ed. by Joseph Black and others (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2015), p. 40.

⁵⁵⁷ Bradley, ed., p. 401.

⁵⁵⁸ <http://www.winterfylleth.co.uk/biography/> [Accessed 6 November 2013].

⁵⁵⁹ ‘The Rise of The Underground’, *Zero Tolerance*, Issue 36, July 2010.

⁵⁶⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/Winterfylleth/info> [Accessed 6 August 2013].

artwork to make clear their motivation, stating that *The Mercian Sphere* is ‘dedicated to all those who are actively involved with the preservation of our great ancestral heritage, history, folklore and rich national culture’.⁵⁶¹ This passionate portrayal of the band’s heritage is manifest in their lyrics. As with Ildra, Anglo-Saxon poetry is a rich source of inspiration; Winterfylleth have also referenced the 8th-century poem ‘The Ruin’ (the title of their 2010 track, in contrast to Ildra’s track ‘Kingdom After Kingdom’ – referencing a line from the poem). Neither band reproduce the original text in its entirety,⁵⁶² but make use of some phrases and the overriding melancholic atmosphere; the author’s ‘tone throughout is one of resignation to the inevitable forces that will ultimately destroy all human creations’.⁵⁶³ Figure 4.2 presents a comparison of how both bands have adapted the original text.

Figure 4.2: ‘The Ruin’ lyrical comparison

Winterfylleth: ‘The Ruin’	Ildra: ‘Rice Æfter Oðrum’
Shattered by Fate! The castles rend asunder, The work of giants moldereth away, Its towers crumble, Aque Sulis, in ruin, The mortar white with frost.	Mighty was this stronghold by mighty Wyrð destroyed This ancient fortress fell, the crumbling work of ancient giants
The mighty men who built it, they of giants renown, Departed hence, undone by death, are held, Fast in the earth's embrace. While overhead for living men, A hundred generations pass.	Mighty were those days of yore to ruin they have fallen By age eaten away then the days of death came Fell widely the altars, as temples tumbled to earth And fell widely those warriors, as Wyrð greatly declared
Long this red wall, now mossy gray, withstood, While kingdom followed kingdom in the land,	Often this wall remained, ashen and red stained Kingdom after kingdom, standing under storms
Wide-wasting was the battle where they fell. Plague-laden days upon the city came: Yet the wall surrounded all with its bright bosom; There stood the courts of stone. Hence to reign hereafter, the Angle!	To ruin fell this place, once goldbright, and with splendor and war gear adorned This bright fortress of a wide kingdom, of great and noble ancient days

⁵⁶¹ Winterfylleth, *The Mercian Sphere* (Candlelight Records, 2010).

⁵⁶² What remains of the original manuscript can be seen in Bradley, ed., p. 402.

⁵⁶³ Amodio, p. 274.

Both bands have also referenced the poem ‘The Wanderer’, which also appears in the *Codex Exoniensis* (otherwise known as the *Exeter Book*), a 10th-century collection of poetry and riddles. Ildra’s interpretation comes in the form of ‘Swa Cwæð se Eardstapa’ (‘So Spoke The Wanderer’, a line from the original poem), whilst Winterfylleth wrote a trilogy of songs that appeared on *The Mercian Sphere*. Rather than explicitly title the songs after the poem itself, they all begin with the prefix ‘The Wayfarer’; the band’s guitarist and vocalist Chris Naughton has confirmed this source material in interviews.⁵⁶⁴ In the song ‘An Englishman’s Verse’, taken from Winterfylleth’s first album *The Ghost of Heritage*,⁵⁶⁵ the band have ‘adapted and arranged’ a poem from 1850 by Martin Tupper entitled *The Anglo-Saxon Race*. In personal communication, Naughton clarified how Winterfylleth approached their use of the original text:

It was 95% verbatim. Other bits were slightly adapted to make the language less provocative. It talks about the Anglo Saxon race, which in the modern world comes across as xenophobic or potentially some form of far right national trigger. I adapted it to say "ways" rather than "race" to delineate the richness of the heritage in the story it was telling and avert it from any far right sentiment, which we were getting accused of around that time. So the point being that Anglo-Saxonism is the by-product of tribal imperialism and led to the formation of a nation, as various related tribes came together under the things that united them. Thus their cultural values brought them together and not an enforced racial integration.⁵⁶⁶

Tupper was ‘one of the best-selling authors of nineteenth-century Anglo-America’.⁵⁶⁷ The poem was written at a significant time for thinking on national and racial identity, and its connection with lexicography. Some writers revisited the reign of King Alfred the Great a thousand years earlier and proposed the Anglo-Saxon period’s impact on English identity formation. Commenting on the writing of Kwame Appiah in 1990, Apollo Amoko has argued that there is an intrinsic link between developments in the study and importance of English literature at the time and some areas of racial thinking:

Appiah suggests that it was on account of the idea of an ‘Anglo-Saxon race’ that the origins of English literature were identified [...] When English literature was instituted as an academic discipline in English universities in the nineteenth century, ‘students were required to learn Anglo-Saxon in order to study Beowulf’. In short, race was at the core of the modern idea of English literature.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ <http://www.lordsofmetal.nl/en/interviews/view/id/3556> [Accessed 6 August 2013].

⁵⁶⁵ Winterfylleth, *The Ghost of Heritage* (Profound Lore Records, 2008).

⁵⁶⁶ Chris Naughton, personal communication with the author, August 2016.

⁵⁶⁷ Matt Cohen, ‘Martin Tupper, Walt Whitman, and the Early Reviews of Leaves and Grass’, *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, 16 (Summer 1998), p. 23.

⁵⁶⁸ Apollo Amoko, ‘Race and Postcoloniality’, in *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. by Simon Malpas and Paul Wake (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 136.

Given the use of these source materials, and the band's discussion of national identity, Winterfylleth have often used interviews to clarify their political position and counter suggestions of extreme racist or right-wing ideologies, suggesting that 'We've always publicised the fact that that is not what we are'.⁵⁶⁹

We would certainly not consider ourselves misunderstood if people perceive us to be nationalists. We are very proud and outspoken nationalists. But the widespread understanding of 'nationalism' seems to be that which the extreme left have been pushing through the left-centric media over the past 40 years to mean something essentially misrepresentative of what 'nationalism' truly is. Nationalism in its truest sense should not be confused with racism or fascism ever [...] Nationalism is the devotion to the interests or culture of one's nation, the honouring of its unique sense of cultural and ancestral identity. It does not EVER mean to hate another race of people or their culture. That IS racism.⁵⁷⁰

In May 2014, Winterfylleth contributed to a project that further demonstrated how the worlds of extreme metal and folk traditions have become firmly entwined in the form of the double album *One And All, Together, For Home*. Curated by Drudkh mainman Roman Sayenko, the compilation saw a number of artists asked to donate their interpretations of folk songs native to their country. Involving such prominent artists as Primordial (Republic of Ireland), Kampfar (Norway) and Drudkh (Ukraine) amongst others, Winterfylleth contributed three tracks: 'The Three Ravens' (an 'anglicised version of a traditional Scottish song called 'Twa Corbies'), 'Abbots Bromley Horn Dance' and 'John Barleycorn'. In the publicity for the release, the record label Season of Mist's website explains:

Each artist employs their own means to find and present their roots to the world [including] interpretations of traditional songs, cover versions of folk artists or the use of themes and melodies from their musical heritage in original compositions [...] 'The idea behind this compilation is a coming together of like-minded artists from all across Europe in an attempt to rediscover the history and traditions of their respective areas of origin; through the medium of traditional music.' (Chris Naughton, Winterfylleth)⁵⁷¹

Another English band with a similar style, aesthetic and lyrical content to Winterfylleth is Wodensthron from Sunderland. Having formed in 2005, their recorded output to date amounts to two split releases (with Niroth and Folkvang respectively) and two full-length albums (*Loss* in 2009 and *Curse* in 2012). Whilst there are some references to historical and mythological events and characters ('That Which Is Now

⁵⁶⁹ <http://www.soundshock.com/index.php/feature-band-interviews/4759-british-black-metal-special-the-rise-and-rise-of-winterfylleth> [Accessed 6 November 2013].

⁵⁷⁰ <http://www.lurkerspath.com/2010/08/24/winterfylleth-defenders-of-the-realm/> [Accessed 6 November 2013].

⁵⁷¹ <http://e-shop.season-of-mist.com/en/items/various-artists/one-and-all-together-for-home/dcd-digipack/37937> [Accessed 12 May 2014].

Forgotten – 597’ referring to the year St. Augustine brought Roman Christianity to Britain for the first time,⁵⁷² the band name itself referring to the Anglo-Saxon name for the god Odin), the band has used interviews to make their intentions clear:

Unlike some so called ‘pagan’ bands Wodensthroner is not a musical history lesson, we strive to provide a reflection of the world around us, viewed through the eyes of a pagan.⁵⁷³

However, having a similar content to their Manchester contemporaries Winterfylleth has led to accusations of racism from some quarters:

Around the release of *Loss* they were accused by elements of the anarchist-punk AntiFa movement of being a part of NSBM, and as a result they were forced to cancel their appearance at a Manchester gig.⁵⁷⁴

Wodensthroner offered a passionate defence: ‘We honour our ancient heritage and write lyrics accordingly and metaphorically, not in some bizarre attempt to attach ourselves to outmoded, futile political and racist ideology’.⁵⁷⁵

4.4: The Irish Contribution

Having originally formed as a covers band in Dublin in 1987, it was not until 1993 that Primordial released their first recording of original material with the *Dark Romanticism* demo. The opening song ‘To Enter Pagan’ contains a clear National Romanticist lyrical sense of yearning for a time that has past and a desire to be at one with nature:

Dark romanticism, of a kind seen no more [...]
 Can fires of the past make me once a warrior to fight the light?
 I am of the earth, my soul is as old as stone.⁵⁷⁶

Indeed, this track has been credited as an often forgotten milestone in the early developments of what has become known in more recent years as Pagan metal. Halupczok goes as far as to declare that ‘With ‘To Enter Pagan’ and the *Dark Romanticism* demo [they] defined an entire genre’.⁵⁷⁷ Despite this connection, vocalist

⁵⁷² Wodensthroner, ‘That Which Is Now Forgotten – 597’, *Loss*, (Bindrune Recordings, 2009).

⁵⁷³ <http://azm-magazine.blogspot.co.uk/2009/08/wodensthroner-interview-is-up.html> [Accessed 6 November 2013].

⁵⁷⁴ Spracklen, Lucas and Deeks, *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵⁷⁵ <http://blackmetal.co.uk/component/kunena/2-discuss-live-events/469193-cancelfest.html?Itemid=0> [Accessed 6 November 2013].

⁵⁷⁶ Primordial, ‘To Enter Pagan’, *Dark Romanticism* (Independent release, 1993).

⁵⁷⁷ Marc Halupczok, ‘Waldschrute & Met-Trinker’, *Metal Hammer*, March 2010, p. 31.

and lyricist Alan Averill has been keen to differentiate between songs that discuss issues or events in his nation's history and an automatic connection with paganism. In the 2009 DVD *Pagan Metal: A Documentary*, a collection of interviews with bands by director Bill Zebub, Averill was keen to demonstrate that the band's lyrics have a greater breadth of topic than some might suggest, as well as explaining his thoughts on the so-called Pagan metal movement:

I mean there are songs that are about the Irish famine but that's nothing to do with paganism [...] A bunch of bands from different areas who are trying to somehow go against the grain, to preserve some sort of element of their own culture, of their own history, of their own past [...] (Because) we deal sometimes with man's natural relationship with the elements and how you oppose or co-exist within that in some of the songs would place us within that [Pagan metal].⁵⁷⁸

A kind of National Romantic sentiment has become a recurring theme during Primordial's now more than twenty-year career, and they have also made a significant number of lyrical representations of place and explicit references to significant characters and events in Irish history. As Averill confirmed:

I have Cúchulainn [Irish mythological hero from the *Ulster Cycle*] tattooed on my forearm [...] I am quite moved by the great sacrifice people made during the 1916 Rising for Ireland to gain independence so that's also quite important.⁵⁷⁹

The opening song on their debut full-length album *Imrama* in 1995, is called 'Fuil Ársa' ('Ancient Blood'). The lyrics are entirely in Gaelic, an unusual example in the world of heavy metal, and the song is again cloaked in an unmistakably pagan, National Romantic sentiment: 'Our blood shall live forever [...] Ancient gods, our fire still burns, take us your sons into eternity. That which comes from the earth shall return once more'.⁵⁸⁰ Most of the lyrics of 'Dark Song',⁵⁸¹ which appears on the following album *A Journey's End* (1998) come from a poem credited to the pagan poet Amergin Glangel entitled 'The Mystery'.⁵⁸² The original appears in what is known as the Irish Mythological Cycle, a pseudo-historical collection of literature that pertains to describe the history of the Irish nation. The collection was collated by an unknown scholar in the 11th century, and is what Rolleston calls the first of 'four main divisions' of Irish

⁵⁷⁸ Alan Averill, *Pagan Metal: A Documentary*, Directed by Bill Zebub, 2009.

⁵⁷⁹ Alan Averill, Primordial, 2007

http://www.primordialweb.com/archive/interviews/int_hammerworld_nov07.htm [Accessed 3 August 2013].

⁵⁸⁰ Primordial, 'Full Ársa', *Imrama* (Cacophonous Records, 1995).

⁵⁸¹ Primordial, 'Dark Song', *A Journey's End* (Misanthropy Records, 1998).

⁵⁸² Lady Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men* (Dublin: Nonsuch, 1905), p. 79.

mythical and legendary literature;⁵⁸³ it is also sometimes known as the *Cycle of Invasions*. Averill supplements the poem with a final verse of his own, which ends with the line ‘Sing the dark song of Erenn to me’, Erenn being the Middle Irish name for Ireland, as referenced in the title of one of the collections of poems within the mythological cycle, ‘*Lebor Gabála Érenn*’ (*The Book of The Taking of Ireland*), otherwise known as *The Book of Invasions*.

‘Children of the Harvest’ from Primordial’s third album *Spirit the Earth Aflame* (2000) is described in the liner notes written by Averill as being ‘adapted and altered from the Irish folklore tale of the Children of Lir’ (another tale taken from the Irish mythological cycle).⁵⁸⁴ Accompanying notes are again used on the 2002 follow-up album *Storm Before Calm* to explain that ‘Sons of the Morrigan’ (the Morrigan sometimes referred to as both a goddess and witch of Celtic mythology) is inspired by the old Irish poem ‘The Recovery of The Tain’: ‘traditionally supposed to have been written by no other than Fergus mac Roy [...] believed to have been written out in Ogham characters on staves of wood’,⁵⁸⁵ Ogham is described by Averill as the ‘old Irish way of writing’.⁵⁸⁶ By the time they released the 2005 album *The Gathering Wilderness*, Primordial’s references to specifically Irish myths, characters or events began to be replaced by lyrics of a more general nature; Averill comments on the title track that ‘The ghosts of our pasts are gathered at the borders of every nation waiting to reign a terrible wrath upon us’.⁵⁸⁷ However, considering the band’s sense of national awareness and consciousness, it would have been surprising if Primordial had never referred to perhaps the most significant period in Irish history, and that which almost unlike no other played a fundamental role in the quest for the independence of the Republic of Ireland from Great Britain: the Great Famine (otherwise known as the Irish Potato Famine) of 1845-1849. The song ‘The Coffin Ships’ has, since its release,⁵⁸⁸ become a staple, popular part of the live Primordial set, and sections of its lyrics are taken from a memorial to those lost at a mass grave in Skibbereen, County Cork, an area that is said to have ‘lost over one third of its population to the famine’.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸³ Rolleston, p. 81.

⁵⁸⁴ Primordial, *Spirit the Earth Aflame* (Hammerheart Records, 2000).

⁵⁸⁵ Rolleston, p. 197.

⁵⁸⁶ Primordial, *Storm Before Calm* (Hammerheart Records 2002).

⁵⁸⁷ Primordial, Liner notes of *The Gathering Wilderness* (Metal Blade Records, 2005).

⁵⁸⁸ Primordial, *The Gathering Wilderness*.

⁵⁸⁹ <http://thinplacestour.com/2010/06/16/skibbereen/> [Accessed 6 August 2013].

Whilst there could be little argument that in terms of musicians in this field from the Republic of Ireland it is Primordial that have achieved the greatest level of recognition, they have not been the only protagonists. Fellow Dublin band Mael Mórdha have, since 1999, been releasing recordings that touch upon many similar lyrical themes, accompanied by music that melds elements of a wide variety of sub-genres of metal, leading vocalist Róibéard Ó Bogail to comment in 2013 that ‘We’ve been accused of being everything from Black, Death, Doom, Heavy, Folk, Pagan (whatever that is), True (see Pagan comment), Viking, Celtic, Epic, Battle, and Thrash’.⁵⁹⁰ The band’s first album *Cluain Tarbh* (2005) describes the preparation for and aftermath of the famous battle fought at Cluain Tarbh - Clontarf (Meadow of Bulls) on Good Friday 1014.⁵⁹¹ The battle was between the then high king of Éire, Brian Boru (a figure again providing a rich source of material for Irish musicians) and the king of Leinster, although here is a band that has chosen to name themselves after an enemy of Boru, Máel Mórda mac Murchada. Mael Mórdha’s third album *Manannán* (2010)⁵⁹² is named after the Irish god of the sea from Irish mythology, the son of Lir, the god referred to by Primordial in ‘Children of the Harvest’ ten years earlier,⁵⁹³ and the 2013 release *Damned When Dead* refers both in its title and one of the songs contained within it ‘All Eire Will Quake’ to the Norman Invasion of Ireland in 1169.⁵⁹⁴ This significant event in Irish history centres around the tale of Diarmuid MacMurrough, King of Leinster who called upon his Anglo Norman ally Lord Richard de Clare (otherwise known as Strongbow) to come to Ireland with an army to assist Diarmuid against his enemies and rival kings. Mael Mórdha’s bassist Dave Murphy explains that:

This is seen as the origin of the English control of Ireland, as the English king Henry the Second soon followed his Norman lords to Ireland and established dominance. For his actions in establishing foreign rule in Ireland, Diarmuid was referred to in the 16th Century history, the *Annals of the Four Masters* as, ‘putrid when living, damned when dead’.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁰ <http://www.avenoetum.com/2013/10/interview-mael-mordha/> [Accessed 29 October 2013].

⁵⁹¹ Mael Mórdha, *Cluain Tarbh* (Karmageddon Media, 2005).

⁵⁹² Mael Mórdha, *Manannán* (Grau Records, 2010).

⁵⁹³ Primordial, ‘Children of the Harvest’, *Spirit the Earth Aflame* (Hammerheart Records, 2010).

⁵⁹⁴ Mael Mórdha, ‘All Eire Will Quake’, *Damned When Dead* (Candlelight Records, 2013).

⁵⁹⁵ <http://wp.livereviewer.com/2013/09/11/interview-with-dave-murphy-from-mael-mordha/> [Accessed 29 October 2013].

Figure 4.3: Cruachan's adaptation of 'Taín Bó Cualigne'

<p>Original text lines 63-106⁵⁹⁶</p> <p>I see a fair man who will perform weapon-feats, with many a wound in his flesh. A hero's light is on his brow. His forehead is the meeting-place of many virtues.</p> <p>In each of his eyes are the seven jewel-bright pupils of a hero. His spearpoints are unsheathed. He wears a red mantle with clasps.</p> <p>His face is beautiful. He amazes women-folk. This lad of handsome countenance looks in the battle like a dragon.</p> <p>Like is his prowess to that of Cú Chulainn of Murthemne. I know not who is this Cú Chulainn of fairest fame, but this I do know, that by him the army will be bloodily wounded.</p> <p>I see a tall man in the plain who gives battle to the host. In each hand he holds four small swords with which to perform great deeds.</p> <p>He attacks with his gae bolga and also with his ivory-hilted sword and his spear. He can ply them on the host. Each weapon as he casts it has its own special use.</p> <p>This man wrapped in a red mantle sets his foot on every battle-field. Across the left wheel-rim of his chariot he attacks them. The distorted one kills them. I see that he has changed from the form in which hitherto he has appeared to me.</p> <p>He has moved forward to the battle. Unless heed be taken, there will be destruction. I think that it is Cú Chulainn mac Súaldaim who now comes to you.</p> <p>He will lay low your entire army. He will slaughter you in dense crowds. Ye will leave with him a thousand severed heads. The prophetess Feidelm does not conceal your fate.</p>	<p>Cruachan: 'Taín Bó Cualigne'⁵⁹⁷</p> <p>I see a battle, a blonde man, with much blood about his belt, and a hero-halo 'round his head, whole hosts he will destroy.</p> <p>His jaws are settled in a snarl, he wears a looped, red tunic, in thousands you will yield your heads, his form dragonish in the fray.</p> <p>A giant on the plain I see, doing battle with the host, holding in each of his two hands four gore laden battle-axes.</p> <p>I see him hurling against that host, Two Gae-bolga and a spear, he towers on the battle field, in breastplate and red cloak.</p> <p>Across the bladed chariot wheel, the warped warrior deals death, that fair from I first beheld, melted to a mis-shape.</p> <p>I see him moving into the fray, take warning, watch him well, Cúchulainn, Suailtim's son! making dense massacre.</p> <p>The blood starts from warriors wounds, total ruin, at his touch, torn corpses, women wailing, because of him, the Forge Hound.</p>
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⁵⁹⁶ <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T301012/> [Accessed 25 September 2015].

⁵⁹⁷ Cruachan, 'Taín Bó Cualigne', *Tuatha Na Gael* (Nazgul's Eyrie Productions, 1995).

Also from Dublin, Cruachan have during a similar time period to Primordial combined tales from Irish history and mythology with elements of extreme metal. This type of lyrical reference was evident from their first demo in ‘Cúchulainn (The Hound of Culann)’, referencing Cúchulainn, an Irish mythological hero who gained his fame by slaying the fierce guard dog of the smith Culann, and then offering to replace the dog as Culann’s protection himself, thus becoming known as The Hound of Culann instead of his original name Setanta. Similarly, on their debut album *Tuatha Na Gael*, Cruachan made use of the epic from the Ulster Cycle in the 11th century *Book of Dun Cow*, ‘Taín Bó Cualigne’ (‘The Cattle Raid of Cooley’) for the song of the same name (Figure 4.3).

The city of Dublin has continued to be a rich source of bands in this field, with a more recent addition to the canon coming in the shape of Celtachor, formed in 2007. The band’s official website states that they see themselves as ‘the narrators of Irish Mythology.’⁵⁹⁸ Their debut album *Nine Waves From The Shore* (2012), tells the tale from the mythological cycle of which there is some discussion that we discover the transition from euhemeristic writing to Irish history. The poet Amergin (Glangel, the ‘pagan poet’ referred to earlier as the author of the poem in the Primordial song ‘Dark Song’) leads the Gael (Milesians) in to battle with the Men of Dea (Tuatha Danann) at Tailtin (now known as Telltown) in the late 5th century. Celtachor’s album title refers to Amergin agreeing to take his troops ‘nine waves from the shore’ whilst the Danaans prepare for battle.⁵⁹⁹ Elsewhere on the album, there are songs such as ‘Sorrow Of The Dagda’, The Dagda being the equivalent in Irish mythology of Odin, sometimes referred to by one of the same alternative names (All-Father or Eochaid Ollathair), and ‘The Kingship Of Bodb Dearg’, the subject of which was one of Dagda’s sons, and the King of the Tuatha Danann.

The Danaans were succeeded by the last invaders of the Mythological Cycle, and the first to be portrayed in the legends as an entirely human race, the Milesians [...] men and women, enlightened and cultivated, led by the poet Amergin, and the first invaders with, perhaps, a place in history. They may be the Celts themselves of pre-Roman, pre-Christian Ireland.⁶⁰⁰

Much like their southern contemporaries, north of the Irish border there have also been lyrical references to tales from Irish history and mythology. Like Mael Mórdha, whilst Waylander have also made efforts to musically represent their heritage through the use of some traditional instrumentation such as tin whistle. However,

⁵⁹⁸ <http://www.celtachor.com/band.html> [Accessed 31 October 2013].

⁵⁹⁹ Gregory, p. 78.

⁶⁰⁰ Rolleston, p. 12.

having formed in 1993, by the release of their second demo *Dawning of a New Age* in 1996 Waylander were already also demonstrating a desire to portray the importance of their heritage within their lyrical work. Examples include the song ‘Ashes to Ashes’: ‘I too am of the earth, Celtic fire burns in my veins ... Celtic fire, warrior born!’⁶⁰¹ On their 1998 debut full-length album *Reawakening Pride Once Lost*, there was a song entitled ‘Emain Macha’, referring to the site otherwise known as Navan Fort which lies to the west of Armagh (which is where the band had formed), and is repeatedly referred to in early Irish mythology.⁶⁰² This site was the base of the Red Branch Knights, the setting for the *Ulster Cycle of Tales* and is now called the place ‘from where the ancient kings of Ulster ruled’ by the Tourist Information Board of Armagh.⁶⁰³ Thomas Rolleston has characterised Emain Macha as ‘a name redolent to the Irish student of legendary splendour and heroism’.⁶⁰⁴

Waylander’s lyrics have continued to portray aspects of their heritage, including topics of identity that can be contentious in a society as often divided as that of Northern Ireland. Their 2012 album *Kindred Spirits* includes the song ‘Lámh Dearg’ which tells the tale of the Red Hand of Ulster,⁶⁰⁵ an ancient symbol and subject that provokes strong feeling in the band’s country, and the source of multiple claims of ownership and explanations of origin from both sides of the political divide. The symbol even has Protestant paramilitary connections as dealt with by author Steve Bruce in 1992: although it is beyond the remit of this thesis,⁶⁰⁶ Waylander vocalist and lyricist Ciarán O’Hagan commented in an online interview around the time of the album’s release that he felt that the symbol could should be one for a peaceful Irish uniting, not one of division:

[The Red Hand] to the native people symbolises Ulster to this day. Paradoxically, the Unionist people also claim the Red Hand as their symbol [...] That's how messed up the conflict in the north is [...] There is a small section of unionism which recognises that it's ok to be proud to be from Ulster AND to be Irish, who recognise that the Gaelic language is for everybody not just for republicans. It's this common ground that is the future for a divided society, that which unites us not what divides us.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰¹ Waylander, ‘Ashes to Ashes’, *Dawning of a New Age* (Independent release, 1996).

⁶⁰² Waylander, ‘Emain Macha’, *Reawakening Pride Once Lost* (Century Media, 1998).

⁶⁰³ <http://www.armagh.co.uk/place/navan-centre-fort/> [Accessed 28 October 2013]

⁶⁰⁴ Rolleston, p. 126.

⁶⁰⁵ Waylander, ‘Lámh Dearg’, *Kindred Spirits* (Listenable Records, 2012).

⁶⁰⁶ Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶⁰⁷ <http://www.metalunderground.com/interviews/details.cfm?newsid=84180> [Accessed 29 October 2013].

A band that has in a short career already presented an unequivocal representation of their national identity and heritage is Scotland's Cnoc an Tursa, formed in Falkirk, Scotland in 2006. Not only does the official biography on their website refer to their borough's motto of 'Better Meddle wi' the De'il than the Bairns O' Falkirk',⁶⁰⁸ but this has also become a slogan for one of their T-shirt designs. Having released their first demo in 2008, it was not until 2013 that the band made their full-length debut album entitled *The Giants Of Auld*, 'auld' translating as 'old' in Gaelic, presenting an immediate attempt to represent not only place but also a historical context and heritage.⁶⁰⁹ The band's name itself is also Gaelic, meaning 'hill of sorrow', and in 2013 guitarist and songwriter Rene McDonald Hill explained:

[The name] relates to the Callanish Standing Stones [the Tursachan Chalanais] which is on the Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides. The stones were considered to be petrified giants that were turned to stone by St Kirean when they would not convert to Christianity.⁶¹⁰

The band's representation of place is further evident through their extensive use of traditional Scottish poetry as a lyrical source, as well as their presenting of additional liner notes in the album's artwork giving additional information regarding the poems' origins and authors. The first full-length song of the Cnoc an Tursa album is 'The Lion Of Scotland', which presents an adaptation of the poem of the same name by the early 19th-century Scottish poet John Imlah in its entirety (all five stanzas) for its lyrics, and can be seen printed in its original context in the poet's collection *Poems and Songs*, published in 1841.⁶¹¹ Other examples on the album include 'The Spellbound Knight' which uses the 19th-century poem of the same name by Scottish poet William Motherwell for its lyrics, and 'In Shadowland' which gives a similar style treatment to the work of Sir Noel Paton. At the end of 'The Piper O'Dundee', the introductory track of *The Giants Of Auld*, there is a scream of 'Sons of Alba, rise up in defiance of tyranny!' The term 'Alba' is commonly held to be the Scottish Gaelic name for Scotland, and so by using this declaration at the outset of their debut album, Cnoc an Tursa are immediately delivering a statement of intent and couching their output in a clearly demarcated context of Scottish national identity. The origin of the term 'Alba' is the subject of some debate. First appearing in Scottish chronicles towards the end of the 9th century as part of the phrase 'ri Albain' ('king of Alba') to describe King Domnall,

⁶⁰⁸ <http://cnocantursa.com> [Accessed 29 October 2013].

⁶⁰⁹ Cnoc an Tursa, *The Giants of Auld* (Candlelight Records, 2013).

⁶¹⁰ <http://www.soundshock.com/index.php/feature-band-interviews/4709-in-the-spotlight-with-cnoc-an-tursa> Accessed [Accessed 29 October 2013]

⁶¹¹ John Imlah, *Poems and Songs* (London: Hugh Cunningham, 1841), p54-55.

son of Constantine, Clarkson calls this an ‘important change in terminology’,⁶¹² with previous kings having been referred to in Latin as rex Pictorum (‘king of the Picts’):

Why this new name was applied to the kingdom is hard to tell, but the Gaelic term Alba is an ancient Irish name for the island of Britain as a whole. At the end of the ninth century it evidently conveyed a much narrower meaning. Was it, perhaps, the contemporary Gaelic name for ‘Pictland’? Or was it simply an apt label for a part of Britain where Gaelic speech now predominated?⁶¹³

4.5: Conclusion

There are many other northern and eastern European bands that have made use of similar textual source materials in their work that would be of interest to the reader keen for further examples of the combination of stylistic elements of heavy metal with instances of lyrics based in history, heritage, mythology and folk culture. Amongst others these could include Kampfar and Einherjer (Norway), Kroda and Hate Forest (Ukraine), Skyclad and Old Corpse Road (England), Saor (Scotland), Annwn (Wales), and From The Bogs of Augishka (Republic of Ireland), and across the range of output the variation of style, approach and intent is considerable. Those that have been examined here have demonstrated consistent approaches in their output, whether by utilizing historical or mythological source material, often (although not exclusively) over lengthy careers. We have also seen how the treatment of original texts can vary between writers, from those who use materials purely as the starting point for creative ideas, to those who choose to replicate them in full.

As already noted, it is primarily the lyrical aspect of a band’s work that has led to genre demarcation as Viking metal or one of the other alternative genre labels mentioned. Perhaps this is due to an artist’s lyrics being one of the most accessible ways to facilitate a portrayal of national identity. As has been shown in the previous chapter, it is all too simple for the visual aspect of a band’s output to slip into transnational or pan-identities. If an artist wishes to express a more specific national, or indeed regional identity, then it has been demonstrated that the accompanying lyrical content can facilitate this. For example, Heesch argues that it is possible to detect subtleties in the

⁶¹² Clarkson, p. 160.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

lyrics of Amon Amarth that characterizes some of their Viking references as being particular to modern-day Sweden rather than being Viking as a vague collective:

The lyrics include some details, which can only be understood on the basis of certain information. In the second verse [of 'Fate of Norns'] we learn about the goal of the Vikings' journey that is 'riches in the east'. This confirms that Amon Amarth sing from the perspective of Swedish Vikings. While Vikings from Norway and Denmark mainly travelled to western region [...] it were mainly, if not exclusive, Swedish Vikings, who travelled to the eastern Baltic region.⁶¹⁴

However, it is recognised that this point is more accurate as an analysis of the perspective of the writer (sender) and not the listener (receiver). Whilst not to underestimate the role of the latter, we see here an emphasis of the importance of intention over reception. To return to the work of Sean Hall, in the latter, vagueness or misunderstanding (whether intentional or otherwise) is always possible. The receiving context, the result of the listener's culture, can mean intent is open to misinterpretation, no matter how defined its construction.

Furthermore, from the experiences of bands such as Winterfylleth and Wodensthron, we have seen that in England there can be less willingness to accept pride in one's national heritage; in comparison to other countries the distinction between nationalism and racism is sometimes harder to establish. This is not to say that there have been no instances of accusations of racism encountered by bands from the Nordic region or elsewhere. There have been plentiful such observations of the output of the Ukrainian bands Drudkh and Hate Forest,⁶¹⁵ and as early as 1994 the Norwegian band Darkthrone included the phrase 'Norsk Arisk Black Metal' (Norwegian Aryan Black Metal) in the accompanying artwork for *Transylvanian Hunger* then claimed that they were 'not supporting national-socialism and that the sentence is a misunderstanding'.⁶¹⁶ The cultural acceptance or otherwise of such matters in different countries represents a rich area for future research.

What is certain is that the reception of lyrical and textual content is further complicated by the recurring theme of authenticity. The legitimacy or validity of a band's lyrical presentation (indeed the narrative of their output as a whole) is a

⁶¹⁴ Florian Heesch, 'Metal for Nordic Men? Amon Amarth's Representations of Vikings', in Scott, ed., 2012, p172.

⁶¹⁵ https://phillymetal.com/topics/Blood_Of_Kingu_Signed_To_C [Accessed 26 September 2015].

⁶¹⁶ Sanna Fridh, 'In Pursuit of the Vikings: An Anthropological and Critical Discourse Analysis of Imagined Communities in Heavy Metal' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Gothenburg, 2012), p. 15.

persistent refrain in the world of heavy metal, to both the artists and fans. This is further heightened when the content could be considered to have an element of extremity or potential controversy. Patterson describes the thread of extremity running throughout heavy metal: 'Dealing with metal music means dealing with extremes, be it in terms of music, lyrics, imagery or appearance'.⁶¹⁷ He considers the origin of this in extreme metal to be the Danish band Mercyful Fate, specifically their lead singer King Diamond (born Kim Bendix Petersen) and his declared position as a Satanist along with his connections to Anton Lavey and the Church of Satan:

The existence of a band that could claim a link to the unholy subjects they dealt with in their music added a sense of authenticity to the genre, and undoubtedly fueled the attitudes of many bands that would follow. A line had been drawn in the sand; there were now bands who believed and practiced in Satanism and those who merely sang about it.⁶¹⁸

Patterson's use of the word 'merely' is significant here; there is a discernment of value attached to whether a band is considered to have sincerity in their work that plays a prominent role not only in heavy metal, but is an intrinsic thread that runs throughout rock music (see John Lydon's infamous 'Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?' onstage quote at the end of the final Sex Pistols' concert in San Francisco, 1978).⁶¹⁹ Whilst beyond the sphere of this thesis, it would provide an interesting field for future research to attempt to ascertain if the personal genealogical origins of a band writing lyrics with a national identity content other than their own can negatively affect perceptions of authenticity with a potential audience.

⁶¹⁷ Scott, ed., 2012, p. x.

⁶¹⁸ Patterson, 2013, p. 20.

⁶¹⁹ <https://music.yahoo.com/blogs/stop-the-presses/johnny-rotten-most-wicked-moments-remembered-sex-pistols-203047636.html> [Accessed 25 July 2014].

Chapter 5: Music

5.1: Recurring Musical Identifiers

As first noted in Chapter 2, there is an inherent lack of precision in the application of the term Viking metal – often an unconvincing attempt to create unity that simply masks a musical diversity present. This is similarly the case with the alternative genre labelling that the music industry has attempted in pagan, battle or heritage metal. It is unusual in comparison to other popular music genre formation for there to be such a musical variety between bands being categorised as belonging to the same field, and for this to be apparently ignored or remain unchallenged by musicians, fans and media unlike. A cursory search on the internet reveals bands as musically diverse as Amon Amarth (melodic death metal), Leaves Eyes (symphonic metal with a female opera-style soprano singer) and Korpiklaani (a metal band with a considerable folk influence who make extensive use of traditional Samic instrumentation, music and lyrics) being labelled as Viking metal.⁶²⁰

Even the normally dependable and hugely informative online resource Encyclopaedia Metallum adopts the generic search term ‘folk/Viking metal’, even if the genre marker is subsequently clarified as ‘folk metal/ambient’, ‘Viking black metal’ or ‘psychedelic Neofolk’.⁶²¹ However, if we examine Viking metal as part of the wider movement of bands that have represented place and portrayed aspects of national identity, then it would be inaccurate to suggest that there are not some musical features that are recurring. Although the writings of Ross Hagen, Keith Kahn-Harris, Dayal Patterson and Imke von Helden contribute to the discussion of genre labelling here (see Chapter 2 for further detail), some of their conclusions differ. Furthermore, the extensive variety of musical methods of presentation are on occasion almost ignored when some of these writers (in particular Hagen and Patterson) primarily suggest that the meeting of folk music and heavy metal is predominantly situated within a black metal narrative. As throughout, the musical examples have been taken down as aural representations for the purpose of illustration.

⁶²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Viking_metal_band [Accessed 9 January 2014].

⁶²¹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/lists/folk> [Accessed 9 January 2014].

5.2: Use of Nature

The use of nature and neotraditional themes in the service of national identity does not come without ideological baggage. Mythologized pastoral pasts and utopian community ideals played a large role in Nazi propaganda in the 1930s.⁶²²

One common element of the musical soundscape in this repertoire is the use of various sounds of nature — particularly during the introductions and endings of both songs and complete albums. It would be impossible to present numerous instances of each effect, but for means of demonstration the following examples of bands of a variety of nationalities may be considered. The sound of a rain or a thunderstorm is a particularly common occurrence. This can be heard both at the beginning and end of *V: Hävitetty* (2007) by the Finnish band Moonsorrow,⁶²³ and at the start of both ‘Envy’ on the 2008 album *Land* by Faroese band Týr,⁶²⁴ and ‘The Landing of Amergin’ by Irish band Celtachor, the first track on the album *Nine Waves From The Shore* (2011).⁶²⁵ ‘Fyrgenstréam’ by English band Wodensthroné has the sound of pouring rain in the background around 1:28 after beginning with the cawing of birds;⁶²⁶ ‘Fading’ the first track on *Autumn Aurora* (2004) by Ukrainian band Drudkh, also begins with the sound of bird call.⁶²⁷ The American band Wolves In The Throne Room has also been particularly active in the use of nature sound effects to supplement their sound. On their 2007 album *Two Hunters*, three of the four lengthy tracks open with examples.⁶²⁸ The opening track ‘Dia Artio’ has a combination of chirping grasshoppers, the howl of a wolf and light rainfall in the distance, ‘Cleansing’ has a crackling fire running through much of its opening section, and album closer ‘I Will Lay Down My Bones Among The Rocks and Roots’ has both howling wind at its beginning and chirping birds in the forest at the end. The band continue this trend on their following album *Black Cascade* (2009), with both ‘Wanderer Above The Sea of Fog’ and ‘Ex Cathedra’ beginning with the sound of rain falling;⁶²⁹ the final track of their 2011 album *Celestial Lineage*, ‘Prayer of Transformation’, concludes with the distant sound of howling wind.⁶³⁰ This style of nature-based scene setting is not, however, a new phenomenon. In 1999, the

⁶²² Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 194.

⁶²³ Moonsorrow, *V: Hävitetty* (Spinefarm Records, 2007).

⁶²⁴ Týr, *Land* (Napalm Records, 2008).

⁶²⁵ Celtachor, *Nine Waves From The Shore* (Independent Release, 2012).

⁶²⁶ Wodensthroné, *Loss* (Bindrune Recordings, 2009).

⁶²⁷ Drudkh, *Autumn Aurora* (Supernal, 2004).

⁶²⁸ Wolves In The Throne Room, *Two Hunters* (Southern Lord, 2007).

⁶²⁹ Wolves In The Throne Room, *Black Cascade* (Southern Lord, 2009).

⁶³⁰ Wolves In The Throne Room, *Celestial Lineage* (Southern Lord, 2011).

beginning of the Forefather (England) album *Deep Into Time* has the sound of howling wind,⁶³¹ as do the openings of the 1994 debut release by Norwegian band Einherjer, *Aurora Borealis*,⁶³² Bathory's *Blood Fire Death* (1988),⁶³³ and the same band's previous album *Under The Sign of The Black Mark* (1987).⁶³⁴

The incorporation of these instantly recognisable sounds could be a deliberate attempt to exploit some form of primal sensibility in the listener. Given the stated ethos of the Norwegian musicians Wardruna (a band whose members have a history, if not a sound, steeped in black metal) as 'strengthening old roots', combined with lyrics that emphasise the 'old' or the 'original' (due to their historic or mythological nature), this use of sound effects appears to only heighten the listener's perception of time and of history as part of a quest for authenticity. The sounds themselves are not necessarily linked to the themes of the specific song or album, or indeed (for the purposes of this study) representative of a specifically identified nation; these sounds are universal, and therefore could be considered transnational. However, there are examples where the natural soundscape directly relates to a sense of place. Wolves in the Throne Room have been particularly active in this regard. The band's biography on their official website explains guitarist Nathan Weaver's original intentions when forming the band:

[Nathan was] inspired to create a band that merged a Cascadian eco-spiritual awareness with the misanthropic Norwegian eruptions of the 90s. Themes of ancientness, apocalypse, connection to place and the struggle to find meaning and spirituality in a mechanical and materialistic world would be woven together in a singular alchemy.⁶³⁵

Cascadia is a bioregion that spans the North west coast of the United States and over the border into the British Columbian part of Canada, where for some inhabitants there is a desire for independence and a lifestyle based on eco-socialism and anti-modernism. Whilst this outlook might not suggest an obvious pairing with black metal, this genre has a longstanding fascination with the natural world. As Olson states: 'Nature is presented by black metal as an alternative to civilization',⁶³⁶ and Richardson argues that 'Nature in black metal is rarely pastoral [...] Black metal is angry with the world that capitalism has built [...] It allies itself with non-human, aggressively anti-

⁶³¹ Forefather, *Deep Into Time* (Angelisc Enterprises, 1999).

⁶³² Einherjer, *Aurora Borealis* (Independent Release, 1994).

⁶³³ Bathory, *Blood Fire Death* (Under One Flag, 1988).

⁶³⁴ Bathory, *Under The Sign Of The Black Mark* (Under One Flag, 1987).

⁶³⁵ <http://www.wittr.com/bio/> [Accessed 10 January 2014].

⁶³⁶ Benjamin Olson, 'I Am The Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music And Culture' (unpublished master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2008), p. 69.

human, natural forces'.⁶³⁷ In a wider context Lucas identifies how 'The depiction of nature is a common trait found across different strains of metal'.⁶³⁸

The impact of *Wolves In The Throne Room* has been considerable since their inception in 2002, bringing a sound to a wider audience worldwide (and unlike other such bands being prepared to tour extensively). *Fauna* (another Cascadian band) have also garnered attention from the black metal underground, and at least to the outsider they share much in terms of musical style, imagery, use of both nature-based themes and sound effects. However, when questioned as to their affinity with their contemporaries, they attempt to highlight what they perceive to be significant differences:

We would not consider the motivation for our project to be 'eco-friendly issues'. The motivation for *Fauna* lies deep within our cellular memory, a knowing that transcends this historical moment, becoming a valiant determination to forge a pathway for humans to once again attain to the grandeur we were meant to embody. This devolution, an atavistic reawakening of the Soul to the wisdom in the Deep Past, can only occur within an animistic immersion in the field of Nature.⁶³⁹

This suggests that there are multiple ways in which nature can be invoked by these bands, whether they wish to combine it with eco-socialism, Satanism, paganism, or heathenism. Sharing many influences with contemporaries such as *Ulver* (Norway) and *Bathory* (Sweden), *Agalloch* have built a considerable wealth of material since forming in 1995 in Portland, Oregon (also part of the Cascadian region). Guitarist and vocalist John Haugh explained his thought on nature's role within his music:

As a heathen, I regard nature as the highest order. It is greater than any man-made religion or deity. It is only natural that it would be an inspiration for my song writing. Although I do not consider *Agalloch* to be one of these forest worship bands.⁶⁴⁰

Given the music industry's promotional labelling bands, and fans' need of terminology for everyday discourse, it is not surprising that the term Cascadian black metal has become part of the lexicography for *Agalloch*, *Wolves In The Throne Room*, *Fauna* and similar bands such as *Skagos*, *Ash Borer* amongst others.⁶⁴¹ However, whilst this term implies representation of a specific place, and whilst in the case of *Wolves In*

⁶³⁷ Richardson, *ibid.*, p. 159.

⁶³⁸ Caroline Lucas, *White Power, Black Metal and Me: Reflections On Composing The Nation*, p. 3 https://www.academia.edu/217635/White_Power_Black_Metal_and_Me_Reflections_on_Composing_the_Nation [Accessed 13 January 2014].

⁶³⁹ <http://www.metalreviews.com/interviews/129> [Accessed 10 January 2014].

⁶⁴⁰ <http://www.lordsofmetal.nl/en/interviews/view/id/1435>, [Accessed 13 January 2014].

⁶⁴¹ http://rateyourmusic.com/list/apocalyptan/cascadian_black_metal/ [Accessed 10 October 2014].

The Throne Room we see a desire for a ‘Cascadian eco-spiritual awareness’, within this movement the themes of nature are for the most part more general or transnational. Indeed, not everyone is convinced that the Cascadian bands actually equate to a distinct musical genre with definable identifiers. Tim Hunter, in the respected online metal blog *Invisible Oranges* printed an article in November 2011, simply entitled ‘Cascadian Black Metal is Bullshit’,⁶⁴² presenting a reasoned argument that there is little that separates these bands from ‘everyone else’, and that in fact many black metal bands ‘draw heavily on anti-modernism and nature fetishism’.

For the purposes of this study, the issue is whether bands are able to create a representation of place and specific national (or in the case of Wolves In The Throne Room a *desired* national) identity, or whether they are in fact presenting a series of identifiers (music, sound effects, lyrics, artwork, website imagery and text) that perhaps only create an identity as a whole, the majority of which (when analysed in isolation) are merely transnational or universal. The examples in these soundscapes are suggestive without being specific. The sound of galloping hooves may *suggest* Odin is riding his eight-legged steed (‘Sleipnir’ by Manowar),⁶⁴³ but could also be the *oskorei* of the Wild Hunt speeding across the sky (‘Galdralag’ by Falkenbach).⁶⁴⁴ The sound of waves lapping at the shore may *suggest* Vikings about to set sail on an adventure (‘Vinland’ by Bathory),⁶⁴⁵ but could also represent the water in a very different story (the aftermath of the drowning of Aino from *The Kalevala*, ‘Drowning Maid’ by Amorphis).⁶⁴⁶ The listener can only interpret the soundscape (or receive the signs, in semiotic terms) in the context of the other identifiers being presented.

5.3: Instrumentation and Texture

There are a number of bands that use traditional instrumentation or acoustic instruments rooted in folk culture, mythology or national identity as an attempt to add additional weight (and perhaps authenticity) to musical identity formation and

⁶⁴² <http://www.invisibleoranges.com/2011/11/cascadian-black-metal-is-bullshit/> [Accessed 8 January 2014].

⁶⁴³ Manowar, ‘Sleipnir’, *Gods of War* (Magic Circle Music, 2007).

⁶⁴⁴ Falkenbach, ‘Galdralag’, ...*En Their Medh Riki Fara* (No Colours Records, 1996).

⁶⁴⁵ Bathory, ‘Vinland’, *Nordland II* (Black Mark Productions, 2003).

⁶⁴⁶ Amorphis, ‘The Drowning Maid’, *Tales From The Thousand Lakes* (Relapse Records, 1994).

representation of place. This instrumentation has been used to perform both melodic and percussive roles, with bands from Finland including Korpiklaani and Moonsorrow being particularly active. Whilst primarily a guitarist, Moonsorrow's Henri Sorvali has supplemented the band's slow and brooding epic soundscapes with 'traditional' musical features such as a jaw (or Jew) harp, tin whistle, and accordion, often as part of extended compositions. The distinctive percussive twang of the Jew harp can be heard in 'Koylionjarven Jaalla Pakanaved' (*Suden Uni*, 2001) from 2:38-2:57. In the same track, Moonsorrow's use of the accordion as an alternative to, or in conjunction with, keyboards to provide melodic ideas laced with folk influence, is demonstrated with the cyclical melodic statement from 0:31-1:00 (Figure 5.1), performed over a repeating E bass, which suggests a drone in keeping with the style. A similar use of the accordion is found in 'Tähdetön' (5:46-5:58), this time with a more fluid, alternating time signature.

Figure 5.1: Moonsorrow accordion melody examples

a) 'Koylionjarven Jaalla Pakanaved'⁶⁴⁷



b) 'Tähdetön'⁶⁴⁸



Influenced by the folk music of the Sami people of Northern Finland, Korpiklaani have also made use of traditional instrumentation more commonly found in their native folk music such as the shamanic drum and violin, as well as extensive accordion work, courtesy of having an accordion player as a full time member (Juho Kauppinen 2004-13, and subsequently Sami Perttula). The variety of Korpiklaani's uses of the accordion can be heard on the track 'Kylästä Keväinen Kehto'.⁶⁴⁹ Not only is it used as a melodic instrument (0:13-0:23), it is also used as a rhythmic device with short, off-beat (0:23-0:41) or held (0:03-0:10) chords, replicating the role of the guitars or keyboards; additionally there are examples of countermelodies to the vocals (0:43-1:03). Furthermore, on tracks such as 'Sahti', the accordion is used as a virtuosic solo instrument instead of a lead guitar, even on occasion 'trading off' solos with the violin

⁶⁴⁷ Moonsorrow, 'Koylionjarven Jaalla Pakanaved', *Suden Uni* (Plasmatica Records, 2001).

⁶⁴⁸ Moonsorrow, 'Tähdetön', *Varjoina kuljemme kuolleiden maassa* (Spinefarm Records, 2011).

⁶⁴⁹ Korpiklaani, 'Kylästä Keväinen Kehto', *Noita* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2015).

in the same manner as many heavy metal bands use two guitarists (2:20-2:41),⁶⁵⁰ for as Weinstein notes ‘heavy metal guitarists are required to demonstrate technical proficiency [...] Guitar solos are an essential element of the heavy metal code’.⁶⁵¹ The prominent replacement feature of accordion and violin in this role ensures that the band’s traditional folk culture is a focal point in an otherwise heavy metal soundscape.

The comparatively commercially successful Finnish band Amorphis, whilst not using traditional instrumentation in their music, make reference to it. The track ‘My Kantele’,⁶⁵² references *The Kalevala* to recount how this instrument (now considered part of the dulcimer and zither family) was first fashioned by a god, and Riekkki called it ‘as close to an electric rendition of our national instrument as one is likely to get’.⁶⁵³ However, there have been examples of this distinctive instrument being used in metal such as in ‘Old Man’ (4:45-4:57) by Amorphis’ compatriots Ensiferum,⁶⁵⁴ where it is used as an alternative to a finger-picked acoustic guitar. Mieron Tiellä has used kantele through a distorted effects pedal to replace guitars entirely.⁶⁵⁵ The Latvian band Skyforger included their national instrument, the kokle (a zither-style instrument, similar to the Finnish kantele) on their 2010 album *Kurbads*,⁶⁵⁶ this being the name of a hero from Latvian legend and fairytale, the type of which play a prominent role in many cultures, having traditionally been passed on orally and collected by folks enthusiasts in the 19th century.⁶⁵⁷

As this demonstrates, the use of instrumentation to revisit the past and invoke specific place is not restricted to Finland. The soundworld of the Swiss band Eluveitie has made a prominent feature of a wide range of traditional folk instruments throughout their career. This is in part due to the multi-instrumental skills of vocalist Chrigel Glazmann who performs on mandolin, Bodhrán, tin and low whistles, bard harp, and more than one example from the bagpipe family of instruments such as Uilleann pipes and the Gaita. In addition, Nicole Ansperger plays violin, and Anna Murphy adds hurdy gurdy as well as being a second vocalist. As is often the case in the field of folk music,

⁶⁵⁰ Korpiklaani, ‘Sahti’, *Noita* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2015).

⁶⁵¹ Weinstein, 1991, p. 24.

⁶⁵² Amorphis, ‘My Kantele’, *Elegy* (Relapse Records, 1996).

⁶⁵³ Riekkki, *ibid.*, p. 140.

⁶⁵⁴ Ensiferum, ‘Old Man’, *Ensiferum* (Spinefarm Records, 2001).

⁶⁵⁵ Mieron Tiellä, *Tevana3* (Hirwenkoto, 2011).

⁶⁵⁶ Skyforger, *Kurbads* (Metal Blade Records, 2010).

⁶⁵⁷ http://www.skyforger.lv/en/index.php?news_id=135 [Accessed 24 June 2013].

the origin and history of some of these instruments is disputed, and whilst the development of the Bodhrán is far from reaching a consensus, the Uilleann pipes have become known as the ‘national bagpipe of Ireland’,⁶⁵⁸ and the Gaita is very popular in many areas of Spain and Portugal.

Many of these traditional instruments are used as melodic lead instruments within Eluveitie’s sound, with several examples of more than one of them being used simultaneously to play melodies in unison, such as the combination of whistle and Gaita in the opening melody of ‘The Call Of The Mountains’.⁶⁵⁹ This melody is predominantly based around the vocal melody of the chorus (where the folk instrumentation is again used), where the lyric of ‘The call of the mountains, the call of the Alps, the call home, the tune in our hearts, the song of the mountains’ (1:07-1:26) does little to hide the intended sense of national identity.

Bagpipes have also made an appearance in the music of the Estonian band Metsatöll, who use the native pipes the torupill, providing an additional lead instrument for the band’s soundscape. There is also no attempt to disguise the accompanying drone of the pipes, adding the distinctive timbre that positions the band’s sound simultaneously within their folk culture alongside their heavy metal traits, such as in ‘Hetk Enne Lahingut’ (0:59-1:26).⁶⁶⁰ Similarly, traditional instruments used by the Russian band Arkona include the gaita gallega, another member of the bagpipe family, as seen in ‘Kupala I Kostroma’ (0:48-1:04).⁶⁶¹ Due to the fact that neither the Metsatöll and Arkona tracks are in English, listeners who do not speak the language being sung are likely to place both examples in the same way that they understand the Eluveitie track, as a representation of national identity. Whilst musically through the use of the native folk instrumentation this would be a valid conclusion, a lack of familiarity with the languages could disguise the content.

The Metsatöll track does portray a similar sentiment to other examples mentioned (‘The moment before battle and clamour, remembering the home, sacred grove, winds of peace’), but, on the surface, ‘Kupala I Kostroma’ appears to be one of

⁶⁵⁸ http://www.discoverireland.com/gb/ireland-things-to-see-and-do/whats-on/listings/product/?fid=NITB_34696 [Accessed 24 June 2013].

⁶⁵⁹ Eluveitie, ‘The Call Of The Mountains’, *Origins* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2014).

⁶⁶⁰ Metsatöll, ‘Hetk Enne Lahingut’, *Iiavikivi* (Nailboard Records, 2008).

⁶⁶¹ Arkona, ‘Kupala I Kostroma’, *Ot Serdca K Nebu* (Sound Age Productions, 2007).

the few Arkona tracks to not have a National Romanticism message ('Why do you love Kupula? I love Kupala because he has curly head'!) However, an explanation of the lyrics presents a very different meaning:

It used to be song written in folk style at the beginning of 20th century, it's not a folk song. There is a little difference in lyrics with original one — it used to be — Poranya, why do you love Ivan? — but they changed it with — Kostroma, why do you love Kupala, because after Christianization of Kievan Rus' (Old Russia) there had been a lot of paganists and one of the main event in their life was Kupala Day (Kupala is the third of main Slavic gods) in the middle of summer and nobody could do anything against. Government settled it this way- Kupala turned to surname, and they gave him first name Ivan, and even now we celebrate day of Ivan Kupala and church has nothing against. Arkona changed Ivan with Kupala (sign of summer) and Poranya with Kostroma (a girl says goodbye to spring) to emphasize their pagan world-view.⁶⁶²

One of the main issues raised by the sometimes unexpected use of such instrumentation is the effect it has on the listener. Do these specific textures contribute to a sense of 'authenticity'? Does the presence of these instruments make the listener *believe* that the material is older, or more 'traditional'? If a melody that has the musical components of traditional folk music in terms of its note selection is being performed using an acoustic traditional lead instrument, do we automatically situate the performance in the context of that folk tradition, more than if the melody had been synthesised? If a percussive instrument that is more regularly utilised in the performance of folk music is used by a heavy metal band, does this mean the music sounds more authentic? The element of situating the music not only in terms of place but also in age, demonstrates 'legitimization provided by the use of the past'.⁶⁶³ This would certainly be an interesting area for future study and although there is not sufficient space to explore this here, Hobsbawm and Ranger's writing on what they term 'Inventing traditions' that 'seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' is suggestive.⁶⁶⁴ Certainly the element of time or the passage of time is a recurring theme throughout the material relevant to this research.

The use of instruments synonymous with the folk and the 'traditional' music of these cultures undoubtedly adds a scenic quality to the music. This is heightened by the sense of musical 'otherness' created by instrumentation that is often unfamiliar in fans' native culture — what Raphael Samuel terms the 'romance of otherness'.⁶⁶⁵ Ross Hagen's

⁶⁶² <http://lyricstranslate.com/en/kupala-i-kostroma-kupala-i-kostroma-kupala-kostroma.html> [Accessed 28 May 2015].

⁶⁶³ Spracklen, Lucas and Deeks, *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁶⁴ Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds, p. 1.

⁶⁶⁵ Samuel, p. 247.

writing on Norwegian black metal identifies how ‘The Norwegian-ness of the bands also added an exotic appeal to their music for foreign consumers’.⁶⁶⁶ Although the distinctive tones of these instruments are significant, the effect may again be explained through a combination of factors – whether musical (melodic figures, scalar patterns, rhythmic devices) or in relation to lyric and concept.

5.4: Vocal Performance

One aspect of vocal performance that has become extremely common is the decision of many bands to perform in their national language, or even regional dialect. Whereas in some other genres of popular music it could be seen to be commercially restrictive or damaging to use any other language than English, for many extreme metal bands (where international success as measured against their pop contemporaries is almost impossible), the disadvantages of using their own language are considerably fewer. For the performer, not only is there the linguistic ease of not having to translate their lyrics and risk losing elements of the original intent, but also a further representation of place is added, especially beneficial for those for whom this is a primary concern. For the audience, the sense of both ‘otherness’ and authenticity is enhanced, encouraging the interested listener to investigate further to explain the content. However, for those not sufficiently engaged, the intended representation of identity could easily be lost to a transnational or vague other.

The majority of the extreme metal world is often associated with vocals that could be characterised as ‘screams’, be they the ‘mid-to-high-pitched scream of black metal vocals’⁶⁶⁷ or low and guttural (death metal). However, many bands also employ a more traditional mode of singing (or to use the metal colloquialism ‘clean vocals’) alongside their extreme metal style of choice, in order to provide greater variety and the possibility of stark, dramatic contrast. This array of approaches in vocal delivery is also present amongst the range of bands portraying national identity within their work. Whether a scream of anger or a melodic chant influenced by a folk melody, the differing timbres both allow for a variety of emotions to be conveyed passionately with a sense of conviction.

⁶⁶⁶ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶⁶⁷ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 184.

A spoken vocal delivery is also used on occasion, suggestive of the significance of storytelling, poetry and national oral traditions. Often this adds an element of ceremony or reverence. ‘Predok’ (*Slovo*, 2011) by the Russian band Arkona is such an example, delivering ‘an address to a deceased ancestor’,⁶⁶⁸ and in this case the National Romanticist sentiment is also clear, as vocalist Masha Arkhipova uses her native tongue to say ‘My heart is trembling and grieving for our land, my brothers and sisters will not help me anymore’.⁶⁶⁹ Comparisons can be seen both in performance and content to the spoken vocal delivery on ‘Fyrgenstréam’ (*Loss*, 2009) by Wodensthron (England), which concludes ‘Let the great wind sing a lament to this land where nobility is no more’.⁶⁷⁰ Alan Averill of Irish band Primordial employed a similar style on ‘Mealtach’ (*Imrama*, 1995) as he intoned a brief piece, rich in pagan emotion: ‘My gods need me now, I’ve sheltered beneath their sky’.⁶⁷¹

More unusually, there have also been examples of the yoik (joik) style of singing, a stylistic trait connected to the Sami people who inhabit a region that stretches across the northernmost areas of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. The term is also used as an umbrella term to refer to all of the folk music of Sami culture. The most significant protagonist of this style within heavy metal is Jonne Järvelä (also known as Shaman) of the Finnish band Korpiklaani. Järvelä has also made guest appearances with some of Korpiklaani’s prominent contemporaries Finntroll (Finland),⁶⁷² and Metsatöll (Estonia).⁶⁷³ Leisiö talks about how in Finnish folk music ‘to sing was not to perform but to communicate’,⁶⁷⁴ and Lansmän expands on this idea:

A *yoik* is not merely a description; it attempts to capture its subject in its entirety [...] It is not **about** something, it **is** that something. It does not begin and it does not end. A *yoik* does not need to have words – its narrative is in its power, it can tell a life story in song. The singer can tell the story through words, melody, rhythm, expressions or gestures.⁶⁷⁵

Järvelä exemplifies this style of vocal performance on the track ‘Spirit of the Forest’ when the yoik is used as precursor to the chorus (1:10-1:33), as he attempts to embody

⁶⁶⁸ <http://www.arkona-russia.com/en/slovo/> [Accessed 21 May 2015].

⁶⁶⁹ Arkona, ‘Predok’, *Slovo* (Napalm Records, 2011).

⁶⁷⁰ Wodensthron, ‘Fyrgenstréam’ *Loss*.

⁶⁷¹ Primordial, ‘Mealtach’, *Imrama* (Cacophonous Records, 1995).

⁶⁷² Finntroll, ‘Jaktens Tid’, *Jaktens Tid* (Spikefarm Records, 2001).

⁶⁷³ Metsatöll, ‘Lööme mesti’, *Karjajuht* (Spinefarm Records, 2014).

⁶⁷⁴ Leisiö, *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁶⁷⁵ <http://www.utexas.edu/courses/sami/diehtu/giella/music/yoiksunna.htm> [Accessed 22 May 2015].

the character in the song's title purely in sound and tone without lyrics.⁶⁷⁶

5.5: Scales and Modes

At the core of the folk music of a wide range of nationalities or regions within them, there are a variety of emphases placed on differing steps of the traditionally accepted diatonic scale (creating the seven modes from ionian through to locrian), and numerous modifications of these scales and modes implemented. The natural minor and (both major and minor) pentatonic scales are prominently featured throughout a significant amount of these folk musics, and (more relevant to this study) in the output of a considerable number of bands that try to combine matters of national identity in this way with heavy metal. Writers such as Aindrias Hirt of the University of Otago in New Zealand (and Norman Cazden to whom he refers),⁶⁷⁷ feel that the use of such musical language (with its roots in the church and subsequent Western art canon) is far from satisfactory, and sees problems in ethnomusicologists' attempts to impose a lexicography upon a style of music for which it is not fit for purpose. Instead Hirt attempts to explain recurrences in the melodies of different folk musics and the scale patterns at their root via everything from matters related to Pythagorean tuning to the natural scale (involving the harmonic series), before presenting his theory on what he calls the 'European folk music scale', and a possible connection to pastoral music. Despite considering Hirt's arguments, I feel that the diatonic and modal systems are the most appropriate form for the core of my analysis. Even Hirt himself comments on some similarities between the results of two folk music analyses by Séoirse Bradley (1980) and Breandán Breathnach (1996) that identify commonly occurring modes within Celtic melodies,⁶⁷⁸ and his own work on *The Celtic Lyre*, suggesting that he feels that perhaps a combination of his natural scale theory and a diatonic or modal based form of analysis may be the most satisfactory.

Bruno Nettl, the Czechoslovakian ethnomusicologist, approaches European folk music as what he terms a 'stylistic unit', i.e. that any varieties within the modern day continent in terms of its folk music are just that — variations on a theme. Unlike Hirt,

⁶⁷⁶ Korpiklaani, 'Spirit of the Forest' *Voice of Wilderness* (Napalm Records, 2005).

⁶⁷⁷ Aindrias Hirt, 'The European Folk Music Scale: A New Theory (Can it Actually be a Pastoral Scale?)', <http://www.academia.edu/2627765/> [Accessed 16 July 2015], p. 1.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 18.

he seems satisfied with the musical language given to us by the diatonic system and its related scales for the analysis of European folk music.

A great many of the songs that use seven tones can be explained, as far as their tonal material is concerned, in terms of the modes [...] that are used to classify Gregorian chant' [...] 'Pentatonic songs make up a large proportion of the European body of folk song.'⁶⁷⁹

However, Nettl does note that there is a danger that Western musicologists can try to make folk melodies and scales fit into the diatonic-based system with which we are most familiar, either brushing over or ignoring entirely notes which may initially appear to be fractionally out of tune, but which could perhaps be explained in terms of the Pythagorean tuning or natural scales explored by Hirt. In fact, Nettl makes a crucial point when identifying that 'the "peculiarity" of certain scales or tone systems to our ears is due to the "particularity" of the tone systems with which we have grown up',⁶⁸⁰ which returns us to Fiske's idea that the reader plays as important a role as the sender in the understanding of a text, be it visual or musical.

Ingrid Rüütel, the Estonian folklorist (and the first lady of Estonia between 2001-6), commented in her paper *Estonian Folk Music Layers in the Context of Ethnic Relations* that 'the problem of musical typology of folk melodies on international scale has not been solved yet' and that 'conclusions drawn from different occasional examples cannot give reliable results'.⁶⁸¹ There certainly does not seem to have been any kind of system of musical analysis accepted as the method of choice for musicologists internationally, with differing languages being preferred by different protagonists. I intend to focus on a lexicon rooted in diatonic harmony and its related modes, without necessarily providing conclusive evidence of a 'one-size fits all' outcome.

Melodies can suggest a folk influence not only in the note selection of the melody itself, but also in their compositional construction, without actually making use of any traditional melodies. By way of an example, Estonian multi-instrumentalist Lauri Õunapuu of the band Metsatöll explains an important distinction between their work

⁶⁷⁹ Bruno Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), pp. 43-4.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 26.

⁶⁸¹ Ingrid Rüütel, *Estonian Folk Music Layers in the Context of Ethnic Relations*, <http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol6/ruutel.htm> [Accessed 13 May 2013].

and that of some of their contemporaries, in that they attempt to construct a continuation of the style of their national folk songs in their compositions, such as ‘Velekeseq Noorõkõsõq’ from *Hiiekoda*.⁶⁸²

We sing old Estonian runosongs (a manner of singing inherent to Finno-Ugric peoples, in which the lead singer first sings the first line of a verse and the choir then sings along the last syllable of the first line and then repeats the line first sung by the lead singer).⁶⁸³

As these types of melody have often been performed without accompaniment as one defining feature of an oral-based tradition, there is perhaps less common use of harmony created between different singers here than in other forms of popular music. Where harmony is present, however, connections can be drawn with some of the earliest developments in the history of harmonic construction.

5.6: Harmony and Texture

The harmonic writing and construction in some forms of heavy metal differ little from that of the majority of other genres and sub-genres of popular music, with a core reliance on major and minor keys, their related modes, and the third based harmony formed from them diatonically. However, it is worth noting some harmonic construction differences that whilst not being unusual throughout metal as a whole, are particularly prevalent in some specific uses here.

Until the early ninth century, the vast majority of singing (particularly within the history of the Roman Catholic church) had been monophonic in nature, with only individual vocalists, or groups performing in unison. This is the body of Western church music known as plainchant or plainsong, of which Gregorian chant music was a significant form. There then followed a period of experimentation, particularly by musical theorists within the church, of singing more than one melodic line at the same time, often in what has become known in music theory as parallel intervals. Identifying comparisons with West African and Latin American musics, Lilja comments ‘parallel octaves, fifths and fourths were standard practice for several hundred years in Western music’.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸² Metsatõll, ‘Velekeseq Noorõkõsõq, *Hiiekoda* (Nailboard Records, 2004).

⁶⁸³ <http://www.estonianmetal.com/interviews.php?id=49> [Accessed 19 March 2014].

⁶⁸⁴ Lilja, p. 94.

Creating an ‘early form of melodic harmonization’,⁶⁸⁵ this style of writing became known as organum, and was prevalent until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, during when it was developed further, with the Ars Antiqua (e.g. Pérotin) then Ars Nova (e.g. Philippe de Vitry) techniques. Due to the reliance on the interval of a perfect fourth (an inverted perfect fifth is also a perfect fourth), organum creates a compositional tool sometimes referred to as quartal harmony.

Philip Tagg is amongst the writers within popular musicology to have looked at quartal harmony’s role in contrast to what he calls ‘tertial harmony’s global hegemony’.⁶⁸⁶ He comments that, ‘Quartal harmony in pop is in fact most often found in the drone - influenced accompaniment of tunes in the dorian, mixolydian, aeolian and pentatonic or hexatonic modes’⁶⁸⁷ and traces examples of this style of harmony within Western European art music to Debussy in ‘short passages providing contrasting harmonic colour to other sonorities’.⁶⁸⁸ Similarly Lilja identifies uses of parallel lines by both Debussy and Stravinsky, commenting that it is also ‘natural to heavy metal, where parallel voice leading is tied to the barré technique of the guitar’.⁶⁸⁹

It is worth drawing a connection between organum and how many of the instruments used in folk music mentioned earlier are either tuned in 4ths or 5ths (for example the violin), or produce drones that create this interval underneath their melody (such as many of the bagpipe-related examples). There can certainly be similarities drawn between these and some of the bands relevant here. As Hagen suggests, ‘some Norwegian black metal bands demonstrate an affinity with traditional styles of Scandinavian folk music in their guitar parts, utilizing drones and modal melodic figures reminiscent of the style’.⁶⁹⁰

Furthermore, in terms of the guitar parts in heavy metal, unlike many other popular music genres there is an extremely common prevalence of chords formed without the presence of an expected major or minor third, i.e. chords such as C5, D5 etc. (to make use of the rock parlance, the ‘power chord’). This style of harmonic writing

⁶⁸⁵ Michael Kennedy, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 644.

⁶⁸⁶ Phillip Tagg, *Everyday Tonality: Towards a Tonal Theory of What Most People Hear* (New York and Montreal: The Mass Media Music Scholars’ Press, 2009), p. 135.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 130.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 128.

⁶⁸⁹ Lilja, p. 95.

⁶⁹⁰ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 185.

produces a sound often described as ‘bare’.⁶⁹¹ Due to the lack of a third, this is neither diatonically major nor minor in construction, which to a listener more used to diatonically complete triads can create a powerful, perhaps haunting or mystical, soundscape. As highlighted by Lilja,⁶⁹² this is the most fundamental of all hand shapes when learning the electric guitar, partially for its relative ease of attainability, and partially due to the fact that without it, the majority of the rock canon would be unplayable. Whilst correctly noting the importance to black metal of full chord voicings, including a (most commonly minor) third as well as a prominent use of arpeggios or broken chords in both riffs and guitar lead lines, Hagen’s declaration that ‘black metal makes relatively infrequent use of the “power chord”’ is misleading.⁶⁹³

As part of identifying common features in the bands most relevant to this study, it is also worth distinguishing them from some forms of extreme metal such as many sub-genres of death metal that make significant usage of single note riffs or patterns, creating only a monophonic texture between guitar(s) and bass, thus focussing on a style of writing away from diatonic harmony. This is especially so as the note selection in these patterns commonly breaks away from the confines of the traditional major or minor scale pattern and is heavily chromatic in nature, so that even when harmony is formed between two differing pitches (such as when a solo or lead line is added to the underlying pattern underneath), the resulting combinations are frequently dissonant in nature.

Whether a single, monophonic vocal line, or by making use of vocal lines that make accentuated use of parallel perfect fourths, fifths or octaves with similarities to organum, it should also be pointed out that the other overriding feature of this vocal style is effectively a doubling of the overall harmony formed by the guitars, bass and (where used) keyboards and any other pitch-based instrumentation. In fact, this is often used alongside or instead of keyboard ‘pads’. Most commonly, this involves long, held notes in the vocals (often to a simple ‘oh’ or ‘ah’) that can provide a core to the sound that almost has an element of tranquillity and sanctity within the frequently fast-moving, raging soundscape, a common contradiction within extreme metal:

⁶⁹¹ Tagg, p. 129.

⁶⁹² Lilja, p. 95.

⁶⁹³ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 184.

b) 'As Long As Winds Will Blow' sustained vocal chords (2:46)⁶⁹⁹

♩ = 76

G#5 Oh F#5/G# Oh G#5 Oh F#5/G# Oh

Having two vocalists singing lyrics an octave apart is a technique demonstrated in Figure 5.3. The examples shown are 'Mellom Bakkar Og Berg' by Storm where male and female vocals an octave apart sing the lyrics of the refrain at the end of each verse, and the verses of 'The Shield Wall' by Forefather:

Figure 5.3: Examples of parallel harmony vocal lines

a) 'Mellom Bakkar Og Berg' (0:09)⁷⁰⁰

♩ = 108

Der hansjølv he - ve tuf - te - ne gra - ve Og sett sjølv si - ne hus_ op - pa deim

b) 'The Shield Wall' (0:30)⁷⁰¹

♩ = 180

Am

When the fiends have come there is no-where to hide

Am G

I must swing my axe, my bro - thers at my side

In the opening verse of 'Po Syroi Zemle' (0:49) by Russian band Arkona (2005), three vocal lines merge to form a group performance of the lyric but this time in parallel fifths and octaves.⁷⁰² These styles of vocal writing further emphasise the suggestion of a continuation of the oral culture present in many folk traditions where poems and songs would often be sung in groups.

The use of multiple voices (either through multi-tracking or by recording a group of singers for each line) helps to accentuate the notion of 'tribe' or 'gang' — a

⁶⁹⁹ Falkenbach, 'As Long As Winds Will Blow', *Ok Nefna Tysvar Ty* (Napalm Records, 2003).

⁷⁰⁰ Storm, 'Mellom Bakkar Og Berg', *Nordavind* (Moonfog Productions, 1995).

⁷⁰¹ Forefather, 'The Shield Wall', *Ours Is The Kingdom* (Karmageddon Media, 2004).

⁷⁰² Arkona, 'Po Syroi Zemle', *Vo Slavu Velikim!* (Soundage Productions, 2005).

primal quality which coupled with the textural / harmonic devices from early music, emphasises the sense of history or heritage in combination with other signifiers. In addition, associations can be drawn with the role that communal singing played in many folk cultures where the oral tradition was prevalent in terms of songs being both performed and passed down from generation to generation. As Hagen notes, black metal musicians in particular often want to represent ‘a romanticized heroic past. [Some in the scene] conceive of these mythologies as part of a national and cultural identity’.⁷⁰³ This style of vocal writing assists in focussing on a previous age and our idealized impression of it.

5.7: Rhythmic Patterns

As Walser correctly identifies,

Rhythm has been particularly neglected in Western theories of musical meaning. This is usually explained in terms of the difficulty of generalizing rhythmic concepts except on the simple metric level.⁷⁰⁴

Whilst I acknowledge the difficulties and limitations herein (‘a purely metric approach fails in the face of rhythmic complexity – syncopation, for example’),⁷⁰⁵ this type of observation certainly has relevance to my work here. Compound time signatures based around dotted crotchet (or three quaver) groupings such as 6/8 or 12/8 are extremely common throughout heavy metal, although they are clearly not restricted to the genre. Examples could include tracks such as ‘Dissident Aggressor’ (1:04) by Judas Priest,⁷⁰⁶ ‘For Whom The Bell Tolls’ (1:50) by Metallica,⁷⁰⁷ or ‘Thus Spake the Nightspirit’ (0:32) by Emperor.⁷⁰⁸ It would be difficult to categorically state that these patterns are any more prevalent in the range of bands representing national identity through their work, but the list of examples is certainly extensive and could include Bathory’s ‘A Fine Day to Die’ (2:23),⁷⁰⁹ ‘First Light’ by Wodensthron (0:43),⁷¹⁰ or ‘Capitel I - I Troldskog Faren Vild’ by Ulver (0:02).⁷¹¹ Anecdotally, I remember that as a classically

⁷⁰³ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 193.

⁷⁰⁴ Walser, p. 48.

⁷⁰⁵ Middleton, 1990, p. 201.

⁷⁰⁶ Judas Priest, ‘Dissident Aggressor’, *Sin After Sin* (CBS Records, 1977).

⁷⁰⁷ Metallica, ‘For Whom The Bell Tolls’, *Ride The Lightning* (Megaforce Records, 1984).

⁷⁰⁸ Emperor, ‘Thus Spake The Nightspirit’, *Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk* (Century Black, 1997).

⁷⁰⁹ Bathory, ‘A Fine Day To Day’, *Blood Fire Death*.

⁷¹⁰ Wodensthron, ‘First Light’, *Curse* (Candelight Records, 2012).

⁷¹¹ Ulver, ‘Capitel I – I Troldskog Faren Vild’, *Bergtatt - Et Eeventyr i 5 Capitel* (Head Not Found, 1994).

trained musician discovering black metal for the first time during my time at university, it was the commonality of 6/8 within the genre that was one of the first aspects to catch my attention.

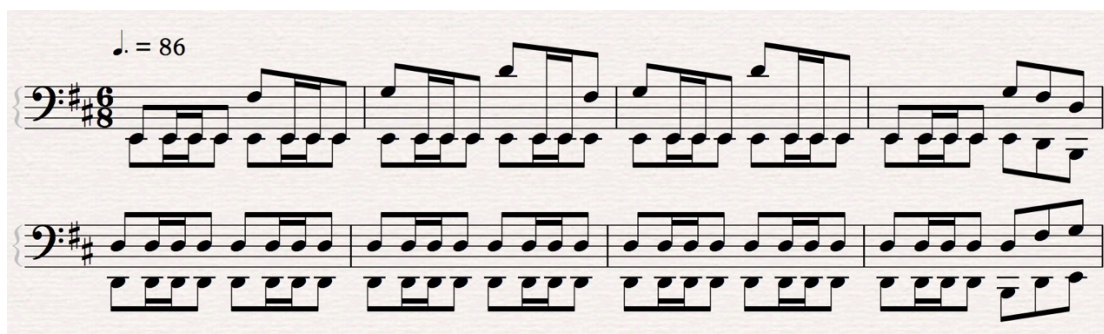
Clearly these time signatures are not exclusive to heavy or extreme metal as they are widespread throughout popular music, but they are used extensively within this area. Historically, they have lent themselves to being the framework for note groupings that have been used to represent (or create impressions of) some kind of movement or forward motion, such as animals running. When writing about the compositional technique of the leitmotif (a usually short, repeating musical phrase) Monelle comments upon the evocative nature of these kinds of patterns, identifying Schubert's treatment of the Goethe poem *Der Erlkönig* (1815) as a particularly significant example, calling it the 'ancestor to many musical horsemen, most of them gallop in compound time, 6/8, 9/8, or 12/8 [...] Why does the musical horse always gallop, never amble or trot?'⁷¹² Monelle also refers to the work of the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw: 'a little rum-ti-tum triplet which by itself is in no way suggestive of a horse although a continuous rush of such triplets makes a very exciting musical gallop.'⁷¹³

Certainly the forward momentum that this type of rhythmic grouping generates is often highly suitable in the context of the themes that they are used to accompany by the bands relevant to this study, be it tales of journey and travel or battle and conquest. This is certainly the case in '793 (Slaget Om Lindisfarne)' ('Battle of Lindisfarne'), an epic composition by Norway's Enslaved lasting more than 16 minutes. A fast, driving, 6/8 rhythm underpins lengthy sections with lyrics such as 'Åretak hørtes, vakre langskip fosset frem, Som en vind fra nord, kom våre fedre i land' ('Strokes from oars could be heard, Beautiful ships gushed through the sea, Like a wind from the north, Our ancestors reached the shore').⁷¹⁴ In a similar fashion, Figure 5.4 shows how Sweden's Amon Amarth use two rhythm guitars in a repeating 6/8 rhythmic figure to give forward momentum to 'Ride Sleipner, ride for all you're worth, faster than lightning, to the dark realms of the world' in 'Hermod's Ride to Hel (Loke's Treachery Part 1)':

⁷¹² Raymond Monelle, *The Sense Of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 49.

⁷¹³ George Bernard Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite: A Commentary On The Nibelung's Ring* (New York: Dover, 1967/1899), p. 104 cited in Monelle, p. 47.

⁷¹⁴ Enslaved, 'Slaget Om Lindisfarne', *Eld* (Osmose Productions, 1997).

Figure 5.4: Amon Amarth use of 6/8 to accompany tale of journey (1:18)⁷¹⁵

Embellishing the rhythmic underpinning combination of rhythm guitar, bass and drums, we also see lead melodies operating within the same rhythmic framework, delivered not only on some of the traditional instrumentation mentioned earlier, but also on acoustic / electric guitar or keyboard. It is here that many of the bands representing place or national identity frequently portray influence of the equivalent aspect of much of folk music, not just in note selection but in rhythmic features as well. The lead melody in ‘Laeknishendr’ from *...En Their Medh Riki Fara...* by Falkenbach (Figure 5.5) has a strong accent on the first and fourth quavers of the 6/8 bar when it is first stated by a lead acoustic guitar, accompanied only by keyboard providing a low, droning root note. This heavy rhythmic emphasis of the dotted crotchet feel is only increased during subsequent repeats of the melody by the presence of not only drums, electric guitar, and bass, but also a screamed vocal moving in rhythmic unison almost entirely using dotted crotchets. These rhythmic figures are not uncommon in folk music; a comparable example is the Northumbrian folk song ‘The Jolly Young Sailor’, a section of which is shown in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.5: ‘Laeknishendr’ melody (1:50-2:08)⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁵ Amon Amarth, ‘Hermod’s Ride to Hel (Loke’s Treachery Part 1)’, *With Oden On Our Side* (Metal Blade Records, 2004).

⁷¹⁶ Falkenbach, ‘Laeknishendr’, *...En Their Medh Riki Fara...* (No Colours Records, 1996).

Figure 5.6: ‘The Jolly Young Sailor’ melody (0:19-35)⁷¹⁷

production values associated with many of their contemporaries, (and in fact both of their ‘main’ bands Satyricon and Darkthrone) are not present here.

A considerable proportion of the songs see little or no attempt to create any form of diatonic harmony beneath the vocal melodies at all, with most guitar and bass lines either being in complete unison with the vocal line, or at most with the guitar using power chords (root, fifth and octave) based on whatever note is in the vocal line. Five of the ten tracks on the album follow this style of writing. Of the other five, ‘Innferd’ and ‘Utferd’ (the opening and closing tracks of the album) are instrumentals, ‘Nagellstev’ and ‘Lokk’ are both performed a cappella, and it is only on ‘Noregsgard’ where there is any kind of harmony between voice and instruments; even then the accompaniment is based almost entirely around a simple chord sequence involving chords I and V. Clear comparisons can be drawn, therefore, between *Nordavind* and the organum writing discussed earlier. Around the time of the album’s release, Satyr was clear as to the intention behind Storm’s music, although it was also evident that the balance between a pride and interest in the history of a nation, and more extreme right-wing politics was causing some irritation in terms of how their work was being received. Satyr suggests that it is not only the lyrics that ground their work in terms of national identity: it is the shared ‘musical roots’ that are equally important.

The lefties do of course hate us since we hail our nation. [Storm’s music is] intelligent, grim music for intelligent Norwegian citizens and everybody else who has some interest in Norway and this type of music [...] Storm is not a political [band]. It is Norwegian atmospheres, back to the roots of this country. Heathenish, Antichristian, National romantic lyrics. [The aim of Storm is] to create Norwegian atmospheres and express our feelings for the musical roots that me and Fenriz share, meaning tunes from our own shores and roots as Norsemen.⁷²²

A similarly brief Norwegian collaboration resulting in just a single studio album was *Grimen*, released in 2007 under the name of Hardingrock.⁷²³ Again this project was comprised of musicians who were already established within their field. Two of the three members were highly regarded extreme metal musicians: Vegard Sverre Tveitan (otherwise known as Ihsahn) once of Emperor and subsequently a successful solo artist, and his wife Heidi Solberg Tveitan (who performs under the name Star Of Ash) of the band Peccatum. However, the third, Knut Buen, came from the world of traditional Norwegian music, and was a high-profile exponent of the Hardanger fiddle

⁷²² http://members.tripod.com/~black_metal/satyricon/storm.html [Accessed 15 January 2014].

⁷²³ Hardingrock, *Grimen* (Mnemosyne, 2007).

(hardingfele). Hagen even references how the magazine *Listen to Norway* considered black metal as ‘part of a tradition of “devil’s music” that traces its lineage back to the Hardanger fiddle’.⁷²⁴ Taking inspiration from the Norwegian mythical tradition, it was Buen who took the lead in both the formation of the project, and was its musical driving force.

However, unlike Storm where complete folk songs were merely reinterpreted through the parameters of heavy metal almost in their entirety, Buen’s approach required a higher level of involvement and arranging in order to compile the finished work.

The tales in question are old and familiar to many Norwegians. The textual content of the project is based on these old tales, some of which have been rewritten [...] Based on these new lyrics we created melodies adapted to the arrangement of the traditional tunes. Yet most of the tunes have also been rearranged, and elements have been used randomly to fit the context.⁷²⁵

Both Vegard and Heidi Tveitan explained how it was possible for this seemingly unlikely combination of musicians to find common ground and establish such an effective affinity:

[Heidi]: Both expressions are grounded in the mythical, and in black metal there is a traditional attraction towards nature and Norse mythology. It comes forth as something idiosyncratic and uniquely Norwegian. This has been a matter of pride for black metal, without necessarily entailing nationalistic sentiments.

[Vegard]: Neither folk music nor extreme metal is driven by a desire to please. It is the passion towards the music itself that comes first. And none of us entertain any wish to be politically correct artists; we want to work with music, freely and independently.⁷²⁶

Although Buen claims that the material on *Grimen* represents an amalgamation of different texts and melodies with considerable reworking, the liner notes of the album give little away in reference to the source material used. During the promotional campaign for the project, Vegard Tveitan did however note that ‘The material provided to us by Knut is a huge part of Norway’s cultural treasure’,⁷²⁷ and it is possible to identify some of this source material that provided the album’s starting point.

⁷²⁴ Hagen, *ibid.*, p. 198.

⁷²⁵ <http://www.ballade.no/mic.nsf/doc/art2007061313022019408560> [Accessed 16 January 2014].

⁷²⁶ <http://www.ballade.no/mic.nsf/doc/art2007061313022019408560> [Accessed 16 January 2014].

⁷²⁷ <http://www.thegauntlet.com/article/1601/9099/IHSAHN-to-collaborate-with-Starofash-and-Grimen-on-new-Neo-Folk-album-Hardingrock.html> [Accessed 5 August 2015].

‘Margit Hjukse’ is a simple Norwegian folk song that has offered inspiration for many musicians of a huge variety of styles, especially those from Norway. These have included jazz pianist Bugge Wesseltoft’s collaboration with classical violinist Henning Kraggerud,⁷²⁸ the Norwegian Soloists Choir who recorded a version with Hardanger fiddle player Gjermund Larsen,⁷²⁹ and an interpretation that replaces often gentle and delicate performance traits with a driving progressive rock accompaniment by Gåte.⁷³⁰ The theme is easily recognisable in these recordings, with only the kind of minor melodic and rhythmic variance that is to be expected. In the main, melodic statements appear over pedal notes of either the tonic or dominant, and this is also the case in the initial melodic statement in the Hardingrock version, performed on piano. Buen’s Hardanger fiddle is then heard restating the melody as an unaccompanied solo, emphasising the importance to the Norwegian culture of the fiddle as a solo instrument. Perhaps the version that demonstrates the greatest sense of variance, not only in terms of melody and rhythm but also in the accompanying harmony, is that by jazz pianist Dag Arnesen, where each melodic statement is used only as a starting point for the improvisations that follow.⁷³¹

As a result of the extent of their use of traditional folk songs as the basis for many of their songs, the Faroese band Týr’s representation of place is particularly effective. As Heri Joensen, their lead singer, guitarist and primary songwriter, has confirmed:

Traditional music dating back to the Vikings, that is not preserved anywhere else in the world, not even in Iceland, is passed on in an oral tradition here and it is still alive and well. That is what we build our music on and draw great inspiration from.⁷³²

Because of the strong oral culture, the writers of these melodies are often unknown, and the music is regularly described merely as a ‘traditional’ or presented with an ‘anonymous’ author. However, whilst the extent of their use of this material may make Týr quite an unusual example in the world of heavy metal, it is possible to draw comparison with recordings of some of the same melodies made by other artists from other fields. It is often the case that treatments by other ‘traditional’ artists adopt a

⁷²⁸ Bugge Wesseltoft & Henning Kraggerud, *Last Spring* (Act Music, 2012).

⁷²⁹ Norwegian Soloists Choir, Berit Opheim Versto and Gjermund Larsen, *White Night (Impressions of Norwegian Folk Music)* (Bis, 2011).

⁷³⁰ Gåte, *Jygr* (Warner Music, 2002).

⁷³¹ Dag Arnesen, *Norwegian Song 1*, (1-2-3-4-GO!, 2013).

⁷³² http://www.napalmrecords.com/hp_promo.php?osCsid=b8820ae6eba92a429d074a1470ce9343&bioID=62 [Accessed 4 July 2011].

harmonic simplicity based on the implications of the original melodies, but amongst others, Joensen often explores some of the potential ambiguities present by utilising a greater sense of creative licence. As a result, whilst Týr's arrangements are often mostly faithful to the melodies themselves, the chord progressions in them sometimes differ from some of the numerous other recordings.

One example is the track known on the 2008 Týr album *Land* as 'Sinklars Visa'.⁷³³ The 1984 recording by traditional group Dansifélagið í Havn is entirely a cappella in keeping with the Faroese culture's oral tradition.⁷³⁴ In comparison, both the 1974 version entitled 'Sinclairwise' by the Norwegian folk rock band Folque, and 2009's 'Herr Sinklars Vise' by the Danish medievalists Gny have some similarities in terms of their harmonic approach.⁷³⁵ Here we see a violin prominently featured as a lead instrument that not only doubles the vocal line, but also uses pedal notes to create a drone effect against the melody. In both versions this is primarily an A, the 5th of the key, and so the pitch that along with the tonic D provides a drone in keeping with the folk style. The Gny recording, however, does break the repeating A with some B flats, that in harmony with the D heavily suggests the use of chord IV (G minor) over a tonic root. The Folque version gradually fades in an electric bass line towards the end of the fourth verse (1:35) that provides an additional layer of harmony against the droning D and A for the remainder of the track, as shown in Figure 5.7:

Figure 5.7: 'Sinclairwise' Folque version⁷³⁶

The image shows a musical score for the track 'Sinclairwise' by the band Folque. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble clef staff (violin) and a bass clef staff (bass). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 60. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The chord progressions are indicated above the treble staff. The first system has chords: Dm, Dm/F, Dm, Dm/F, G(sus2), C, B♭maj7, A⁵. The second system has chords: Dm, Dm/F, Dm, Dm/F, G(sus2), C, B♭maj7, A, Dm, Dm/F, A, Dm. The bass line features a steady eighth-note pattern, primarily on the notes D and A, creating a drone effect.

⁷³³ Týr, 'Sinklars Visa', *Land* (Napalm Records, 2008).

⁷³⁴ Dansifélagið í Havn, 'Sinklars Visa', *Føroyskur dansur (The Faroese Dance)* (Hansemann Tórgarð, 1984).

⁷³⁵ Gny, 'Herr Sinklars Vise', *Ærlig Pæl* (Eget, 2009).

⁷³⁶ Folque, 'Sinclairwise', *Folque* (Philips, 1974).

The vocal styles employed by Heri Joensen of Týr come in two styles, both employing pitch in a more traditional sense than many of their metal contemporaries. The first (for example heard at the initial stating of the melody) is based around the upper range of a tenor vocal, a common feature of heavy metal. However, when the melody is stated for the second time (1:00-1:20), he employs a vocal style that is more in keeping with the folk music origins of the piece, and is an octave lower in range. The nature of such source material as used by Týr often dictates a greater fluidity in terms of rhythmic patterns, uneven length phrases and changing time signatures (see Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8: Rhythmic transcription alternatives for 'Sinklars Visa' (Týr harmony)

a) Minim beat

b) Crotchet beat

As is evidenced in all of the versions of *The Ballad of Sinclair* mentioned above, here the original melody is again cyclical in nature and it does not follow what has become the norm for much popular music by having even, four bar phrases. There are several ways that this Faroese melody (stated for the first time at 0:00-0:40 in the Týr version) can be counted, all of which involve a seemingly uneven shift of feel of the emphasised strong beats in several places, although it is possible to count a 2/4 feel

throughout, with the melody beginning with a one beat anacrusis. As well as a rhythmic fluidity, Figure 5.8 shows Týr's extensive use of inverted chords that heightens the sense of uncertainty in the interpretation, lessening the use of the root chord versions. The band also makes prominent use in the refrain at the end of a major chord on step IV (E major), as a preparatory tool for the perfect cadence at its conclusion. In addition to creating the suggestion of an ascending melodic minor scale, the major 6th (G#) in a minor key facilitates the employment of a non-diatonic chord used extensively in the popular music canon. An even greater harmonic variety can be found in 'Led Er Din Sang' by Kristian Blak, the Danish composer and leader of the jazz-influenced 'Nordic music ensemble' Yggdrasil, a track that was also based on *The Ballad of Sinclair*; the phrase 'Led er din sang' being the first line one of the nineteen stanzas in the original poem.⁷³⁷

Although some of Forefather's melodies and guitar lead lines betray the influence of folk music in terms of parts of their scale patterns and rhythmic phrasing (whether 'Eostre' from *Steadfast*, or 'The Call to Arms' from *The Fighting Man* which suggests a medieval dance), like Týr, Forefather crafted recordings of a number of traditional melodies as standalone entities. Of particular interest to the musicologist here is that there are multiple recorded versions of the songs that they have chosen to integrate into some of their albums, made by artists of a wide variety of styles, creating a range of interpretations. 'The Wilde Dance' from the first Forefather album *Deep Into Time* (1999) was the band's version of a melody known as 'Wolsey's Wilde', originally written by William Byrd, c.1590.⁷³⁸ Guitarist and vocalist Athelstan has confirmed that he was familiar with a variety of recordings of the melody both using pipes and harpsichord.⁷³⁹ Other Forefather versions of medieval songs include 'When Our England Died' from *The Fighting Man* (2000),⁷⁴⁰ which is the band's version of the melody variously known as 'Robin Hood and The Tanner' and 'Dol and Roger'.⁷⁴¹ Furthermore, Athelstan identified that 'Hero On The Hill' on his 2013 solo album *The*

⁷³⁷ Kristian Black and Yggdrasil, 'Led Er Din Sang', *Yggdrasil* (Tutl, 2002).

⁷³⁸ Forefather, *Deep Into Time*.

⁷³⁹ In personal communication with Athelstan in August 2013, he indicated he was familiar with a number of previous recordings of the 'Wolsey's Wilde' melody, including a pipe recording by Sirinu, *Court Jesters* (Griffin Records, 2010), and a harpsichord recording by Joseph Payne, *The 99 Most Essential Renaissance Masterpieces* (X5 Music Group, 2011).

⁷⁴⁰ Forefather, *The Fighting Man* (Angelisc Enterprises, 2000).

⁷⁴¹ St. George's Canzona, 'Robin Hood and The Tanner', *Musica Para Robin Hood Y Su Rey* (Enigma Classics, 1979). The City Waites, 'The Jovial Lass or Dol and Roger', *Purcell: The Muffitians of Grope Lane (Music of Brothels and Bawdy Houses of Purcell's England)* (United Classics, 2013).

Ride was his interpretation of ‘Bryd One Brere’, an English song dated to around 1300, again composer unknown.⁷⁴² ‘Miri It Is’ a song of unknown authorship, dated to around 1225, appears on Forefather’s 2008 album *Steadfast*, and has also been recorded by several other artists working in a variety of styles. Translating into modern-day English as ‘Merry It is’, only the first verse of the poem survives and so (as is the case in the Forefather version) the lyrics are often repeated by performers cyclically:

Anonymous, 13th Century English

Miri it is while summer ilast
 With fugheles son
 Oc nu neheth windes blast
 And weder strong
 Ei, ei! What this nicht is long
 And ich with wel michel wrong
 Soregh and murn and fast

English Translation:

Merry it is while summer lasts
 With the song of birds
 But now draws near the wind's blasts
 And harsh weather
 Alas, alas! How long the night is!
 And I, most unjustly
 Sorrow and mourn and fast⁷⁴³

In comparing a number of different transcriptions of this melody, a range of tonal centres are used. The transcription presented by the Scottish medieval ensemble Gaïta on their website has the melody written in G minor,⁷⁴⁴ whilst the equivalent on the Oxford Girls’ Choir website⁷⁴⁵ presents it in D minor – as does the Italian collective La Reverdie’s recording in 2001.⁷⁴⁶ Whilst John Potter and The Dufay Collective (1995) favour E minor,⁷⁴⁷ the Medieval Babes opt for C minor.⁷⁴⁸ The Forefather recording is performed in E minor, and I have transcribed it as such (Figure 5.9). Whilst the use of the pitch D at the end of each phrase might suggest the mode of D mixolydian, the strong pitches of B and E suggest the Aeolian mode on E, with the D as the flattened seventh. As is common in folk music, there are a small number of melodic variants here in comparison to some of the other versions mentioned. In bars 14 and 18 of the

⁷⁴² Athelstan, *The Ride* (Seven Kingdoms, 2013).

⁷⁴³ <http://shards.pbworks.com/w/page/16102793/Miri%20It%20Is> [Accessed 28 October 2013].

⁷⁴⁴ <http://www.gaita.co.uk/tunebook.pdf>, p. 13 [Accessed 2 August 2013].

⁷⁴⁵ <http://www.oxfordgirlschoir.co.uk/downloads/extras/ENGMED.pdf> [Accessed 2 August 2013].

⁷⁴⁶ La Reverdie, *Nox-Lux - lumière de vie & ténèbre de mort* (Arcana, 2001).

⁷⁴⁷ The Dufay Collective, *Miri It Is* (Chandos Records, 1995).

⁷⁴⁸ Medieval Babes, *Salva Nos* (Netzwerk, 1997).

Forefather transcription, the words ‘this’ and ‘wel’ respectively have two notes, whereas in the majority of other versions encountered for this research, there is only a single dotted crotchet on the higher two of the pitches (step 5 of the mode).

Figure 5.9: ‘Miri It Is’ Forefather version initial melodic statement⁷⁴⁹

♩. = 110

Mi - ri it is whi - le su - mer i - last with fu - ge - les song oc nu ne heth

9
win - des blast and we - der strong Ei ei what this niht is long

17
And ich, with wel mi - chel wrong so - reg hand murn and fast

The Forefather version also differs slightly from many others with the word ‘and’ in b.22, as whilst here there is only a dotted crotchet C (the flattened 6th of the scale), other transcriptions (such as Oxford Girls’ Choir, Figure 5.10) have a quaver followed by a crotchet from the root down to the flattened 6th instead:

Figure 5.10: ‘Miri It Is’ Oxford Girls’ Choir transcription⁷⁵⁰

Ei, ei, what this niht is long! so - reg hand murn and fast.

Any harmonisation of the melody is obviously based on the implications of the melody itself. For example, b.4 of the Forefather transcription contains an F#, D and A, the notes within a chord of D major, thus making the use of anything other than that chord or as a minimum a D5 chord (missing the major 3rd) more problematic or at the very least more prone to unwanted harmonic clashes.

Typical of the harmony of much folk and medieval musics is the use of a bare-sounding harmony based on perfect 4th and 5th intervals, often to create an effect often

⁷⁴⁹ Forefather, ‘Miri It Is’, *Steadfast* (Seven Kingdoms, 2008).

⁷⁵⁰ <http://www.oxfordgirlschoir.co.uk/downloads/extras/ENGMED.pdf> [Accessed 2 August 2013].

referred to as a drone, such as that discussed by Nettl when describing the use of the hurdy gurdy,⁷⁵¹ and the organum style of harmony writing mentioned earlier. At least part of the reasoning for this harmonic feature is the fact that many stringed instruments used in these styles (violins, lutes, bazoukis etc.) have strings that are tuned to these intervals. It is therefore unsurprising to find this style of harmonic accompaniment used extensively in the recordings mentioned.

As noted earlier, the bare fifth is an intrinsic part of the sound of heavy metal and rock music through the use of one of the core signifiers:

If there is one feature that underpins the coherence of heavy metal as a genre, it is the power chord. Produced by playing the musical interval of a perfect fourth or fifth on a heavily amplified and distorted electric guitar, the power chord is used by all of the bands that are ever called heavy metal.⁷⁵²

However, whilst the other recordings looked at for this research almost entirely made use of only 5th chords based on step 1 and 7 of the Aeolian mode (E and D respectively in a mode on E), once the initial version of the melody is completed, the Forefather version employs additional chords, such as the 6th degree of the mode (C).

Figure 5.11: 'Miri It Is' Forefather harmonized melodic statement (0:27-55)⁷⁵³

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Miri It Is' by Forefather. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are primarily eighth and quarter notes. Above the notes, chord symbols are provided for each measure. System 1 (measures 25-30) features chords E5, C5, D5, C5, and D5. System 2 (measures 31-37) features chords E5, C5, D5, E5 (with a trill), D5, and E5. System 3 (measures 38-42) features chords C5, D5, and E5. System 4 (measures 43-47) features chords C5, D5, C5, and D5.

⁷⁵¹ Nettl, p. 111.

⁷⁵² Walser, p. 2.

⁷⁵³ Forefather, 'Miri It Is'.

A chord sequence of bVI – bVII – I has been extremely common within rock music throughout its history. When discussing mode and harmony Robert Walser refers to the writing of eminent heavy metal guitar teacher Wolf Marshall who calls it ‘the characteristic Aeolian chord progression, absolutely indigenous to modern rock/metal’.⁷⁵⁴ Well-known examples of this sequence within the rock and metal canon include ‘Wishing Well’ by Free (1972),⁷⁵⁵ or the beginning of the chorus of ‘Fear of the Dark’ by Iron Maiden (e.g. 6:08 to 6:11).⁷⁵⁶ Its appearance within the work of Forefather is therefore in keeping within the context of the style that the band are working within, and it provides a strong sense of resolution to chord I each time it is used as an alternative to a more traditional perfect cadence.

Part of the strength in the use of the bVII chord in this context can be traced to it sharing notes with the dominant chord (chord V) in conventional harmony, the chord that most commonly proceeds chord I. For example, in the key of E minor (or to use Marshall’s language E Aeolian), diatonically chord V would be B minor (made up of B, D and F#, and this would add an A if the extended version of the chord, B min7 was used as an alternative). If instead of V-I we use bVII-I, then (in this key) the notes D, F# and A would also be diatonically present in a chord of D major, providing a satisfactorily smooth movement for the notes of E, G and B in the subsequent chord I. This progression provides a strong alternative to both the B minor to E minor cadence mentioned, and the frequent substitute B major to E minor, borrowing the major 7th step from the harmonic minor scale.

The rich folk culture of Ireland has seen metal bands from both North and South use traditional Irish music to represent a sense of place, albeit within the context of heavy metal that often bears a considerable influence of black metal. In 2009, Primordial vocalist Alan Averill suggested that ‘if anyone who knows something about Irish traditional music listened to Primordial they will find a lot of the same structures, the same timings, the same rhythms’,⁷⁵⁷ whilst the band’s two guitarists Ciáran MacUiliam and Micháel O’Floinn attempted to explain to *Ultimate Guitar* magazine how the influence of traditional Irish music has influenced their sound:

⁷⁵⁴ Wolf Marshall, ‘Music Appreciation: Iron Maiden’ in *Guitar For The Practising Musician*, January 1989, p. 113 cited in Walser, p. 47.

⁷⁵⁵ Free, ‘Wishing Well’, *Heartbreaker* (Island Records, 1972).

⁷⁵⁶ Iron Maiden, ‘Fear of the Dark’, *Fear of the Dark* (EMI, 1992).

⁷⁵⁷ Averill, in Zebub, dir., 2009.

[Ciáran]: I was into Irish music as a bit of a national thing. Around then bands started including their national heritage in their music. It wasn't so much a lyrical influence as a musical influence. Trying to get a bit more of a tribal kind of thing. That's where I got the drop D thing from, the low D ringing out like an Uilleann pipe drone. That's kind of our hallmark.

[Micháel]: Yeah, and a lot of it's in 6/8. That'd be the timing that kind of gives it the Primordial signature. That's the traditional Irish influence, lots of jigs in 6/8. It's what gives that kind of folky feel.⁷⁵⁸

The use of drop D guitars to assist in the creation of a drone effect and a reliance on the use of the 6/8 time signature is not restricted to Irish folk music, nor is Primordial the only metal band to employ them – despite Averill's careless statement that 'you won't find [these rhythms] in hardly any other metal bands'.⁷⁵⁹ However, other Irish musical features help the listener to interpret these elements in national terms. On the album *Spirit the Earth Aflame*, for example, Primordial included the instrumental track 'The Cruel Sea'.⁷⁶⁰ Whilst the liner notes on this occasion do not list the source of the melody (identifying it only as 'Traditional'), one astute online reviewer, calling themselves JonAftermath, credited it in 2003 as a 'reworking of a Seán Ó Riada tune'.⁷⁶¹ Dying of liver diseases at the age of just 40 in 1971, Ó Riada was a composer who built a career arranging and reviving public interest in traditional Irish music to significant acclaim and effect, and the placing of Ó Riada alongside such significant names demonstrates the perceived weight with which some received his work.

At the time, there were musicians who declared that Seán Ó Riada did composing in Ireland a great disservice, because he chose to bring classical forms to bear on traditional music. Yet was this not what Grieg had done a century before with Norwegian music and Dvorak with the music of Moravia?⁷⁶²

Guitarist Ciáran MacUiliam has confirmed these unofficially identified sources and expanded upon the origins of the melody that Primordial used for 'The Cruel Sea'. 'It is a traditional air that Ó Riada reworked. He knew it as "Cuan Bheil Inse (Valentia Harbour)"; others called it "Amhrán na leabhar" ("Song of the Books")'.⁷⁶³ Although there are several transpositions in performance (such as those by Enda Seery,

⁷⁵⁸ http://www.ultimate-guitar.com/interviews/interviews/primordial_weve_gone_back_to_the_basics_for_claritys_sake.html [Accessed 5 August 2013].

⁷⁵⁹ Averill, in Zebub, dir., 2009.

⁷⁶⁰ Primordial, *Spirit the Earth Aflame* (Hammerheart Records, 2000).

⁷⁶¹ http://www.metal-archives.com/reviews/Primordial/Spirit_the_Earth_Aflame/1510/JonAftermath [Accessed 28 October 2013].

⁷⁶² Garech a Brún, 2011

<http://www.clonakilla.com.au/index.php/2011/why-sean-o-riada-is-irish-musics-pop-icon/> [Accessed 3 August 2013].

⁷⁶³ Personal communication from the author, August 2013.

Seosaimhín Ní Bheaglaoich, and Lorcan Mac Mathuna)⁷⁶⁴ the majority of notated sources are in E dorian. The variety of root notes for performances but consistency of that for transcriptions, suggests it may be more often than not performance constraints in terms of instrumental or vocal ranges that dictates where the melody is centered. Certainly it would seem reasonable to suppose that Primordial's desire to accompany their interpretation with a low, droning, tremolo-picked pedal note may have led them to stick with the E dorian mode, due to their guitars having an E as their lowest pitch available in standard tuning.

In comparison to Primordial's output, Cruachan's music incorporates a more prominent use of traditional Irish music and instrumentation, such as tin whistles, flutes, Bodhrán and bazouki as a more integral part of their sound. In terms of the musical source material itself, the liner notes for their first album referred to 'trad arrangements by Cruachan',⁷⁶⁵ and although they did not list specific original sources here, it is possible to identify examples of how they have used traditional Irish folk songs as part of their representation of place elsewhere in their discography. The 2002 album *Folk-Lore* included interpretations of two 19th-century Irish songs 'The Rocky Road to Dublin' (by D.K. Gavan) and 'Spancill Hill' (by Michal Considine).⁷⁶⁶ Alternate recordings of these melodies have included those by The Dubliners,⁷⁶⁷ and even mainstream pop artists such as The Corrs.⁷⁶⁸ Cruachan's *The Morrigan's Call* included a version of 'Téir abhaile 'riú',⁷⁶⁹ an Irish traditional melody of unknown origin also recorded by Clannad in 1975 amongst others.⁷⁷⁰ Another melody (listed only as 'traditional') – 'Brian Boru's March' – appears on Cruachan's album *Blood On The Black Robe*. Brian Boru was a High King of Ireland in the 10th century, and someone who remains a significant figure in Irish history today, often mentioned in mainstream popular culture with references in novels, films, and even a special set of commemorative stamps in 2002.

The vocalist of Irish band Mael Mórdha, Roibéard Ó Bogail, is also credited as

⁷⁶⁴ Enda Seery, 'Amhrán na leabhar', *Síocháin Na Tuaithe: Peace of the Countryside* (Enda Seery, 2013); Seosaimhín Ní Bheaglaoich, 'Amhrán na leabhar', *Taobh Na Gréine - Under The Sun* (Gael Linn, 1994); Lorcan Mac Mathuna, 'Amhrán Na Leabhar', *Rogaire Dubh* (Lorcan Mac Mathuna, 2007).

⁷⁶⁵ Cruachan, *Tuatha Na Gael* (Nazgul's Eyrie Productions, 1995).

⁷⁶⁶ Cruachan, *Folk-Lore* (Hammerheart Records, 2002).

⁷⁶⁷ The Dubliners, 'Rocky Road to Dublin', *The Dubliners* (Transatlantic, 1964).

⁷⁶⁸ The Corrs, 'Spencil Hill', *Home* (Atlantic, 2006).

⁷⁶⁹ Cruachan, *The Morrigan's Call* (Karmageddon Media, 2006).

⁷⁷⁰ Clannad, *Clannad 2* (Gael Linn, 1975).

playing whistle on some of the band's recordings. Here the instrument is used sporadically, such as in the introduction to the title track of 2005's *Cluain Tarbh*.⁷⁷¹ He also uses it in the openings of both 'The Doom Of The Races Of Eire' and 'Our Ancestors Dwell Here' from *Manannán*,⁷⁷² providing melodic lead lines as an alternative to lead electric guitar, rather than performing traditional and widely-known melodies. The role of the imagined community here is, naturally, significant. The presence of the folk instrumentation and (in all of those three examples at least) a 6/8 rhythm can, in the context of the accompanying lyrical and visual presentation, easily give the suggestion of a representation of Irish national identity to the non-native heavy metal listener. As a result, it could be argued that the band have many stylistic similarities to their contemporaries such as Metsatöll from Estonia. However, the style of the vocals used in Mael Mórdha are described by an online interviewer known only as Gizmo in 2013 as 'of a very distinct and dramatic style and are often described as from an old Irish tradition',⁷⁷³ and vocalist Ó Bogail goes on to explain how he feels he has taken influence from the traditional method of Irish singing known as Sean Nós. He had expanded on this in a previous interview in 2010:

Our music is influenced by ... the old Gaelic music which has been preserved by our Sean Nós singing but also by folklorists and musicologists from the last three hundred years, or more specifically the Laments and Elegies from that music. That tends to influence the whistle and singing parts mainly but also bleeds into the general feel of the music too.⁷⁷⁴

Whereas Ó Bogail does make use of some of the distinguishing features of Sean Nós such as examples of ornamentation and multiple notes per word or syllable (melisma), and this may be discernible to an expert in the field, it is likely that to the average heavy metal fan such aspects of national identity will remain undetected, or at least not specifically Irish. More information on the subject of Sean Nós singing can found in works by writers such as Anthony Bluett and Tomás Ó Canainn.⁷⁷⁵

Although more than one member of Celtachor are credited on their debut album as performing both tin whistle and Bodhrán, and the seeming importance to their sound placed on this traditional instrumentation, the band take a different position to some of

⁷⁷¹ Mael Mórdha, *Cluain Tarbh* (Karmageddon Media, 2005).

⁷⁷² Mael Mórdha, *Manannán* (Grau Records, 2010).

⁷⁷³ <http://www.avenoctum.com/2013/10/interview-mael-Mórdha/> [Accessed 29 October 2013].

⁷⁷⁴ <http://www.aristocraziawebzine.com/en/home-en/13-root/interviste/3373-mael-mordha-english-version> [Accessed 5 August 2015].

⁷⁷⁵ Anthony Bluett, *Things Irish* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1994); Tomás Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland* (Oxford: Routledge, 1978).

their contemporaries with their viewpoint on musicians who make use of traditional melodies within their output, apparently seeing this as a negative act rather than a positive method of representation of their heritage. This despite the asserted significant intention of the musicians involved, of portraying ‘Irishness’.

[Fionn]: I think as long as people can hear the “Irishness” in our music we are achieving something, if that’s not through the whistle and the bodhran then it’s through the rolling and crashing of the riffs

[Stephen]: We create our own folk music in the songs we create. For some bands it works great that they can mix the two but for us it is simply not in our interest to copy what has gone on before.

[Fionn]: We wrote [the melodies] ourselves. When you know your modes and scales it’s not so hard to write your own music in the Irish folk style. Traditional music is definitely and always will be a key influence. We want to be careful not to just copy and paste though.⁷⁷⁶

Comparisons can be drawn here with the work of Imke von Helden from 2010, where she cites her 2008 interview with Frode Glesnes of Norwegian band Einherjer:

There are only few authentic examples of applying traditional melodies. Most bands admit that they do not use authentic folk melodies. Frode of Einherjer states that they create melodies that ‘feel’ Norwegian for them instead of looking into old song books. He explains the feasibility of this procedure with the fact that most people have the melodies of their country in the back of their heads, ready to come out, whether consciously or unconsciously.⁷⁷⁷

The band Cnoc an Tursa have confirmed that their ‘melodies and the hooks can definitely be traced back to traditional Scottish folk music’.⁷⁷⁸ In addition to the album’s introductory track ‘The Piper O’ Dundee’ ending with a scream of ‘Sons of Alba, rise up in defiance of tyranny!’ (Alba being the Celtic name for Scotland, and so a seeming call to arms against the English), Figure 5.12 shows how the music is an adaptation (the lyrics are not used) of the refrain of a Jacobite song by the same name.⁷⁷⁹ In the example of the Cnoc an Tursa version, ‘The Piper O’ Dundee’ is used as an intro track designed to segue into ‘The Lion of Scotland’, and this link is facilitated by basing the adaptation of the traditional melody in the same key, D minor; ‘it was a conscious decision to make this the intro track’.⁷⁸⁰ The effect of this is enhanced because as can be seen, the band’s version is entirely constructed in the aeolian mode, whereas in both of

⁷⁷⁶ <http://www.themidlandsrocks.com/interview-with-celtachor/#.UneWHRaG7mI> [Accessed 4 November 2013].

⁷⁷⁷ von Helden, *ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

⁷⁷⁸ <http://www.soundshock.com/index.php/feature-band-interviews/4709-in-the-spotlight-with-cnoc-an-tursa> [Accessed 29 October 2013].

⁷⁷⁹ Cnoc an Tursa, ‘The Piper O’ Dundee’, *The Giants of Auld* (Candlelight, 2013).

⁷⁸⁰ <http://www.teethofthedivine.com/featured/interview-with-cnoc-an-tursa/> [Accessed 5 November 2013].

the online transcriptions there is some ambiguity due to the presence of a major 6th in b.2 (suggesting the dorian mode), and a minor 6th in b.6:

Figure 5.12: ‘The Piper O’ Dundee’ melody versions

a) Traditional music website version⁷⁸¹



b) Onlinesheetmusic.com version⁷⁸²



c) Cnoc an Tursa version (0:00-10)⁷⁸³



This kind of melodic alteration is again in keeping with the folk traditions that are being utilized, and Figure 5.12 also shows that there are also some significant rhythmic differences between the three versions. The first transcription heavily relies on a dotted rhythm, the second example having a dotted rhythm primarily at the beginning of each line, whilst the Cnoc an Tursa adaptation has a straight quaver rhythm throughout. In addition, the resolution of the refrain in the final three notes also has a variety of rhythms used with both versions of a dotted rhythm (the two original transcriptions) and a straight pair of quavers (Cnoc an Tursa) all used. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy to whether to transcribe the melody in 2/4 or 4/4 with no final conclusion possible in favour of either option.

⁷⁸¹ <http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/scottish-folk-music/008125.HTM> [Accessed 5 November 2013].

⁷⁸² <http://www.onlinesheetmusic.com/the-piper-o-dundee-p261482.aspx> [Accessed 5 November 2013].

⁷⁸³ Cnoc an Tursa, ‘The Piper O’ Dundee’.

There is also some variety in the harmonic progression used to underpin this melody. The Cnoc an Tursa version concludes with C to D minor (bVII - I) in exactly the same way as the Forefather adaptation of ‘Miri It Is’ did, whereas the harmony indicated on the website to accompany Figure 5.12b) finishes with a perfect cadence in G minor (borrowing from the harmonic minor in the case of the dominant chord), of D7 to G minor. When asked about his treatment of original melodies, Rene Hill (the guitarist of the band in 2013) suggested ‘I found a whole host of covers on YouTube [...] The chord progressions remain true to the original song.’⁷⁸⁴ As is often the case in this field, conclusively identifying the ‘original’ melody, rhythm, harmony or text can prove an impossible task, with the musicologist often having to settle for noting differences in approach. Here we see an example of the need for caution when declaring definitive origin of this type of material.

A sound working knowledge of music theory in terms of both rhythmic phrasing, time signatures, and scale and mode selection can certainly facilitate the ability to replicate music that is in keeping with the music of a particular style, and traditional folk melodies would not be any exception here. As has been demonstrated, there are considerable similarities between the note selection and rhythmic patterns of many examples of folk music representing a variety of nations. Therefore, there is an inherent possibility for a listener to draw conclusions regarding specific national characteristics that are highly suggestive rather than robust enough to withstand academic scrutiny. Whilst it is beyond the remit of this thesis to explore such a hypothesis here, this would be a fertile ground for future study. I would suggest that asking listeners, both with and without prior listening experience in the field, to blindly identify the national origins of melodies without any supplementary information as to the band’s name, artwork or lyrical language, would be likely to produce confusion and less than accurate results; the musical features combine with the other textual and visual elements examined in Chapters 3 and 4, to form the package that is received by the listener. It is only then, I propose, that suggested national characteristics begin to develop in the mind of the receiver. Here we see Fiske’s notion that ‘the reader is as creative as the author’,⁷⁸⁵ come to fruition in conjunction with Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’, and Hobsbawm and Ranger’s the ‘invention of tradition’.

⁷⁸⁴ Rene Hill, personal communication with the author, November 2013.

⁷⁸⁵ Fiske, *ibid.*, p. 283.

Chapter 6: A Case Study in Transnational Identity – Oakenshield

As has been shown, matters of transnational identity are a recurring thread in this field. Originating in Leeds, West Yorkshire, England, the work of Oakenshield has demonstrated a tendency for a somewhat unusual combination of many of the techniques of identity portrayal discussed in this study. Not only have they adopted the textual, visual and musical strategies identified in previous chapters, but rather than representing a singular identity, the approach of sole member Ben Corkhill has been to explore a collage of multiple identities. By presenting a body of work that is simultaneously specific in source material yet wide-ranging in the material's origins, we are returned to questions that compare the intent behind a band's project regarding the possibility of confusion in reception. With multiple layers of identity representation at play, the work of Corkhill provides further evidence of the heavy metal community's acceptance of transnational identities without any significant attempt to challenge or question. As the chapter will demonstrate, Oakenshield have taken the rare step of making available explanatory supplementary information to accompany recordings, which, when considered as a whole, makes the band's work a fascinating amalgam of the themes relevant to this study which merits detailed examination.

Ben Corkhill originally started Oakenshield in 2004 under the name of Nifelhel, a word that overlaps with the concept of Nifelheim from Norse mythology, 'an otherworld, or underworld, which is imagined as a place beneath the earth [...] the dark realms of Hel'.⁷⁸⁶ Releasing two demos (*Call Of The Gods* in 2005 and the following year's *Upon The Blood Of Ymir*), the influence of Norse mythology was extensive, with song titles such as 'The Fate Of A Viking', 'Sons Of Oden', and 'Asgard'. Despite changing the name of the band in 2007 to Oakenshield (a reference to Thorin Oakenshield — a fictional character in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*), the lyrical theme of Corkhill's recorded output showed no sign of change, with the first Oakenshield demo in the same year entitled *Gylfaginning*, and song titles including 'Ginnungagap', 'The Death Of Baldr' and 'Valhalla'; *Gylfaginning* (the tricking of Gylfi) is the name given to the first part of Sturri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* (early 13th century), and is a rich source of our modern-day knowledge of Norse mythology.

⁷⁸⁶ O'Donoghue, p. 72.

Whereas the motivation behind such lyrical topics can vary widely from artist to artist, Corkhill has always made it clear that for him, Norse mythology was simply an extension of his interest in history generally and Viking history specifically, and that he intended to use his lyrics to tell a story, without any overt religious connotations:

I personally have no religious beliefs, I do not believe in any gods or God, and do not worship idols. However [...] I have an admiration for and interest in many European pre-Christian belief systems. For me, though, mythology and history are purely interests of mine.⁷⁸⁷

Corkhill expresses a desire to use his interest in history to teach and to remind modern society of our origins and identity: ‘What we can learn about who we are today from history is incredible and should never be overlooked by anyone’.⁷⁸⁸ Corkhill’s sentiment here resonates with the explanation of the title and the subject matter behind Winterfylleth’s 2014 album *The Divination of Antiquity*. ‘Divination means to divine, to gain something from [...] so the title means learning from antiquity, from history’.⁷⁸⁹ It may not be immediately evident to the general public how learning about historical tales or mythology can benefit someone in the present day. However, Corkhill explains that in relation to his own work this is due to what he feels is the fundamental role that Nordic culture played in what we have come to know as England during the Viking period, also referencing a similar role played by the Saxons. Importantly, he makes a clear link between Nordic culture and northern Britain:

In Yorkshire and the northeast we have a dialect and accent derived largely from the Scandinavian and Germanic tongues. It would be naïve and quite childish to assume that this means we are related to these ancient peoples by blood, but it remains an integral part of our local history. The Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians have played as important a part in our northern identity as the Celtic tribes that originally inhabited the lands.⁷⁹⁰

From the outset, Corkhill made no attempt to avoid the problematic ‘Viking metal’ label for his music. The subtitle of the official Oakenshield website proclaims the band to be ‘Viking / folk metal’, although the front page complicates matters by also referring to ‘UK folk metal’.⁷⁹¹ Whether an intentional statement or accidental typographical error, the readiness to make use of the former term on the official site signifies comfort with commonplace genre labelling, despite the efforts of some bands to avoid such titles and the stereotypes that can come with it. Furthermore, the menu

⁷⁸⁷ http://www.oakenshield.org/press/vampster_interview.html [Accessed 13 May 2014].

⁷⁸⁸ Spracklen, Lucas and Deeks, *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁸⁹ Chris Naughton in José Carlos Santos, ‘Honour, Valour, Pride’, *Terrorizer*, 255 (December 2014), p. 20.

⁷⁹⁰ Spracklen, Lucas and Deeks, *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷⁹¹ www.oakenshield.org [Accessed 13 May 2014].

headings for each page on the site have a runic-style inscription underneath, the meaning of which is unclear, as no translation is provided. On the online Links page, amongst those listed are several pertaining to Viking metal content elsewhere online, the motivation for which is also unclear.

6.1: *Gylfaginning*

Oakenshield's full-length debut album *Gylfaginning* was released in 2008, the year following the demo of the same title; indeed, of the 11 tracks, four were re-recorded versions of those found on the demo. The list of song titles continues to illustrate extensive referencing of Norse mythology, and even the album's instrumental ('The Aesir') takes its name from that given to the pantheon of old Norse gods.

- Track 1: 'Ginnungagap' (5:20)
- Track 2: 'The Sons of Bor' (4:30)
- Track 3: 'Idavoll' (4:30)
- Track 4: 'Yggdrasil' (4:47)
- Track 5: 'The Aesir' (6:12)
- Track 6: 'Fenris' (4:54)
- Track 7: 'Valhalla' (5:26)
- Track 8: 'Utgarda-Loki' (6:33)
- Track 9: 'Hymir' (3:36)
- Track 10: 'The Death of Baldr' (6:26)
- Track 11: 'Vigrid' (8:55)

Within the album, the primary lyrical content (whether as quotation or reference) continues to evidence the author's fascination with Norse culture, from the explanation of the beginning of the world, to the tale of the death of one of the most important gods:

Early of ages when nothing was
 There was neither sand nor sea nor cold waves
 The earth was not found nor the sky above
 Ginnungagap was there but grass, nowhere.⁷⁹²

Thokk will weep dry tears at Baldr's funeral pyre
 Alive or dead the old man's son gave me no joy
 Let Hel hold what she has.⁷⁹³

Similar themes are apparent in the visual presentation of the album (Figure 6.1), as beneath the Oakenshield logo two ravens are pictured in full flight, representative of Odin's ravens, Hugin and Munin:

⁷⁹² Oakenshield, 'Ginnungagap', *Gylfaginning* (Einheit Produktionen, 2008).

⁷⁹³ Oakenshield, 'The Death of Baldr', *Gylfaginning*.

Figure 6.1: Oakenshield *Gylfaginning* front cover⁷⁹⁴

This is not dissimilar in style to the logo of Falkenbach (Figure 6.2), another non-Nordic musician with a fascination for Norse mythology, who also came from the black metal tradition of one-man bands. As discussed in Chapter 3, not only are Odin's ravens present, but there are also representations of other significant Norse icons such as Thor's hammer Mjölnir and the great tree Yggdrasil:

Figure 6.2: Falkenbach logo⁷⁹⁵

The picturesque landscape of the *Gylfaginning* cover with tranquil water in the foreground and dramatic rolling hills in the background, also mirrors the visual strategies of bands such as Enslaved, Falkenbach, Moonsorrow and Windir (Figure 6.3). Once again the links between this style of presentation in heavy metal and the work of National Romantic artists such as Johan Christian Dahl, Peder Balke and their contemporaries explored in Chapter 3 is evident, with the power and dramatic impact of nature playing a prominent role in identity formation.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹⁴ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/1/7/5/8/175895.jpg?0802> [Accessed 20 April 2015].

⁷⁹⁵

http://en.prophecy.de/out/pictures/onthe-fly/oxarticle/normal/x700/1/falkenbach_logo_originalquadrat.jpg [Accessed 20 April 2015].

⁷⁹⁶ Jenny Anderson and Mary Hilson, 'Images of Sweden and the Nordic Countries', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 34.3 (2009), 219-228; David, M. Wilson, 'The Viking Age in European Art – A Note', in *The Waking of Angantyr: The Scandinavian Past in European Culture*, ed. by Else Roesdahl, Sorensen Preben Meulengracht and Preben Meulengracht Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 176-191; David, M. Wilson, *Vikings and Gods in European Art* (Højbjerg: Moesgard Museum and Aarhus University Research Foundation, 1997).

Figure 6.3: Landscape artwork examples

a) *Frost* (Enslaved, 1994)⁷⁹⁷b) *Magni Blandinn Ok Megintiri* (Falkenbach, 1998)⁷⁹⁸c) *Likferd* (Windir, 2003)⁷⁹⁹d) *Tulimyrsky* (Moonsorrow, 2008)⁸⁰⁰

For *Gylfaginning*, rather than referencing an old painting, Oakenshield used a photo taken in Norway by a Polish photographer, Maciej Duczynski:

The landscape captured summed up the setting of the album, which is of course Earth, and the dark clouds on the left hand side represented the ominous coming of the earth's fate – Ragnarok.⁸⁰¹

It was not here that comparisons between Oakenshield and Falkenbach (a band that had released a steady stream of music since 1989) ended. Indeed, reviews of the *Gylfaginning* demo had already suggested that 'If you've ground your Falkenbach albums to dust from overplaying, you'll obviously want to pick this up immediately'.⁸⁰² Whilst some of these comparisons simply offered a point of reference for listeners ('[*Gylfaginning* has an] epic Viking atmosphere reminding [reminiscent?] of bands like

⁷⁹⁷ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/1/1/0/0/1100.jpg?4302> [Accessed 21 April 2015].

⁷⁹⁸ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/2/8/6/8/2868.jpg?1520> [Accessed 21 April 2015].

⁷⁹⁹ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/1/8/7/8/18781.jpg> [Accessed 21 April 2015].

⁸⁰⁰ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/1/8/5/6/185671.jpg?0744> [Accessed 21 April 2015].

⁸⁰¹ http://www.oakenshield.org/press/vampster_interview.html [Accessed 13 May 2014].

⁸⁰² http://www.metal-archives.com/reviews/Oakenshield/Gylfaginning_Demo/171641/ [Accessed 15 May 2014].

Falkenbach’),⁸⁰³ others were more critical, accusing Corkhill of a lack of originality (‘If you can’t stand Falkenbach, don’t bother to read any further’).⁸⁰⁴ Whatever the writer’s viewpoint, the signing of Oakenshield to the German label Einheit Produktionen at least brought a level of exposure that until that point had proved elusive, and despite these observations, reviews were generally positive overall. However, it would be inaccurate to simply dismiss Oakenshield’s debut full-length album purely as a clone of Falkenbach, despite the similarities. In fact, some observers have even viewed Falkenbach as derivative; Dayal Patterson suggested that Bathory’s *Hammerheart* (1990) ‘inspired the sound, concept, and aesthetic of many later bands of the genre, such as Germany’s impressive Falkenbach’.⁸⁰⁵

In terms of the music on *Gylfaginning*, a 6/8 time signature is prominent. Four of the 11 tracks make use of it, with a further two adopting more fluid and changing time signatures, whilst still being based around a compound rhythm grouping of a dotted crotchet. This prominence is commonplace in the field, especially in black metal. For example, on the debut E.P. by Norwegian band Emperor, of the four tracks included, three feature extended sections in 6/8 such as in the opening track ‘I Am The Black Wizard’ at 2:01-4:04 (it is also common for songs to not remain in the same time signature throughout).⁸⁰⁶ The more fluid variation of time signatures as used by Oakenshield on the tracks ‘Valhalla’ and ‘Utgarda-Loki’ are not dissimilar to those used by the Faroese band Týr (see Figure 6.4), and as before the similarities between the rhythmic patterns used and numerous examples in folk music are present:

Figure 6.4: Fluid time signature examples

a) Oakenshield ‘Valhalla’ melody (0:00-0:08)⁸⁰⁷



⁸⁰³ <http://www.metalsoundscapes.com/archives/2115/oakenshield-gylfaginning> [Accessed 13 May 2014].

⁸⁰⁴ http://www.metalstorm.net/pub/review.php?review_id=5718 [Accessed 13 May 2014].

⁸⁰⁵ Patterson, 2013, p. 35.

⁸⁰⁶ Emperor, *Hordanes Land* (Candelight Records, 1993).

⁸⁰⁷ Oakenshield, ‘Valhalla’, *Gylfaginning*.

b) Týr 'Nine Worlds of Lore' melody (1:02-1:18)⁸⁰⁸



The vocal stylings of Corkhill are in keeping with the range of those utilised by many in this area (as discussed in Chapter 5), with a raspy black metal style scream being the most prominent, interspersed with some clean melodic vocals, and a small number of spoken word sections, such as in 'Utgarda-Loki' at 1:04-1:22. When using the clean vocal performance, in places Corkhill also employs the organum style of harmony line already highlighted, with a prominent use of perfect fourths, fifths and octaves. In 'Valhalla', each black metal style 'question' lyric is 'answered' by a cleanly sung 'Oh', with organum style harmony, the first example of which is at 1:09. This bare sounding form of harmonic composition is also used in the same track from 3:16 to 3:59, and again there are parallel fifths from 4:29 to 4:58. In turn, each of these styles of vocal delivery further enforce differing elements of the kinds of identities this material references. The aggressive nature of the black metal scream hints at the aspect of violence in the tales of battle and conflict, or helps the performer represent their anger towards their chosen enemy. The organum style of harmonic writing not only bears stylistic similarities to the drones prominent in folk music, but it is also often performed by multiple voices, suggesting at a form of chant that could be performed by a group of warriors, a crowd or other type of public gathering.

The use of spoken word sections reminds us of the emphasis on oral transmission of stories within the period relevant here. For example in Old Norse culture, 'the complex, sophisticated verses of the skaldic poets were very fashionable at the courts of kings and in the halls of cultured men',⁸⁰⁹ there was an 'essentially oral mode of composition and transmission' of Anglo-Saxon poetry,⁸¹⁰ and Daitz refers to how in the history of Estonia 'some of the songs of these peoples have survived for many centuries via oral transmission'.⁸¹¹ Similarly, the Faroe Islands has a long tradition

⁸⁰⁸ Týr, 'Nine Worlds of Lore', *The Lay of Thrym* (Napalm Records, 2011).

⁸⁰⁹ Ellis Davidson, p. 23.

⁸¹⁰ Bradley, ed., p. xiii.

⁸¹¹ Daitz, p. 16.

of poetry and song being performed not only for the entertainment of leaders, but as a regular community activity, passing the material on to future generations.⁸¹² A central issue in this thesis is whether any creative writer is merely taking an influence from folk music, is attempting to create a pastiche of a particular national style, or is utilising specific source material for their compositions in the form of traditional melodies. In terms of *Gylfaginning*, Ben Corkhill has confirmed that, ‘there were no traditional melodies used, all the music was composed by myself, just with influence from Scandinavian (and wider) folk music’,⁸¹³ aligning himself in this instance with bands such as Ireland’s Celtachor referred to in Chapter 5 when they stated that ‘We create our own folk music in the songs we create’.⁸¹⁴

The period 2008-2012 was a relatively fallow period for Oakenshield, other than their contribution to compilation album in 2009, a version of ‘Twa Corbies’, the Scottish ballad that Winterfylleth have since recorded for the 2014 compilation *One And All, Together, For Home*, curated by Drudkh mainman Roman Sayenko and Chris Naughton of Winterfylleth. This represents a fusion of Oakenshield’s work and Corkhill’s interest in folk music, marking the band’s first recorded version of a traditional song. In addition, Corkhill made a version of the Yorkshire folk song ‘Lyke Wake Dirge’ available for download via the band’s MySpace page. In the summer of 2009, Corkhill also created podcasts via a supplementary website, in the form of what he called the ‘Shield Of Oak Show’.⁸¹⁵ Taking the form of three radio ‘programmes’, these podcasts saw Corkhill perform tracks by a range of international metal bands, as well as promoting artists as the best of the ‘UK underground’.⁸¹⁶ In the final programme, entitled *Yorkshire Special*, Corkhill engaged further with issues of identity by only playing music by bands that shared heritage with the county of his origin (even if these did not necessarily represented their regional identity musically). In the accompanying text on the website, Corkhill incorporated stereotypical Yorkshire identifiers, by instructing listeners to ‘Get your flat caps on and grab the nearest pint of Tetley’s’;⁸¹⁷ he also described the podcast as being in celebration of the previous month’s Yorkshire Day, an annual celebration held on 1 August.

⁸¹² Green, pp. 64-5.

⁸¹³ Personal communication with the author, May 2014.

⁸¹⁴ <http://www.themidlandsrocks.com/interview-with-celtachor/#.UneWHRaG7mI> [Accessed 4 November 2013].

⁸¹⁵ <http://oakenshield.podomatic.com> [Accessed 14 May 2014].

⁸¹⁶ Ibid.

⁸¹⁷ <http://oakenshield.podomatic.com> [Accessed 14 May 2014].

6.2: *Legacy*

It was not until 2012 that Oakenshield's second album, *Legacy*, was released. Initial impressions of the artwork may have led listeners to suspect that little had changed in terms of the textual and thematic content. The front cover (Figure 6.5) depicts a painting of a warrior looking out upon a stormy sea where several Viking-style dragonhead ships are visible in the distance. Nearer the shore, towards the foreground, there appears to be another of these ships ablaze.

Figure 6.5: Oakenshield *Legacy* front cover⁸¹⁸



It is not immediately possible to ascertain the nationality or time period of the warrior as we only see the rear view of his armoury and helmet. However, in the context of the band's previous work and the style of the ships depicted, this could be a Viking soldier looking forlornly out at his compatriots, or alternatively a native warrior ready to defend his land against a Viking invasion. The band logo once again has two ravens in full flight beneath.

The tracklisting also suggests a continuation of a Nordic influence, with song titles including 'Jorvik' (the Viking name for the city of York) and 'The Raven Banner', with references to Hugin and Munin. However, the album focuses primarily upon the Vikings' historical exploits. 'Wen Heath' is a battle referred to in the well-known Icelandic saga, *Egil's Saga*, and 'Clontarf' (Cluain Tarbh), as noted in Chapter 5, is a famous battle in Irish history, on Good Friday 1014 between Brian Boru and the king of Leinster Máel Mórda mac Murchada. The relevance of this battle to Oakenshield is that

⁸¹⁸ <http://www.metal-archives.com/images/3/2/7/9/327992.jpg?2922> [Accessed 21 April 2015].

Máel Mórda mac Murchada's army was in part made up of Norsemen from Orkney and the Isle of Man in a Viking-Irish alliance. Although Boru himself was killed, his forces were victorious, and this battle is often thought to be significant in signalling the end of the Viking raids in Ireland. A further example of the thematic thread of Viking exploits abroad is 'Earl Thorfinn', referring to Thorfinn Sigurdsson, Thorfinn the Mighty, an Earl of Orkney in the 11th century but of Viking descent, 'the greatest of the Orkney jarls in might, wisdom, and magnanimity'.⁸¹⁹

In terms of the lyrics, the album often takes a fairly factual, story-based approach, focussing in the main on the historical or saga-based tales. Unlike some of his contemporaries, (such as the Scottish Cnoc an Tursa on English incursions north of the border, or any number of musicians on the Christian 'invasion' into Nordic lands), there are few negative connotations in Corkhill's treatment of the idea of invasion. Instead, the focus is on the unfolding narrative:

On a winter's night Rognvald's men returned
 Revenge was in their eyes
 Thorfinn's house and company were burned
 And all the land was claimed
 Believed to be dead, Thorfinn stowed away to Caithness
 Where he bided his time, plotting his revenge
 Soon before Christmas he returned
 And beset Rognvald and his men
 By their campfire's light as they made their festive preparations.⁸²⁰

However, in some songs, the lyrics suggest nature-worship, or longing for past times, suggesting similarities with examples discussed in Chapter 4 such as the Ukrainian band Drudkh and their use of poets such as Taras Shevchenko:

The sun shines over the hill, calling all men who stand
 He who hears cannot return, life is not in his hands
 Under foot, the dust and soil, lies what we cannot see
 In time knowledge will come, one day all men are free.⁸²¹

Bright summer sun reddened with blood
 That which once was green
 Now scorched, blackened with ash.⁸²²

Rather than a political commentator, therefore, Corkhill positions himself as an observer. There is little evidence of first-person narrative, and at no time is the listener

⁸¹⁹ Jones, p. 387.

⁸²⁰ Oakenshield, 'Earl Thorfinn', *Legacy* (Einheit Produktionen, 2012).

⁸²¹ Oakenshield, 'Eternal As The Earth', *Legacy*.

⁸²² Oakenshield, 'The Raven Banner', *Legacy*.

aware of how the events should be interpreted. This is in part due to the style of lyric writing, and the lack of central thematic thread that might suggest a single, specific national identity. Whilst the content clearly represents the exploits of the Vikings and their conquests in and around the British Isles, unlike some of his contemporaries Corkhill's interpretative position makes no attempt to persuade the listener for one protagonist's viewpoint over another, and no statement of a preferred protagonist.

The credits in the accompanying liner notes for *Legacy* frequently make use of the abbreviation 'Trad'. Identifying relevant source materials (whether in terms of lyrics or music) was initially problematic, but contact with the band led to a significant document. In January 2011, during the creation of the *Legacy* project, rather than being satisfied simply with a standard set of liner notes for the accompanying artwork, Corkhill decided that his work required an additional supporting 'text', *Legacy Histories*. This came in the form of an eight-page PDF electronic file that not only included the song lyrics, but also details of source materials for the texts and music. Corkhill is not the first metal musician to create such extensive accompanying notes to support their work. The American death metal band Nile, for example, included detailed discussions of Egyptian history and mythology in their liner notes (*Black Seeds Of Vengeance*, 2000; *Annihilation Of The Wicked*, 2005). In the collector's edition of *Ithyphallic* (2007), this material was even printed on a mock-papyrus scroll, housed in a ten-inch pyramid accompanying the CD – mirroring Corkhill's use of a brown background for his document, suggestive of discolouration through age. Primordial, from the Republic of Ireland, also provided additional information to explain the historical or mythological context of their work, although in a less comprehensive manner. Although *Legacy Histories* (created before the album was released) offers the listener a useful context in which to situate the textual and musical content, its lack of accessibility was striking. Unlike the Nile and Primordial examples that were part of the albums' packaging, Corkhill chose to only make his document available via a page on the website of Einheit Produktionen (the label responsible for the album's release), doing nothing to draw attention to it other than listing it alongside other promotional materials available for download.

There was a range of possible reasons behind the crafting of the document, which in itself could be seen as a somewhat academic act for a heavy metal artist; perhaps Corkhill simply wished to document the song writing process for his own

satisfaction, or perhaps it was preparatory work to facilitate responses to media interview questions once the album was commercially released. In subsequent personal communication with Corkhill, I broached the subject of his original motivation for making the document. He explained: ‘The intention of it was simply to provide people with an in-depth look into the stories and inspirations/influences behind each track and the album in general’.⁸²³ This information has not been made available through the band’s official website(s), but only via secondary sources such as the band’s information page on their label’s website,⁸²⁴ and via an eBook search engine.⁸²⁵ This covert approach reflects the anonymous form of presentation that has long been a feature of the careers of many black metal bands, what Paterson calls black metal’s underground ethics: ‘limited print runs, a lack of promotion, and stark, inaccessible imagery and sound’.⁸²⁶ Many black metal artists often refuse to engage with the traditional activities of the media and fans alike. Engendering a form of cult persona is designed to increase the allure of the artist and, in this instance, we certainly see an attempt by a band like Oakenshield to demand more of those who are taking an interest in their music: the greater the effort, the greater the reward. However, it transpired that this was not the band’s original intent, as Corkhill explains:

The histories doc(ument) was actually intended to be made widely available, though the means just never really came around properly [...] to be honest I think it just ended up a case of not having or knowing how to distribute it widely enough.⁸²⁷

Some comparisons can be drawn here with the recent popularity of bands conducting crowdfunding projects through websites such as Kickstarter and PledgeMusic. Here fans are given the opportunity to pledge donations of increasing amounts, in order to gain a range of rewards. These can take the form of limited edition products, merchandise, exclusive tracks, and often increased access to their chosen artist via video interviews, online instrumental lessons privately accessed blogs, having their name put on the credits of a release, or in some cases to actually meet the artist themselves. Successful campaigns of this nature in the world of heavy metal have included Florida death metal band Obituary who in September 2013 reached a final pledge value of more than 600% of their original \$10,000 target for recording their new album via

⁸²³ Personal communication with the author, May 2014.

⁸²⁴ <http://www.einheit-produktionen.de/index.php?id=503,0,0,1,0,0> [Accessed 16 May 2014].

⁸²⁵ <http://ebookbrowse.net/oakenshield-legacy-songs-histories-pdf-d309949253> [Accessed 16 May 2014].

⁸²⁶ Patterson, 2013, p. 313.

⁸²⁷ Personal communication with the author, May 2014.

Kickstarter,⁸²⁸ and Devin Townsend, who in early 2014 raised 546% of his target amount for his *Casualties of Cool* project via PledgeMusic.⁸²⁹

Musically, *Legacy* opens with an instrumental track of more than three minutes entitled ‘Northreyjar’, the Old Norse name for the Orkney Islands off the north coast of Scotland. *Legacy Histories* identifies two traditional folk melodies as source material here: ‘the Scandinavian traditional tunes ‘Uti Vår Hage’ (‘Spring has returned’) and ‘Oppi Fjellet’ (‘Up In The Mountains’) (Sweden and Norway, respectively)’.⁸³⁰ This welding of melodies from two Nordic countries exemplifies a representation of a musical pan-Nordic and transnational identity, in a similar manner to its artwork equivalent explored in Chapter 3. This is firstly significant in terms of the writer; in this instance Corkhill is an ‘other’ in the form of an English musician who has undertaken the compositional process with no personal identity-based connection to the region and nothing more than an interest in the folk culture and history. This could additionally be the case in terms of the music’s reception by a listener unfamiliar with the original melodies.

Beginning with the chime of a tubular bell (a feature of other heavy metal tracks such as Black Sabbath’s self-titled song or ‘For Whom The Bell Tolls’ by Metallica),⁸³¹ the soundscape of ‘Northreyjar’ is orchestral, albeit synthesised. Whilst there is a plethora of examples of metal bands supplementing their sound with orchestral instrumentation, the costs involved in hiring performers of real instruments are often prohibitive. Therefore, keyboard or virtual instrument equivalents are the common alternative:

[The] use of synth illustrates a curious paradox that has frequently surfaced in black metal; namely that the inclusion of minimal, linear and primitive-sounding keyboard parts can actually prove far more immersive, convincing and even authentic than a realistic emulation of traditional instruments [...] sometimes a simple keyboard refrain will say infinitely more than a hundred layers of orchestral voices.⁸³²

The use of a low, sustained, string tonic (E) held as a pedal note underneath the initial melodic statements of ‘Uti Vår Hage’ is significant here, as it reinforces the influence of

⁸²⁸ <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/unation/help-fund-a-new-obituary-album> [Accessed 19 May 2014].

⁸²⁹ <http://www.pledgemusic.com/projects/casualties-of-cool> [Accessed 19 May 2014].

⁸³⁰ *Legacy Histories* PDF, Ben Corkhill, Oakenshield (2011, p. 1).

⁸³¹ Black Sabbath, ‘Black Sabbath’, *Black Sabbath* (Vertigo, 1970); Metallica, ‘For Whom The Bell Tolls’, *Ride The Lightning* (Megaforce Records, 1984).

⁸³² Patterson, 2015, p. 171.

the drones prevalent in folk music. Woodwind instrumentation is prominent with first bassoon then oboe stating the melody. Corkhill does not necessarily always make use of original melodies in full or in their original structural form. For example, a modified version of the two-line refrain of ‘Uti Vår Hage’ is used as the opening melody and by using the D# at the end of b.4 in conjunction with the repeated use of the minor 3rd, heavily suggests a melody of harmonic minor construction. Figure 6.6 compares an arrangement of the same melodic phrase by Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960), a significant Swedish composer, who also used works such as his three Swedish Rhapsodies to represent national identity:

Figure 6.6: ‘Uti Var Hage’ melody

a) arr. Corkhill⁸³³



b) arr. Alfvén⁸³⁴



The second melody stated for the first time at 0:46 (Figure 6.7) is in fact the verse melody of the original song. The bassoon again plays the lead line, now accompanied by higher held string chords, some of which, like the vocal harmonies discussed earlier (although not exclusively), make use of bare sounding fifth and octave intervals (see b.4). The addition of a drone is in keeping with the folk music influence present as well as the power chord based soundscape common throughout heavy metal. The folk element is enhanced further by the presence of the C# in b.4 giving the melody a modal quality (E dorian, one of the more commonly used modes in folk music).⁸³⁵ When this melody reappears at 1:19, a chord of E5, increasing the underlying drone effect, has replaced the Em chord of bb.1-3. In addition, the crotchet A at the end of b.5, is replaced by an A# — suggestive of the idea of melodic variants in folksong. This obviously has harmonic implications for the accompanying chord, creating a brief use of the secondary dominant F# major. Figure 6.8 provides Alfvén’s transcription for comparison.

⁸³³ Oakenshield, ‘Northreyjar’, *Legacy*.

⁸³⁴ ‘Uti Vår Hage’, arranged Alfvén, <http://musescore.com/user/643/scores/934> [Accessed 13 May 2014].

⁸³⁵ Nettl, p. 67.

Figure 6.7: 'Uti Var Hage' verse melody, arr. Corkhill⁸³⁶

Figure 6.8: 'Uti Var Hage' verse melody, arr. Alfvén⁸³⁷

Alfvén's version of the original melody has a much faster moving, more complex harmonic rhythm, in comparison to that by Corkhill. This can be seen particularly in a comparison of the two versions of the first three bars. In addition, Alfvén's version has a more prominent and earlier use of modulation to the relative major key, being the basis for bb.4-6 rather than Corkhill using his in bb.7-8.

At 1:54 in 'Northreyjar', Corkhill presents the first statement of the Norwegian melody 'Oppi Fjellet' (Figure 6.9), and this is performed using the sound of a xylophone, accompanied only by percussion in the basic two-bar pattern transcribed below using some kind of timpani or similar and a sleigh bell sound. Here the rhythmic pattern shifts from the simple 3/4 time with an occasional triplet in the melody of 'Uti Vår Hage' to a more consistent use of a dotted crotchet or compound time signature, here in the form of 9/8. As previously discussed, time signatures based on triplet groups or dotted crotchet beats is commonplace not only throughout much of folk music but also in black metal:

Figure 6.9: 'Oppi Fjellet' verse melody, arr. Corkhill⁸³⁸

⁸³⁶ Oakenshield, 'Northreyjar', *Legacy*.

⁸³⁷ 'Uti Vår Hage', arranged Alfvén, *ibid*.

⁸³⁸ Oakenshield, 'Northreyjar', *Legacy*.

One striking feature is the range of possibilities in terms of the bar divisions in this folksong. Figure 6.10 offers an alternative approach to barring in the transcription by Eric Forgeot. The two versions become aligned again from beat 2 of bar 2. As with the melodic variants noted above, this is an example of the kind of rhythmic equivalent commonplace in folk music.

Figure 6.10: ‘Oppi Fjellet’ verse melody, arr. Forgeot⁸³⁹

Oppi Fjellet
Ingrids vise
Ræven og haren
Trad. / tekst : Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (Norge - Norway - Norvège)

As noted in the introduction to this thesis there are various methods of notating a swing rhythm, with no internationally accepted method of doing so. The effect is achieved in my transcription of the Oakenshield version by notating even half-beat quavers with a metric modulation to indicate that they should be performed with the two-thirds and one-third division shown. Forgeot’s transcription has one of the commonly used alternatives in pairing a dotted quaver with a semiquaver.

Oakenshield was not the first metal band to make use of this source material; the Norwegian ‘supergroup’ Storm (featuring Fenriz of Darkthrone and Satyr of Satyricon) recorded a version of the full original song by the same name on their only full-length album *Nordavind* in 1995. The barring of the melody is again an issue; there are elements in common with both Corkhill and Forgeot, but there are also a couple of instances of a ‘dropped’ (omitted) beat, meaning a change in time signature is temporarily necessary in order to transcribe the melody accurately (Figure 6.11):

Figure 6.11: ‘Oppi Fjellet’ verse melody arr. Storm⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁹ ‘Oppi Fjellet’, arr. Forgeot, <http://folkcovers.org/static/notes/Scandinavia.pdf> [Accessed 14 January 2015].

⁸⁴⁰ Storm, ‘Oppi Fjellet’, *Nordavind* (Moonfog, 1995).

In the Oakenshield version, the elongated decay of the timpani provides a subtle kind of E drone or pedal note effect for the melody, which is otherwise unaccompanied and without harmony, other than a solitary horn sound at 2:09, held for three bars. The use of horns (in this instance sounding much like a French Horn) is often used in music to suggest some form of battle, a hunt or similar; Richard Wagner's 'Ride of The Valkyries' from *Die Walküre* (1856) would seem a particularly prevalent example here, not only for its use of horns, but also for its connection to Norse mythology, and the link between Valkyries and battlefields. This timbre is not an uncommon feature in heavy metal, such as the introduction of 'Viten Og Mot (Sindighet)' by Helheim (Norway, 2011)⁸⁴¹ or 'Progenies Of the Apocalypse' by their compatriots Dimmu Borgir (2003).⁸⁴²

Another version of the 'Oppi Fjellet' melody played by the xylophone appears at 2:17 of 'Northreyjar' when there is a modulation to B minor (Figure 6.12). This modulation, along with a full chord backing provided by strings instead of a lone root pedal note accompaniment, elevates the track from a sparse, haunting opening, to a triumphant, celebratory musical statement of intent for the album that is to follow. The track stays in the new (minor) dominant key for its remainder, ending with approximately twenty seconds of non-pitched percussion in the form of some kind of tom and sleigh bells, as well as a solitary tubular bell ringing as in the opening.

Figure 6.12: 'Oppi Fjellet' B minor verse melody arranged Corkhill⁸⁴³

The musical score for 'Oppi Fjellet' in B minor is presented in two staves. The first staff contains the melody, starting with a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff contains the chordal accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the mode is minor. The chords are: Bm, F#, Bm (G on rpt), F#, Bm, D, F#, Bm, F#, G, F#, Bm.

As soon as 'Northreyjar' ends, the second track 'Earl Thorfinn' begins immediately with a more overt heavy metal soundscape of distorted guitars, bass guitar and drums. However what is not mentioned on the *Legacy Histories* document is that the first melody heard is again the Norwegian 'Oppi Fjellet' melody from 'Northreyjar', although this time it has returned to its original E minor, thus creating a perfect cadence

⁸⁴¹ Helheim, 'Viten Og Mot (Sindighet)' *Heiðindómur Ok Mótgangur* (Dark Essence Records, 2011).

⁸⁴² Dimmu Borgir, 'Progenies Of The Apocalypse', *Deathcult Armageddon* (Nuclear Blast, 2003).

⁸⁴³ Oakenshield, 'Northreyjar', *Legacy*.

from the B minor chord at the end of track one to the beginning of track two; this creates a musically satisfactory link and resolution to the beginning of the first song of the album and the first time that we hear the metal instrumentation that is the core of the band's sound.

Again, rhythmic devices are striking. As has already been noted, the 'Oppi Fjellet' melody in the majority of versions (including that used by Oakenshield in 'Northreyjar') has the feel of three beats in the bar. Within this time signature, the melody uses a pair of swung quavers (however this is notated) as its main rhythmic grouping. In 'Earl Thorfinn', in terms of the drum pattern, whilst there is some fluidity and the occasional uneven bar, there is primarily a 6/8 or 12/8 feel (i.e. two or four dotted crotchet beats, or groups of three quavers). The dotted crotchet beat that forms the building blocks of 6/8 and 12/8 is extremely prevalent in black metal, and indeed much of the remainder of 'Earl Thorfinn' continues in this tradition. Despite this rhythmic underpinning, some of the lead melodic lines performed on a type of whistle, as well as the rhythms of the vocal phrases, provide a frequent polyrhythmic conflict due to the tension between a primarily three-beat melodic phrasing and a drum pattern that is built on pairs of beats. The supplementary information provided in the *Legacy Histories* document for 'Earl Thorfinn' focuses not on the musical source material at hand, but instead the narrative, identifying the main character as Thorfinn Sigurdsson ('Thorfinn the Mighty'), 'not to be confused with Thorfinn Skullsplitter [...] The particular events described in this song relate to Thorfinn's relationship with his nephew Rognvald, which eventually turned bloody.'⁸⁴⁴ Thorfinn Sigurdsson was an 11th-century Norwegian jarl referred to in the Orkneyinga Saga.

The third track on *Legacy* is 'Jorvik', taking its title from the Old Norse name for what is modern-day York. The *Legacy Histories* document here discusses the history of the city. Corkhill describes the lyrics as a 'fictional narrative' about the Viking leader Ivar the Boneless.⁸⁴⁵ Musically there are a number of features typical of the amalgamation of styles relevant here, including a driving 6/8 rhythm that underpins the whole song. In keeping with the soundscape established on the previous track, again the melody is heavily influenced by folk music, this time performed on a whistle; this is first stated in the introduction to the song as a solo, after which it reappears during each vocal chorus. The melody is based around the natural minor scale, although the

⁸⁴⁴ *Legacy Histories*, p. 1.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 2.

harmony provided underneath by guitars and keyboards briefly borrows from the harmonic minor scale on several occasions, creating a major chord at the fifth step (in this case B major in the key of E minor).

This ambiguity between a minor and major dominant chord in a minor key is a recurring feature in this field (fluctuating between a minor and modal approach). In addition, the chorus sees Corkhill make some use of the bare sounding perfect fourth and fifth harmonies in the vocals, particularly on the cry of the title of the track ‘Jorvik!’ However, he does not restrict himself to this style and also helps to emphasise the harmonic borrowing from the harmonic minor scale during the cadential phrase at the end of the chorus by singing a D# over a B beneath (Figure 6.13), resolving to the perfect fourth B and E to finish.

Figure 6.13: ‘Jorvik’ (1:39-1:48)⁸⁴⁶

The image shows a musical score for the chorus of 'Jorvik'. It is written in 6/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is on a treble clef staff. The chords are indicated above the staff: C, Em, B, B(sus4), B, and Em. The lyrics are: 'Far we have come and long we shall re - main'. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a final cadence on the last note.

‘Mannin Veen’ (Manx Gaelic for ‘Dear Isle of Man’) is the next song on *Legacy*, taking its name from the 1938 tone poem by Haydn Wood, an English composer who moved to the Isle of Man aged 3, who often used the song as a source of inspiration. However, the title is not the sole source of material for Corkhill here as his track includes not only a reworking of Wood’s initial themes, but also what Corkhill refers to as a ‘traditional Manx tune “The Storm Is Up”’,⁸⁴⁷ before concluding with an arrangement of ‘Ellan Vaninn’. The last of these songs can be the source of some confusion as there are two well-known songs that go by the same name. The first, and the one often referred to as the alternative national anthem of the Isle of Man,⁸⁴⁸ was originally a poem by the 19th-century British writer Eliza Green, which was later put to music by J. Townsend. The second, covered by artists such as Robin Gibb of The Bee Gees, is sometimes referred to as a traditional folk song from the Isle of Man,⁸⁴⁹ but was in fact written by Liverpool folk singer Hughie Jones and The Spinners in the 1960s to

⁸⁴⁶ Oakenshield, ‘Jorvik’ *Legacy*.

⁸⁴⁷ *Legacy Histories*, p. 3.

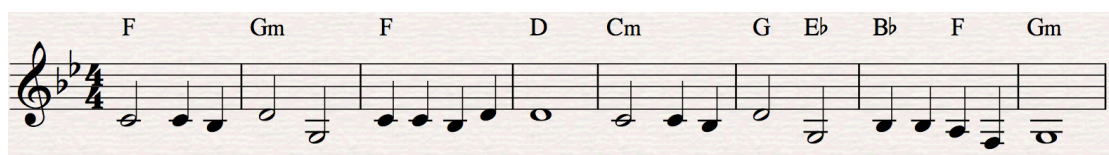
⁸⁴⁸ http://www.manxmusic.com/history_page_129615.html [Accessed 29 April 2015].

⁸⁴⁹ Usernames RedNev and robotforaday <http://aliverpoolfolksongaweek.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/46-ellan-vannin-tragedy.html> [Accessed 23 April 2015].

commemorate the Ellan Vaninn ship disaster of 1909. The vessel was lost sailing into the mouth of the river Mersey from its homeport in the Isle of Man, along with all of its passengers and crew. In an example such as this it is possible that by creating original music or using musical source material that is in the style of a particular folk music or at least takes influence from folk music, this further heightens the sense of age or historical context for the listener. This will, in turn for some, add an additional element of legitimacy to the weight of the work, especially in a field so fixated on the need for authenticity.

In the Oakenshield track, the statements of The Spinners' 'Ellan Vaninn' refrain theme at 2:39 and 3:37 both begin and end with a major chord based on the flattened seventh step of the G aeolian (natural minor scale), F major, resolving to the tonic chord of the key (G minor), as shown in Figure 6.14. This use of bVII^{maj} to I^{min} is a cadence used extremely frequently throughout rock music, such as the reliance on this pattern in Deep Purple's 'Child In Time' discussed by Moore.⁸⁵⁰

Figure 6.14: 'Mannin Veen' arr. Corkhill⁸⁵¹



However, using a similarly constructed perfect cadence to the previous track 'Jorvik', at the conclusion of the last statement of the final line of 'Mannin Veen' at 3:55 (see Figure 6.15), this harmony is replaced with a major chord on the dominant fifth step of the G minor key (D), and so this necessitates an alteration in the penultimate note of the melody (F# instead of F). As in other examples, this is again an example of a minor key melody borrowing a non-diatonic note from the harmonic scale. The use of an interrupted cadence at b.8 creates a greater sense of resolution at the perfect cadence at bb.11-12. This is enhanced further by the fact that during this repeated last line the rhythmic lengths of the melody are effectively doubled so that the phrase takes two bars rather than its normal one. It is, of course, not unusual for folksong-based music to include variants in melodic phrasing on the part of a performer. Indeed, in this instance,

⁸⁵⁰ Moore, 2001, p. 56.

⁸⁵¹ Oakenshield, 'Mannin Veen', *Legacy*.

comparison could be drawn with the frequently similar use of a modified, repeated tag line at the end of many jazz and swing songs.

Figure 6.15: ‘Mannin Veen’ arr. Corkhill⁸⁵²

According to the *Legacy Histories* document this track is not only in ‘homage to my family history’ due to the theorised Isle of Man origins of Corkhill’s own surname, the ‘kettle of Cor (Thor)’, but he also states that he has a strong ‘personal affinity’ with the island.⁸⁵³ It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that he chose to represent the island in the form of an instrumental track, especially as (apart from the originally orchestral Wood tone poem) the lyrics for the songs that the music was taken from have such strong connections with the island and its history.

The track ‘Wen Heath’ is named after one of the theoretical locations of The Battle of Brunanburh in 937, with Wen Heath being the possible name at the time for the area that has become known as Wirral. However, in *Legacy Histories*, Corkhill concedes that the true location of the battle is ‘unknown’. The true location of the battle ‘remains hotly debated’,⁸⁵⁴ and despite its significance in British and Viking history, the ‘site has never been identified’.⁸⁵⁵

There has in the past been considerable uncertainty as to where Brunanburh was, with claims ranging from the Humber, Burnswalk in Dumfriesshire and Blackburn and Burnley in Lancashire. However, the great bulk in the historical and philological opinion is now in favour of Wirral, particularly because of the philological connection of Brunanburh with Bromborough.⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵² Oakenshield, ‘Mannin Veen’, *Legacy*.

⁸⁵³ *Legacy Histories*, p. 3.

⁸⁵⁴ Jayne Carroll, and others, *The Vikings in Britain and Ireland* (London: The British Museum Press, 2014), p. 29.

⁸⁵⁵ Wood, p. 158.

⁸⁵⁶ Stephen Harding, *Scandinavian Wirral, West Lancashire and Chester* (Birkenhead: Countywise, 2002), p. 153.

Corkhill is not the first heavy metal musician to reference this battle in his work. His compatriots Forefather did so both in the song ‘Brunanburh’ in 2008, and also four years earlier in another song title ‘The Shield Wall’. This is an expression taken from the tale of ‘The Battle of Brunanburh’ that appears in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (e.g. in the *Winchester Manuscript*).⁸⁵⁷ The battle is also described in *Egil’s Saga*, the saga ‘generally attributed on stylistic and other grounds to Iceland’s greatest medieval historian, Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), who was a descendant of Egil’.⁸⁵⁸ Musically, ‘Wen Heath’ makes prominent use of a hemiola, a polyrhythmic, syncopated effect between a three beat phrase and a two beat phrase used concurrently. This rhythmic effect has a long history through many styles and forms of music; however, discussing the music of Brahms, Hancock clearly situates this device in relation to folk music:

Brahms’s original melodic ideas were often derived from or closely related to the German folk music that was his lifelong passion [...] Echoes of folk music include patches of modal colouring, hemiola, and occasional use of irregular meters.⁸⁵⁹

This compositional technique lends itself especially well to a 6/8 time signature due to the ease of movement between two groups of three quavers (6/8) and three groups of two quavers (3/4). The effect on the listener of these two competing rhythmic phrases is one of constant conflict, each attempting to assert control over the other. ‘Wen Heath’ makes creative use of a Scottish traditional song called ‘Henry Martin’ where we can see this type of rhythmic devices being utilised (Figure 6.16). The following melody begins for the first time at 1:36 and is performed by a solo violin over a driving 6/8 soundscape of distorted guitars, bass and drums; it performs the role of a counter melody underneath the harshly screamed black metal vocals. As can be seen in bars 3, 16 and 17, the violin melody contains three evenly spaced crotchets, which when performed against the 6/8 pattern in the drums (punctuated by a bass drum on the first quaver and a snare drum on the fourth) produces the hemiola effect. The melody is performed four times consecutively, and during the second, third and fourth cycles, the hemiola in the violin in bb.16-17 is further exaggerated by the use of melodic vocals that are in the same rhythm but harmonise with the violin in perfect fourths (Figure 6.17):

⁸⁵⁷ Swanton, ed., p. 106.

⁸⁵⁸ Thorsson, ed., p. 7.

⁸⁵⁹ Virginia Hancock, ‘Volkslied / Kunstlied’, in *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Rufus Hallmark (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2009), p. 144.

Figure 6.16: 'Wen Heath' melody⁸⁶⁰

The musical score for 'Wen Heath' melody is presented in three staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is written in treble clef. The chords indicated above the notes are: Em, D, G, B/F#, Em, D, Em, D, B, Em, G, D, Em.

Figure 6.17: 'Wen Heath' refrain⁸⁶¹

The musical score for the 'Wen Heath' refrain is presented in a single staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is written in treble clef. The chords indicated above the notes are: Em, G, D, Em. The lyrics below the notes are: Struck for their hordes and their hearths and their homes!_____

Oakenshield's Ben Corkhill is not the first musician to make use of the 'Henry Martin' melody. Transcriptions of versions by the German composer Albert Hague and the American folk singer songwriter Joan Baez from her 1960 self-titled debut album are presented in Figure 6.18. The primary similarity between the two is that they are both written in 3/4 instead of the 6/8 framework used by Oakenshield. Baez's version is more harmonically and rhythmically complex, and the phrasing of Baez's vocal performance introduces an element of the hemiola rhythm similar to Oakenshield's version. In bb.1, 2, 3, and 18, there is a note whose arrival is syncopated between the second and third crotchet beat, and therefore dissects the bar evenly, producing the temporary effect of 6/8 (two groups of three quavers). Due to the more simplistic harmonic progression in the Hague transcription, there is a greater exaggeration of almost a drone effect, as the majority of the melody is performed over the tonic chord of Em (with even the cadential movement at the end involving a second inversion of the Am chord ensuring that the root of the chords remains on an E).

⁸⁶⁰ Oakenshield, 'Wen Heath', *Legacy*.

⁸⁶¹ Oakenshield, 'Wen Heath', *Legacy*.

Figure 6.19: 'Henry Martin' arr. Donovan⁸⁶⁴

By comparing these different interpretations which exaggerate varying musical elements, each in turn demonstrates a common feature of folk music: the hemiola rhythmic pattern in versions by Oakenshield and Baez (whether within a 6/8 or 3/4 metre), the drone style accompaniment (Hague), and the fluid length of vocal phrasing (Donovan). As a result, we see further evidence of the context in which Corkhill's work continues to use folk music for source material as a means of identity representation, and some of the musical devices utilised in the process. In fact there are similarities that can be drawn between these elements of Donovan's recording and the work of the Faroese metal band Týr referenced elsewhere in this study, who base much of their work on the folk music of their native islands.

The following track on *Legacy* is entitled 'Clontarf' and focuses on events in early 11th-century Ireland, specifically in relation to Brian Boru, High King of Ireland and his battle at Clontarf with Máel Mórda ('without doubt, the best known Irish battle of the Middle Ages').⁸⁶⁵ In the *Legacy Histories* document, Corkhill describes how in his struggles to overcome Boru, Máel Mórda recruited assistance from Sigtrygg Silkbeard, 'leader of the Vikings in Dublin, as well as Norsemen from Orkney and the Isle of Man'.⁸⁶⁶ Boru's victory helped to seal the end of Viking power in Ireland; MacKillop describes how the Vikings 'found their power curtailed' after the battle,⁸⁶⁷ and Corkhill states that there were 'no further raids recorded after 1014'.⁸⁶⁸ The

⁸⁶⁴ Donovan, 'Henry Martin', *H.M.S. Donovan* (Dawn, 1971).

⁸⁶⁵ Carroll, and others, p. 37.

⁸⁶⁶ *Legacy Histories*, p. 5.

⁸⁶⁷ MacKillop, p. 49.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

significance of the battle means that Corkhill is not the first artist to find inspiration in the story; the Irish landscape artist Hugh Frazer created his striking portrayal of the battle *The Battle of Clontarf* in 1827. Corkhill confirmed that whilst a solo violin plays a prominent lead role throughout the track, it is in fact only in one section (beginning at 2:50) where the melody makes direct use of a traditional folk song, in this instance the Irish song ‘The Rocky Road to Dublin’.⁸⁶⁹ Corkhill’s treatment represents a creative refiguring of the melody in terms of time signature, pitch, rhythm, harmony, and also speed. Despite this variety, it is possible to see how the shape of the original tune has been preserved, and Corkhill is far from the first musician to create this type of adaptation.

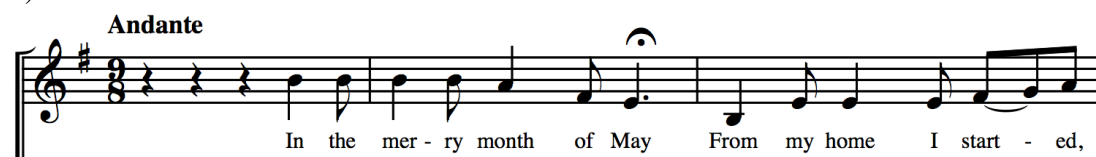
When notated, ‘The Rocky Road to Dublin’ is often written with a time signature of 9/8, although there is variation in the rhythmic placement of the beginning of the phrase, which in some versions can create an anacrusis. Figure 6.20 compares two versions of the opening; one commonly-found transcription, usually simply listed without credit as ‘traditional’, and the other by Hungarian composer Olasz Balázs, which supplements the first phrase with an extra two notes.

Figure 6.20: ‘The Rocky Road to Dublin’ melody

a) Harding’s All-Round Collection⁸⁷⁰



b) arr. Balázs⁸⁷¹



The feel of the group of three quavers (here in a dotted crotchet grouping) is maintained in some other notated versions, where with a time signature of 2/4, pairs of quavers are performed with a swing feel (in a similar manner to the range of notation methods mentioned when discussing ‘Oppi Fjellet’ earlier), such as that by Paddy Moloney of

⁸⁶⁹ Personal communication with the author, May 2014.

⁸⁷⁰ <http://riffspot.com/music/title/r/rocky-road-to-dublin/tin-whistle/> [Accessed 19 January 2015].

⁸⁷¹ Traditional, transcribed Balázs, <http://www.free-scores.com/PDF/balazs-olasz-the-rocky-road-dublin-13762.pdf> [Accessed 19 January 2015]. A version the same as that by Balázs also appears on the prominent sheet music website Music Notes, <http://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtdFPE.asp?ppn=MN0091558> [Accessed 19 January 2015].

the traditional Irish band The Chieftains.⁸⁷² The Oakenshield melody differs rhythmically, however, by having groups of four semiquavers rather than a triplet feel (Figure 6.21). There has also been some modification of the melody itself with the notes linking the dominant and root notes in the opening phrase being the 4th and 3rd steps of the scale (the D and C) rather than the 4th and 2nd (the A and F# in the other versions):

Figure 6.21: ‘Clontarf’⁸⁷³



In all of the versions looked at so far, both in terms of chord progression and key signature, we begin with a minor chord based on the root of a natural minor scale beginning of the same note. Additionally, in each case the melody begins on the 5th note or the dominant step of that scale. However, in the transcription of the melody that appears in the *Oxford Fiddle Group Tunebook* (Figure 6.22), we see another example of variance inherent in the notation of this type of melody:

Figure 6.22: ‘The Rocky Road to Dublin’ arr. Oxford Fiddle Group Tunebook⁸⁷⁴



Here we see the ambiguous nature of the use of modes inherent to this style of writing. Whilst the first line has a clear sense of D aeolian, the remainder of the melody lends itself much more to a classification of D dorian. Rather than centre the transcription in D minor (which at least for bb.1-4 would have been appropriate), the arrangement has no key signature (i.e. C major or A minor) and instead makes use of accidentals to identify the B flats. This, in turn, leads us to not only identify the importance of modes

⁸⁷² <http://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtdFPE.asp?ppn=MN0015718> [Accessed 19 January 2015].

⁸⁷³ Oakenshield, ‘Clontarf’, *Legacy*.

⁸⁷⁴ <http://www.oxfordfiddle.co.uk/ofgtunes.pdf> [Accessed 22 January 2015].

in folk music, but also to the previously mentioned innate possibility of modification in transcriptions of a music which has its roots as an oral tradition, as well as often failing to lend itself to straightforward categorisation within either a major or minor framework.

The influence of modes rooted in Gregorian chant and church music has been widespread for many centuries, across numerous styles. Lilja states that modal influences in what he calls the ‘Western art music canon [...] were derived either from various folk music traditions or from church modes’.⁸⁷⁵ It would, however, be a fallacy to attempt to declare that all folk music has a root in modes, and indeed Nettl correctly points out that musicologists are sometimes too keen to try and establish these connections; whilst ‘we must concede the possibility of a great deal of influence of church music on folk song’, he suggests, this can only be a fully accurate process if we retain it for classifying songs that ‘actually have seven tones’.⁸⁷⁶ Although there is indeed something to be said for this standpoint, I believe that it fails to recognise how some notes within each mode have more of a significant weighting in terms of the characteristics of that mode than others. We should therefore be careful not to ignore the significance of the presence of these defining notes. Indeed Nettl himself later concedes that ‘it is sometimes revealing to examine the functions of the various tones in a scale’.⁸⁷⁷ If we compare a natural minor scale (or aeolian mode, i.e. flattened 3rd, 6th and 7th) with a dorian mode (flattened 3rd and 7th), it is clear that the crucial note, which distinguishes the two, is the presence of a 6th from a major scale. Therefore, whether a melody contains all seven notes of a scale or not, if it bears many characteristics of being written in a minor key, but has accidentals that are the major 6th, then the significant feature of a dorian mode is there and so the nature of the mode will be present.

Upon examining some of the later parts of the different transcriptions of ‘The Rocky Road to Dublin’, we see how this note is a recurring feature and could lead to varying possibilities for how they are notated. The second part of the melody in both the version published by Music Notes and the arrangement by Balázs contains the following figure (Figure 6.23):

⁸⁷⁵ Lilja, p. 167.

⁸⁷⁶ Nettl, p. 43.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 68.

Figure 6.23: 'The Rocky Road to Dublin',⁸⁷⁸

The chord progression of E minor and B minor (along with the one sharp key signature) gives a strong indication that this piece is in E minor. However, the presence of C# accidentals would have alternatively allowed this transcription to be written in E dorian with a two sharp key signature. Returning to the *Oxford* transcription, we can see that there is some fluidity between the presence of both B flats and B naturals, meaning that neither notating this version in D minor or D dorian would be entirely satisfactory. Indeed, this kind of analysis could easily lead to the conclusion that my own transcription of the 'Clontarf' melody (Figure 6.21) could have made use of the one sharp key signature of G major (writing in A dorian), removing the need for the F sharp accidental in b.8. In short, it is easily demonstrated that there can be alternative methods of notating melodies of this nature, and it is important that the benefits and pitfalls of each are not ignored.

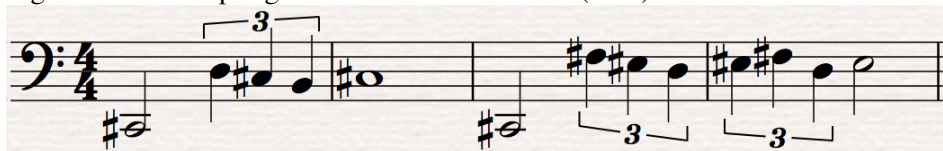
The relevance of modes in relation to the world of heavy metal is not restricted to Oakenshield and there are some artists for whom the use of particular modes has become an intrinsic part of their sound. Canadian guitarist, vocalist and prolific writer Devin Townsend, for example, has become well known for his abundant use of the lydian mode (with its distinctive sharpened 4th),⁸⁷⁹ a compositional device that (along with ninth chords) he has relied on heavily throughout his career.⁸⁸⁰

The phrygian major mode (a phrygian mode with a major 3rd, also sometimes known as the phrygian dominant due to it starting on the 5th step of a harmonic minor scale) is prevalent across many of metal's sub-genres, with particularly active protagonists including the American death metal band Nile, and Swedish guitar virtuoso Yngwie Malmsteen. We can also hear it used by Polish blackened death metal stars Behemoth, such as in 'Sculpting the Throne Ov Seth' (Figure 6.24), which is formed using C# phrygian major (the fifth mode from F# harmonic minor):

⁸⁷⁸ <http://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtdFPE.asp?ppn=MN0091558&> [Accessed 22 January 2015].

⁸⁷⁹ <http://martingoulding.com/lessons/solo-studies/devin-townsend/> [Accessed 23 January 2015].

⁸⁸⁰ http://exclaim.ca/Music/article/devin_townsend_project-addicted, [Accessed 23 January 2015].

Figure 6.24: 'Sculpting the Throne Ov Seth' riff (0:25)⁸⁸¹

The flattened 2nd that forms a core part of the mode is used extensively across heavy metal (also appearing as it does in the lydian mode), and is often described as adding an element to the sound that is Egyptian, Arabic, or Latin.⁸⁸²

The penultimate track on *Legacy* is 'Eternal as the Earth', a phrase that clearly portrays a national romantic sentiment. The now commonly identified yearning for a return to a future reminiscent of a glorious past or the need for a rising up in the face of persecution is lyrically evident, declaring themes similar to the work of Drudkh amongst others:

The sun shines over the hill, calling all men who stand
 He who hears cannot return, life is not in his hands
 Under foot, the dust and soil, lies what we cannot see
 In time knowledge will come, one day all men are free⁸⁸³

The *Legacy Histories* document identifies the subject matter as the tale of the Battle of Cynwit (or Cynuit) in 878 between an army of Anglo Saxons and Danish warriors led by Ubbe (Ubba) Ragnarsson. In much the same manner as the discussion regarding Brunanburh, the site of the battle has been the subject of some debate with various locations in the Somerset (Cannington Camp),⁸⁸⁴ and Devonshire area put forward as possibilities. The battle is referred to in Bernard Cornwell's novel *The Last Kingdom*, published in 2004, and is considered significant due to the Anglo Saxons capturing the Raven Banner (Hrefn) in their victory over the Viking army.⁸⁸⁵ Whilst King Alfred the Great is often credited directly or not as having led the English resistance, there is an alternative theory supported by some such as Lavelle that based on the reference to Ealdorman Odda in the chronicle of Aethelweard (Ethelwerd), it was in fact he that led the resistance against the Danish Vikings whilst Alfred was in

⁸⁸¹ Behemoth, 'Sculpting the Throne Ov Seth', *Demigod* (Mystic Production, 2004).

⁸⁸² There is not sufficient space here to produce a comprehensive overview of the inherent characteristics of a large number of modified scales and modes. However, of particular relevance for further reading here is the writing of Shay Loya where he discusses the music of Liszt, and Hungarian and eastern European folk music: Shay Loya *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2011).

⁸⁸³ Oakenshield, 'Eternal as The Earth', *Legacy*.

⁸⁸⁴ A. P. Baggs, and M. C. Siraut, 'Cannington', *A History of the County of Somerset: Andersfield, Cannington, and North Petherton Hundreds (Bridgwater and Neighbouring Parishes)*, 6 (1992), 73-76.

⁸⁸⁵ Swanton, ed., p. 77.

hiding.⁸⁸⁶ Interspersed within Corkhill's composition is a section (both lyrical and musical) taken from the traditional English song 'Down Among The Dead Men', which is often attributed to the Rev John Dyer, an eighteenth-century Welsh poet, who became a clergyman of the Church of England:

May love and wine their joys maintain
And their united pleasures reign
While smiling plenty crowns the land
We'll sing the joys that both afford
And they that with us won't comply
Down among the dead men, let him lie.⁸⁸⁷

The line 'While smiling plenty crowns the land' does not appear in every other reproduction of the original poem, as it is sometimes replaced by the line 'Whilst Bacchus's treasure crowns the board',⁸⁸⁸ Bacchus being the name given by the Romans to the Greek god Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. Despite Corkhill's assertion in *Legacy Histories* that the lyric he has borrowed here 'echoes the general sentiment [...] of the overall lyric theme',⁸⁸⁹ having already explained that the song's lyrics 'explore how the notion of fate prevents men from escaping their destiny – whether it be to live to old age or fall on the field', this seems at odds with the more common labeling of Dyer's original being a 'drinking song' and the term 'dead men' actually being representative of 'empties [...] under a festive table'.⁸⁹⁰

Musically, Corkhill's version of the traditional song (which appears at 2:13 in 'Eternal as The Earth' performed by a violin part doubled and harmonized in places by a lead electric guitar) is for the most part a faithful representation of the melody (Figure 6.25), although he has made some changes to the harmonic progression in comparison to other published versions. One of the most effective aspects of the use of this song here is that it is immediately preceded by some thirty-one seconds of an original melody in a similar idiom, accompanied entirely by an E5 drone created by the electric rhythm guitars and bass, meaning that when the harmonic progression finally breaks away from that, the impact is enhanced. This is especially the case when (considering

⁸⁸⁶ See Carruthers, ed., p. 109; Dr Ryan Lavelle, University of Winchester, BBC Radio 4, *Making History*, 27/09/2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0150p8y#auto> [Accessed 9 February 2015]; J.A. Giles, ed., *Old English Chronicles* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1906), p. 31.

⁸⁸⁷ Oakenshield, 'Eternal As The Earth', *Legacy*.

⁸⁸⁸ http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/song-midis/Down_Among_the_Dead_Men.htm [Accessed 9 February 2015].

⁸⁸⁹ *Legacy Histories*, p. 5.

⁸⁹⁰ E., David Gregory, *The Late Victorian Folksong Revival: The Persistence of English Melody, 1878-1903*, p. 534; http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/song-midis/Down_Among_the_Dead_Men.htm [Accessed 9 February 2015].

up until this point the song is firmly entrenched in a minor key) at bb.3-4 there is a IV-V-I perfect cadential movement to resolve to the relative major key of G major during the lyric ‘united pleasures’.

Figure 6.25: ‘Eternal As The Earth’ melody⁸⁹¹

The musical score for the melody of 'Eternal As The Earth' is presented in three staves. The key signature is G major (one sharp, F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is written in treble clef. The chord symbols above the staves are: Em, C, B, C, D, G, Am, F, E (Staff 1); C, D, G, Em, G, Em, C, B (Staff 2); Em, D, C, B, G, Am, B, Em (Staff 3).

‘Eternal As The Earth’ also makes use of elements of the North Yorkshire traditional song ‘Lyke Wake Dirge’. Appearing for the first time at 0:52, initially Corkhill only uses the traditional song’s chord sequence, although on the second cycle, this is added to by a lead guitar and whistle performing the melody in unison. The song acts as a countermelody underneath the vocals (screamed in a black metal vocal style). This is not the first time that Corkhill has made use of ‘Lyke Wake Dirge’, as on the 2009 Oakenshield demo, he recorded a version of it in its entirety. Again ‘Eternal As The Earth’ provides a collision of a range of national, transnational and regional identities, combining tales of a battle between Anglo Saxons and Danish Vikings, a drinking song by a Welsh poet, and a North Yorkshire melody. Indeed, it could be argued that here we have a microcosm of the subject matter relevant to the study: a musical work presented under a label presented as a cohesive whole of Viking metal, which unless more closely examined fails to reveal the myriad of elements at play.

Legacy concludes with ‘The Raven Banner’, a mostly original composition although it does include a reprise of the ‘Uti Vår Hage’ melody that was so prominent the album’s opening track ‘Northreyjar’. This arrives for the first time at 6:29 and loops for more than two minutes until the track fades to nothing, providing a satisfying musical return to ‘home’. Lyrically Corkhill uses the *Legacy Histories* document to

⁸⁹¹ Oakenshield, ‘Eternal As The Earth’, *Legacy*.

explain the significance of the Raven Banner (Hrefn or Hrafnsmerki):

[Hrafnsmerki] is hugely symbolic when looking at the history of the Vikings. It was carried by many Scandinavian kings and chieftains during their time of expansion and conquest, the earliest appearance being chronicled in 878. Thought to reflect the significance of Odin's ravens in Norse paganism, it was even in some cases thought to hold magical powers (such as the banner of Sigurd the Stout of Orkney).⁸⁹²

As noted in Chapter 3, images of ravens are commonplace and have become almost as representative of Viking and Norse culture as Thor's hammer Mjölnir. Used in conjunction with the returning 'Uti Vår Hage' theme ('Spring has returned'), and a lyrical refrain of 'Fljúga hverjan dag, jörmungrund yfir' ('Fly every day over the great earth'), Corkhill creates a representation both musically and lyrically of the importance throughout National Romanticism of the notion of time and the everlasting strength of both nature and Odin's ravens.

By creating *Legacy* using the methods discussed, and with the additional materials that he has, Corkhill has crafted a quintessential example of the transnational identities at play in this field, and one that can fulfill many roles depending on the needs of the receiver. To the heavy metal fan with an interest in the subgenre that runs no further than the music, the album provides the necessary elements of both black metal and folk music, and is a work that is musically in keeping with his contemporaries such as Falkenbach or Moonsorrow. Those receivers that interact with this music because they enjoy the elements of 'other' it provides without a concern for the details of the various pan-identities presented, can also do so successfully. However, for those who wish to examine the variety of source material and inspiration for the fusion of music, text and imagery that Corkhill provides, there is an opportunity to unpick a rich tapestry of cultural revisiting. Oakenshield presents a highly unusual blend of not only traditional material that has been adapted and reinterpreted, but also the creation of original music that is stylistically in keeping with both the folk heritage that inspires it and the black metal soundscape within which it is crafted. This is coupled with both a musical and lyrical approach that borrows from a range of Northern European cultures so seamlessly that a transnational identity can easily be perceived as a cohesive whole, which has thus far been unchallenged.

⁸⁹² *Legacy Histories*, p. 6.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1: Research Questions Revisited – A Genre Assessed

This thesis demonstrates how far the field of heavy metal bands who represent national identity in their work has developed, and identifies several ongoing issues within the movement. Given the fluid nature of popular music genres and the discourse surrounding their demarcation, it is naturally not possible to reach a final set of boundaries acceptable to all. However, there follows a series of reflections on the questions raised by the current material being produced by these bands. These research questions were:

1. To demonstrate the breadth of Northern and Eastern European bands active in the field and challenge the current focus on those from the Nordic region, challenging the continued focus of the material produced in or about the Nordic region, in turn drawing comparisons with the National Romanticism movement of the 18th and 19th centuries.
2. To challenge the genre-labelling that has thus far been used to describe the material being produced, showing inconsistencies and identifying the issues caused.
3. To draw comparison between the work of these bands and the theories of Benedict Anderson (imagined communities), and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (invented traditions), examining the bands' material in terms of traditional material and authenticity.
4. To offer a case study that encapsulates the transnational identities that are inherited within the field, crucially using musical analysis throughout where previous writers used cultural or lyrical elements as their primary focus.

7.1.1: Limitations of the Nordic Focus

Given the prevalent use of the term Viking metal, there continues to be a disproportionate amount of focus on bands from the Nordic region, ignoring the contribution of bands from other geographical areas. Whilst Nordic metal bands continue to have a significant role in terms of representing national identity, it is unhelpful to suggest that these bands are the only protagonists. This thesis has identified numerous examples of significant bands from across the other regions of Europe, some

of whom have been as active as the leading Nordic counterparts since the earliest stages of the national identity in metal movement, including Primordial (formed in 1987) and Cruachan (1992) from Republic of Ireland, Falkenbach (1989) from Germany, Waylander (1993) of Northern Ireland, and Skyforger from Latvia (1995). In Chapter 4.4 the discussion of Primordial's *Dark Romanticism* demo (1993) (with Halupczok's conclusion that with this recording they 'defined an entire genre') provides an example of how non-Nordic bands have been responsible for equally significant developments in the collision between national identity and romanticism and heavy metal.

As the movement has developed, it has become evident that at least two other regions have become particularly active. The UK has a longstanding history in heavy metal, from the genre forefathers of Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, through to the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) led by Iron Maiden, and the doom 'Unholy Trinity' of My Dying Bride, Paradise Lost and Anathema in the early 1990s. In the same decade we have seen that there were a considerable number of Irish bands from both sides of the border that placed matters of national identity at the centre of their work. After the turn of the millennium this style of writing became even more prevalent in UK extreme metal, with bands such as Winterfylleth, Wodensthron, Cnoc an Tursa, Mael Mórdha, Oakenshield, Saor, Fen, Celtachor, Corr Mhóna, Ildra, also becoming active. Meanwhile in the eastern regions of Europe, a similar explosion took place involving Graveland, Drudkh, Hate Forest, Metsatöll, Arkona, and Negură Bunget. All of these bands and their many contemporaries have shown clear evidence of a type of cultural revisiting that bears distinct similarities to the National Romanticism movement of the 18th and 19th centuries.

7.1.2: A Genre Labelling Challenged

Chapter 2 provided a critical analysis of current lexicography in use by the media, record labels and audience when describing the material being produced. The issues inherent in attempting to apply any of the terms most commonly used (Viking, battle or pagan) were demonstrated. Throughout, the recurring concerns were two-fold: firstly, the terms are often applied interchangeably, without precise definition or demarcation, and unchallenged. Secondly, none of these terms can portray the variety of content created, and instead fail in attempting to suggest that there is a single defining thematic thread. This is exhibited in Chapter 2.3 by examples such as the diversity contained within the *Battle Metal* compilation CDs produced by *Metal Hammer*, the

April Fool's piece in *Terrorizer* regarding the use of the term 'Viking metal', and Deena Weinstein's acknowledgment that the genre label Pagan metal is another lyric-based term that hides within it a wide range of musical styles. Throughout, I have acknowledged the transience of genre definition (e.g. Kahn-Harris stating that genres 'cannot be static'), and the importance of the role of the listener (e.g. Brackett's emphasis on the need for 'listener competence'). However, by presenting the flaws intrinsic in the terms used thus far, I have demonstrated that without the establishment of an agreed and tested lexicography, it is difficult to see how the labelling in this field can be said to match the academic standards necessary for genre understanding.

7.1.3: Invented Traditions and Imagined Communities

In Chapter 1 I discussed the significance of Ernest Gellner's assertion that nationalism 'invents nations where they do not exist'.⁸⁹³ However, as Benedict Anderson correctly observes, 'Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates "invention" to "fabrication" and "falsity", rather than to "imagining" and "creation"'.⁸⁹⁴ Both during the National Romanticism movement and with the bands relevant here, this distinction is important: just because a community imagines the concept of the nation does not diminish its creative value. In numerous instances, bands have used their lyrics, artwork and music — often in combination — to display a rekindling of an interest in their country's heritage and history. This has often been cloaked in the imagery of the power, beauty or purity of nature and landscape, commonly overlapping with tales of battle, mythology or paganism, be they based on fact or fiction. These elements have combined to present a 'prestige of origin':⁸⁹⁵ in essence not only an identity (national or transnational) but also a sense of value in time or history. Alongside the writings of Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger challenge the notions of tradition and authenticity. If the starting point of a tradition or identity has its authenticity questioned or challenged, either by sender or receiver, then it becomes more difficult to attach value to such a 'prestige of origin'. Many of the bands discussed here either explicitly or implicitly express a desire for their nation's identity to 'return' to a prior state, an earlier time, or as Fridh concludes, 'The focus on a cultural historical past can also be understood as the rejection of modernity itself'.⁸⁹⁶ Scott Wilson critically identifies anti-modernity as a

⁸⁹³ Ernest Gellner, cited by Anderson, p. 6.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁵ Aarnes, *ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

⁸⁹⁶ Fridh, *ibid.*, Abstract.

fundamental theme of black metal and explains a connection between this and the genre's fascination with nature by referring to Cascadian black metal band Wolves in the Throne Room as being strongly 'associated with the ecological impulse in black metal'.⁸⁹⁷ The suggestion is that modern society and culture has deteriorated in their homeland and gradually eroded a nation's 'true' character. As Hannerz notes:

Your destiny is with the nation's future generations. There is also the sense of a national restoration of dignity. If there was a glorious past, there must be a glorious future, and a personal share in that coming renewal.⁸⁹⁸

This kind of National Romantic language, privileging myth and tradition, is common; examples include this promotional biography for Skyforger's 2002 album *Thunderforge* by their record label Metal Blade Records:⁸⁹⁹

[*Thunderforge* contains] themes of ancestral culture and heathen gods. The album successfully recaptures the spirit of ancient Latvia [...] describing the ancient Baltic traditions, myths and wisdom. The music is powerful, precise [...] imbued with Pagan fire and crushing might.⁹⁰⁰

National and regional texts of many kinds have played a central role in metal albums, and the wealth of these examples has been demonstrated. These have not been restricted to those from the Nordic region, but have explored equivalent historical, mythological and poetic texts from countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Russia and across the British Isles. What has distinguished a comparatively smaller number of bands from the majority in this field, is the more selective incorporation of traditional source materials in the form of folk songs or melodies. Bands such as Týr (Faroe Islands), Storm and Hardingrock (Norway), Forefather (England), Cnoc an Tursa (Scotland) and Primordial (Ireland), have adapted their nation's folk musical heritage and positioned it within a range of heavy metal soundscapes. Whilst the source materials here can be identified, there are also examples of bands such as Ireland's Celtachor who, whilst confirming that the folk music of their country does influence their writing, prefer to avoid explicit references to their sources: 'We create our own folk music in the songs we create [...] it is simply not in our interest to copy what has gone on before'.⁹⁰¹

⁸⁹⁷ Scott Wilson, ed., *Melanology: Black Metal Theory and Ecology* (Aldersford: Zero Books, 2014), p. 7.

⁸⁹⁸ Hannerz, p. 83.

⁸⁹⁹ Skyforger, *Thunderforge* (Folter Records, 2003).

⁹⁰⁰ <http://www.metalblade.com/us/artists/skyforger/> [Accessed 24 May 2016].

⁹⁰¹ <http://www.themidlandsrocks.com/interview-with-celtachor/#.UeWHRaG7mI> [Accessed 4 November 2013].

7.1.4: Oakenshield – Transnational Identities Encapsulated

I have demonstrated how unchallenged transnational identities have become accepted, such as that demonstrated by the Oakenshield case study in Chapter 6. This shows an example of an artist who has intentionally combined different visual, textual and musical aspects to represent national and transnational identity. Whilst we have seen multiple examples of bands representing either their own nation, or a nation that is of interest to them despite having no personal connection, here is a band that it could be argued does both. In doing so, Ben Corkhill has encapsulated the representation of transnational identity, both in the way it is presented (significantly supplemented by the *Legacy Histories* document), and in the way it has been received. Furthermore, the album contains both adaptations of traditional folk music material, as well as original music written in a style heavily influenced by these materials. The example of Oakenshield acutely demonstrates how transnational identities are being formed by artists in this field, hitherto unchallenged. Here we see a band that has combined textual and musical source material from across northern Europe alongside original compositions in a similar folk style within a heavy metal soundscape, in what Hannerz would term ‘The withering away of the nation’.⁹⁰² As mentioned in Chapter 1, the concept that neighbouring nations could have distinctly different, as opposed to at least some transnational, qualities seems doubtful. Therefore, whilst the *Legacy* information document discussed in Chapter 6 distinguishes in some detail between the variety of nations that Corkhill’s source material originates from, to the listener not in possession of that information (and perhaps unfamiliar with the texts and melodies being utilized) there is little to differentiate between them stylistically. This suggests a clear example of a transnational identity being both presented and received. In this example the modern nations involved are many of the territories occupied or invaded by Vikings (a very transnational term in itself), such as Scotland, Ireland, England, Norway, and the Orkney Islands. Therefore, in some ways, if ever ‘Viking metal’ was to have validity as a genre label, perhaps that is what Oakenshield could be said to be, despite not being a band from the Nordic region itself. However, this would not resolve the limitations of the term in not taking account of the range of musical styles.

⁹⁰² Hannerz, p. 81.

7.2: National Identity, Metal and the Mainstream

Whilst the vast majority of the bands relevant to this research continue to exist in a culturally underground space only occupied by senders and receivers that have sought the material out, on occasion the music has gained much wider exposure. It has been beyond the remit of this thesis to analyse in depth how the mainstream culture of different nations perceives heavy metal music and its surrounding cultural trappings. However, it is of particular interest that there are numerous instances of metal musicians in the Nordic countries having their work supported in ways that their contemporaries from elsewhere would not. Whilst this does not specifically explain the frequency of Nordic bands using their work as a means of national identity representation, it does perhaps in part explain why metal bands from the region are so active. In Sweden, for example, ‘studios are often subsidized’,⁹⁰³ and the government helps to pay for rehearsal spaces where young musicians can practice their trade. Musician and author Daniel Ekeröth suggests how integrated this initiative is:

Since Sweden is a wealthy country [...] everybody who ever wanted to play in a band has been able to do so. Instruments and rehearsal rooms have been provided by the municipalities to a large extent, and you could actually even get paid by certain associations to rehearse and make recordings. Many cities in Sweden still have large buildings with rehearsal rooms that you can rent for practically nothing.⁹⁰⁴

Across the border in Norway, it is clear that there are numerous examples of mainstream culture giving significant recognition to extreme metal musicians. The Spellemansprisen Awards is an annual awards ceremony that are often referred to as the Norwegian’s Grammys, and are thought of as one of Norway’s most prestigious prizes. When reporting death metal band Execration’s 2015 victory, the prominent webzine *Noisey* commented that this was another sign of how ‘Extreme metal is a much bigger deal in Scandinavia than it is pretty much anywhere else, at least in terms of mainstream acceptance and support’.⁹⁰⁵ However Execration was far from the first extreme metal winner of a Spellemansprisen, with previous winners including black metal bands Satyricon, Dimmu Borgir, and multiple awards for Enslaved. This has not been the only example of mainstream Norway’s acceptance of its metal heritage. In 2011 it was reported that the government had taken considerable steps to ensure that its members had some knowledge in the field should they need it:

⁹⁰³ Kahn-Harris, p. 85.

⁹⁰⁴ Ekeröth, p. 14.

⁹⁰⁵ <http://noisey.vice.com/blog/execration-won-a-norwegian-grammy> [Accessed 23 May 2015].

The Norwegian foreign ministry has begun training aspiring diplomats in “TNBM – True Norwegian Black Metal” – after foreign service missions reported a rise in enquiries about the musical genre from around the world [...] The head of the foreign ministry’s centre of excellence, Kjersti Sommerset, told *Dagens Næringsliv*, “[...] In the training program, we have a large cultural program, in order to give the trainees a good understanding of Norwegian culture and the cultural industry”.⁹⁰⁶

Perhaps in the midst of this cultural acceptance, it should come as little surprise that not only does Norway continue to play a prominent role in bands that portray their national identity through their work, but their artists have received a level of mainstream acknowledgement that, in the context of their black metal roots, is somewhat unusual. The recent *Skuggsja* project saw Ivar Bjørnson of Enslaved and compatriot Einar Selvik of Wardruna commissioned to write a piece celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Norwegian constitution in 2014.⁹⁰⁷ The duo accepted on the condition that they were allowed to criticize and question the constitution:

It was in the spirit of freedom of speech, and they wanted someone to represent the Norwegian Norse history. [*Skuggsja* is] the Norse word for ‘mirror’ or ‘reflection’ [...] Now it’s grown into a broader cultural event, rather than just a metal gig or whatever.⁹⁰⁸

From the outset, the *Skuggsja* project clearly involved a strong sense of national identity representation, whilst demonstrating an awareness of their role as musicians of bringing metal to a wider audience in this content:

The piece not only contextualizes harder music’s role in the democracy in Norway in 2014, but also joins threads from the country’s ancient musical history and solidifies harder music’s position as Norway’s most important cultural export.⁹⁰⁹

Skuggsja’s initial performance was at the 2014 Eidsivablot at Eidsvoll Verk, 50 miles north of Oslo, ‘the very same place were the 112 men gathered in 1814 to write Norway’s constitution’.⁹¹⁰ Following a repeat performance at the 2015 edition of the Roadburn festival, 2016 saw the project released as an album on the prominent independent label Season of Mist.⁹¹¹ By this time, Selvik and Bjørnson’s collaboration had developed further, by forming their own label By Norse, as ‘a platform for

⁹⁰⁶ <http://www.newsinenglish.no/2011/06/08/diplomats-trained-in-black-metal/> [Accessed 23 May 2015]/

⁹⁰⁷ See Chapter 3 for more information on Wardruna.

⁹⁰⁸ <http://www.gigwise.com/features/105992/wardruna-norway-enslaved-skuggsja-interview-vikings-nazis-london> [Accessed 23 May 2015].

⁹⁰⁹ <http://www.skuggsja.no> [Accessed 23 May 2016].

⁹¹⁰ <https://artistpicturesblog.com/2014/09/14/eidsivablot-extreme-metal-and-vikings/> [Accessed 23 May 2016].

⁹¹¹ Skuggsja, *Skuggsja: A Piece for Mind and Mirror* (Season of Mist, 2016).

Norwegian Art, Music, literature, film and culture',⁹¹² along with Simon Füellemann of the All Independent Service Alliance.

7.3: Genre Revisited: Identity in Metal as a Two-Way Process

As was established in Chapter 2, musical genres are rarely static. The definition of what does or does not constitute a particular genre or subgenre is constantly in a state of debate, as artists absorb the influence of both predecessors and contemporaries, and the tastes of both fans and industry stakeholders contribute to what Negus terms 'a complex interception and interplay'.⁹¹³ When looking at the influence of national identity across the heavy metal spectrum, it is evident that we are not observing a musical movement that is restricted to the past. This is clearly demonstrated by the ever-continuing stream of releases by metal artists that reference aspects of regional, national (both their own and other), and transnational identity. A recurring theme throughout the thesis has been the constant tension between the role of the writer and that of the receiver. The intention of the author is a natural primary focus of interest for the researcher, but it is evident here that the audience plays a role of equal importance in the understanding of the identity portrayal, and it is easy for misconceptions to be established, intentionally or not. Where the core of a creative work is a visual, textual or musical 'other' to the listener, then this in itself plays a role in the understanding of what is being presented. In their writings on genre, Jeffrey Kallberg and Heather Dubrow establish how both the author and audience play their roles,⁹¹⁴ and Borthwick and Moy identify how any ensuing 'dispute is central to genre-based study'.⁹¹⁵

As my research has progressed, examples from within a wide range of metal subgenres have continued to be produced, and show no signs of becoming less frequent. In 2016, Swedish band Amon Amarth, now more than twenty years into their career, released *Jomsviking*.⁹¹⁶ A fictional story in the form of a concept album couched in an extensive use of Nordic mythology and Viking imagery, according to vocalist and lyric writer Johan Hegg it is based 'on the saga of the Jomsvikings, which is an old Norse

⁹¹² <http://www.bynorse.com/about/> [Accessed 23 May 2016].

⁹¹³ Negus, pp. 29-30, is discussed in Kahn-Harris, p. 12.

⁹¹⁴ See Chapter 2 for the relevant discussion of genre issues.

⁹¹⁵ Borthwick and Moy, p. 3.

⁹¹⁶ Amon Amarth, *Jomsviking* (Metal Blade Records, 2016).

legend written around the 12th century'.⁹¹⁷ The accompanying artwork maintains the style that their audience is accustomed to, with an image of a Viking warrior standing over his foe brandishing his weapon, along with a Viking dragonhead ship and two ravens (suggesting Hugin and Munin, as highlighted in Chapter 3).⁹¹⁸

Jumalten Aika was the 2016 album by Moonsorrow from Finland, and as they have done throughout their career, they continue to perform in their native tongue.⁹¹⁹ Whilst this is a clear representation of their national identity, the way that bassist and vocalist Ville Sorvali describes the band's work positions them as attempting to present themes that are transnational in nature, despite the origins of the musicians and language involved:

We wanted to go back in time to the age of the gods [...] The overall concept could easily be translated universally. These myths that we based the stories upon were taken from Finnish and Scandinavian mythology [...] but they can apply to anyone in the world.⁹²⁰

Furthermore, Sorvali makes clear that the band definitely align themselves with Pagan metal: 'It's a nice, broad definition that does not limit the music'.⁹²¹ In Chapter 2 I demonstrated the limitations of using the term Pagan metal as part of the heavy metal lexicology, and Sorvali corroborates this here; whilst it is the term the band have identified themselves with, it lacks any precise description of their music. Moonsorrow can also be situated in relation to the traditional instrumentation highlighted in Chapter 5, although as Sorvali admits, 'We have traditional Folk instruments mimicking sounds from the synthesizer, that are actually so good you can't even tell the difference because the software is so good nowadays'.⁹²²

As has been the case through their career, Ukraine's Drudkh continue to make use of the poetry of the band's compatriot poets as the source material for their lyrics, and *A Furrow Cut Short* in 2015 was no exception.⁹²³ Amongst others it contained the work of Vasyl Semenovych Stus (1939-85), a prominent dissident whose writings were banned by the Soviet Union. In fact, during the reign of Mikhail Gorbachev, '1985 saw

⁹¹⁷ <http://bravewords.com/news/amon-amarths-johan-hegg-talks-upcoming-jomsviking-album-i-dont-think-any-fans-of-amon-amarth-are-going-to-be-disappointed> [Accessed 17 May 2016].

⁹¹⁸ http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Amon_Amarth/Jomsviking/556111 [Accessed 17 May 2016].

⁹¹⁹ Moonsorrow, *Jumalten Aika* (Century Media Records, 2016).

⁹²⁰ <http://crypticrock.com/interview-ville-sorvali-of-moonsorrow/> [Accessed 18 May 2016].

⁹²¹ Ibid.

⁹²² <http://crypticrock.com/interview-ville-sorvali-of-moonsorrow/> [Accessed 18 May 2016].

⁹²³ Drudkh, *A Furrow Cut Short* (Season of Mist, 2015).

renewed repressions against Ukrainian dissidents; several were sentenced for imprisonment, and one, the prominent poet Vasyl Stus, died in a prison camp’;⁹²⁴ Stus was posthumously given the title Hero Of Ukraine by his country’s president in 2005. In the source material by Stus used by Drudkh in the two-part track ‘Cursed Sons’, Stus laments ‘But the main thing that hurts - Where is Ukraine? Farther, farther, farther’.⁹²⁵ In personal email communication with Drudkh’s Roman Sayenko in May 2016, I asked him about the source material, and his response demonstrated the difficulties that face metal fans when receiving work such as this: ‘The original poem by Vasyl Stus includes bunch of archaic words and poetic expressions. Also, Ukrainian language often includes some regional particular qualities’.⁹²⁶

In Chapter 3, the prevalent sense of ‘other’ at play throughout this field of music was strongly proven, and a comparison made with Raphael Samuel’s writing on the ‘romance of otherness’.⁹²⁷ Sayenko’s acknowledgement shows that only listeners with specific regional knowledge may be able to receive the precise message that Stus was attempting to convey. If it is difficult to reach a modern-day English equivalent then it could hardly be argued that by not presenting English translations in the accompanying booklet Sayenko is attempting to retain the type of ‘mystery and anonymity’ referenced in Chapter 4 as being a common aspect of the work of many artists relevant here.⁹²⁸ In addition, Drudkh is far from the only example of bands that continue to publish their lyrics in their native tongue alone.⁹²⁹ There does, though, remain a suggestion that this can sometimes be the case, such as this by guitarist Martin Farrow of Irish band Corr Mhóna in late 2014: ‘It is not our aim to be secretive or elitist. We have English translations to all our lyrics’.⁹³⁰

The subject of lyrics in a language other than English within heavy metal continues to be a source of discussion, and a primary indicator of national identity. Sam Savigny, writer for teamrock.com and *Metal Hammer*, wrote in June 2016 how he

⁹²⁴ Yekelchik, p. 178.

⁹²⁵ Vasyl Stus, *According to historical records eyewitnesses*, (1971-77), <https://translate.google.co.uk/translate?hl=en&sl=uk&u=http://www.litrasoch.ru/tvorchosti-stusa-na-prikladi-tvoru-za-litopisom-samovidcya/&prev=search> [Accessed 18 May 2016].

⁹²⁶ Roman Sayenko, Personal communication with author, May 2016.

⁹²⁷ Samuel, p. 247.

⁹²⁸ Patterson, 2013, p. 28.

⁹²⁹ See *Senprāsija* by Latvia’s Skyforger for a comparable example (Thunderforge Records, 2015).

⁹³⁰ <http://www.metalireland.com/2014/09/28/corr-mhona-interview/> [Accessed 18 May 2016].

considered that heavy metal is ‘all a bit monolingual’.⁹³¹ Identifying Germany’s Rammstein (formed 1994) and the 1996 album *Roots* by Brazil’s Sepultura as significant examples of exceptions to the English speaking majority, Savigny claims that these bands were part of only ‘a handful of outfits [also including Sólstafir of Iceland and Sarcófago of Brazil] who attempted to expose themselves to bigger audiences after the evolution to a more globalised genre in the mid-late ‘90s’ but not to great success.⁹³² It is clear from my research that there were countless examples of metal artists in that period that made non-English lyrics a fundamental part of their work, such as Skyforger who have included their native Latvian lyrics since their first release in 1997,⁹³³ and Primordial (Ireland) whose debut album *Imrama* began with ‘Fuil Ársa’ in Gaelic.⁹³⁴ Strangely, Savigny goes on to ascertain that from the late 1990s ‘foreign language heavy music began to wane in popularity’ until the late 2000s, when we ‘did begin to see the emergence of other native speaking bands’.⁹³⁵ It is surprising that Savigny has either ignored or been unaware of the extensive canon of bands performing in a language other than English discussed in this research, particularly from the first decade of the new millennium. However, the fact that the examples he selects to demonstrate his notion of a resurgence are comparatively mainstream such as Japan’s Babymetal suggests a lack of specialism in some of the more underground areas of heavy metal.

In the live arena the bands relevant here remain active, both on their own tours and as part of packaged bills. *Paganfest* continues to be an annual touring package, both in Europe and the United States, with different bills for each. All four bands that make up the 2016 European package make use of many of the identifiers that have been discussed, acting as microcosm of the transnational identities at play. References to Norse mythology such as Nothgard’s ‘Ragnarök’,⁹³⁶ and *Walhalla Wacht* by Heidevolk are prevalent.⁹³⁷ There are multiple examples of folk instrumentation supplementing the metal soundscape, either with acoustic instruments or keyboard generated equivalents, such as the accordion solo at 3:28 in ‘Femde’ by Finsterforst, and the recurring violin

⁹³¹ Sam Savigny, <http://teamrock.com/feature/2016-06-02/how-have-attitudes-towards-non-english-speaking-bands-changed>, [Accessed 5 June 2016].

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ Skyforger, *Semigalls’ Warchant* (Independent release, 1997).

⁹³⁴ Primordial, *Imrama* (Cacophonous Records, 1995).

⁹³⁵ Savigny, *ibid.*

⁹³⁶ Nothgard, ‘Ragnarök’, *Warhorns of Midgard* (Black Bards Entertainment, 2011).

⁹³⁷ Heidevolk, *Walhalla Wacht* (Napalm Records, 2008).

and tin whistle melody in ‘Uns’rer Flöten Klang’ by Equilibrium.⁹³⁸ There are also instances of the organum style vocal harmony discussed in Chapter 5 such as the extended melodic vocal section at 2:59 in ‘Mach Dich Frei!’ by Finsterforst which is entirely in parallel octaves, reminding us of the continuing connection between this ‘early form of melodic harmonization’⁹³⁹ and how ‘parallel voice leading is tied to the barré technique of the guitar’.⁹⁴⁰ Furthermore, all four bands have examples of lyrics performed in their native tongues. Whatever language is chosen, however, a National Romantic sentiment is clear such as this example from Nothgard:

From time immemorial
 Old values reign the world
 The oblivion is straight ahead
 And the wisdom soon lost
 My legacy
 Are your ancestors words
 Regard my call
 Swear the oath [...]
 Modern Warriors
 I call you
 Ancient Heritage
 I praise you⁹⁴¹

Despite these bands appearing under the *Paganfest* banner, there is once again evidence of the interchangeable and imprecise genre labelling discussed in Chapter 2. Referring once again to the encyclopedic website *Metal Archives*, Equilibrium is listed as ‘Epic Folk / Viking Metal’,⁹⁴² Finsterforst as ‘Folk Metal’,⁹⁴³ Heidevolk as ‘Folk / Viking Metal’,⁹⁴⁴ and Nothgard as ‘Epic Melodic Death Metal’.⁹⁴⁵ Despite the common use of the term Pagan metal previously discussed, there is no mention of it here, and whilst none of the bands are from the Nordic region, again we see the term Viking metal continue to be prominent as an interchangeable alternative alongside folk metal. Indeed, in May 2016, Swedish band Grand Magus released their eighth album *Sword Songs*, which along with a multitude of Norse mythological references, and a sound heavily influenced by bands such as Manowar and Rainbow, contains an explicitly clear, genre-referencing chorus:

⁹³⁸ Finsterforst, ‘Femde’, *Rastlos* (Napalm Records, 2012) and Equilibrium, ‘Uns’rer Flöten Klang’, *Erdentempel* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2014).

⁹³⁹ Kennedy, ed., p. 644.

⁹⁴⁰ Lilja, p. 95.

⁹⁴¹ Nothgard, ‘Ancient Heritage / Modern Warriors’, *Warhorns of Midgard* (Black Bards Entertainment, 2011).

⁹⁴² <http://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Equilibrium/11613> [Accessed 20 May, 2016].

⁹⁴³ <http://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Finsterforst/62761> [Accessed 20 May, 2016].

⁹⁴⁴ <http://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Heidevolk/17850> [Accessed 20 May, 2016].

⁹⁴⁵ <http://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Nothgard/3540325606> [Accessed 20 May, 2016].

Viking metal – bring you to your knees
Viking metal – a warrior’s decree
Viking metal – death is victory
Forged in iron, crowned in steel – Viking metal⁹⁴⁶

It must be concluded that there is a need for the metal community and industry to firstly accept the fact that none of the genre labelling terms currently in use satisfactorily apply to the majority of bands associated with them, and to address this anomaly in order to properly acknowledge the wide diversity that exists.

Although national identity metal or heritage metal might not be as commercially appealing as battle metal, for example, these terms do offer greater accuracy in terms of the bands’ rationales and strategies. This would still not resolve the need, however, to take account of the wide range of musical soundscapes because again the lyrical content would be taking primary focus — a common flaw in popular music analysis, as suggested by writers such as David Brackett, Simon Frith and Lars Eckstein.

In order to best develop the lexicology in the field therefore, there is a need for terms that combine both lyrical content and musical style, such as ‘Viking power metal’ or ‘national identity black metal’. I would contend, however, that the objectives of this thesis have been met and it is now up to others to use its findings to derive perhaps less unwieldy alternatives of these examples that accurately describe the wide diversity of what is national identity in heavy metal.

⁹⁴⁶ Grand Magus, ‘Forged in Iron, Crowned in Steel’, *Sword Songs* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2016).

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Select Discography

Below is a selection of some of the recordings that formed the core listening of this research, demonstrating a range of national identities and methods of portrayal. A more extensive selection is contained in the main body of the text.

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Amon Amarth, *Twilight Of The Thunder God* (Metal Blade Records, 2008)

Amorphis, *The Karelian Isthmus* (Relapse Records, 1992)

Amorphis, *Skyforger* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2009)

Arkona, *Ot Serdca K Nebu* (Sound Age Productions, 2007)

Arkona, *Slovo* (Napalm Records, 2011)

Bathory, *Blood, Fire, Death* (Black Mark Production, 1988)

Bathory, *Twilight of the Gods* (Black Mark Production, 1991)

Bathory, *Nordland I* (Black Mark Production, 2002)

Burzum, *Umskiptar* (Byelobog Productions, 2012)

Celtachor, *Nine Waves From the Shore* (Independent release, 2012)

Cruachan, *Celtica* (Independent release, 1994)

Cruachan, *Tuatha Na Gael* (Nazgul's Eyrie Productions, 1995)

Cnoc an Tursa, *The Giants of Auld* (Candlelight, 2013)

Drudkh, *The Swan Road* (Supernal Music, 2005)

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Eluveitie, *Origins* (Nuclear Blast Records, 2014)

Ensiferum, *Iron* (Spinefarm Records, 2004)

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- Manowar, *Sign of the Hammer* (Ten Records, 1984)
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- Primordial, *Dark Romanticism* (Independent release, 1993)
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Select Electronic Sources

For primary sources and unsigned articles, see references in the main body of the text.

Below is a selection of some of the most informative and extensively used electronic sources.

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