

IDENTITY, COSMOPOLITANISM AND EDUCATION IN EXTREME METAL BANDS: THE CASE OF FINLAND


*Identidad, cosmopolitismo y educación en las bandas de metal
extremo: el caso de Finlandia*

Eugenio Otero Urtaza^a

Reception date: 22/01/2020 • Acceptation date: 08/03/2020

Abstract. Music is an art that often defines the education and values of people. Extreme Metal is a controversial musical genre that at times, in some of its subgenres, has caused episodes of exceptional violence. Metalheads make up a cultural movement that is present on all continents. Metal movements are difficult to dissolve in the magma of social acceptance: they create a consciousness of transnational solidarity, of response to waste and ostentation that destroys the planet, while claiming the place in which it is lived. Extreme Metal is not an artistic fashion, it is profoundly changing the mentality of many young people who reject the social organisation of the capitalist and Christian world and try to find alternatives for the future. In this article we ask how their convictions are formed and in what way the school's teachings influence them. One of the ways of studying the phenomenon is by analysing the lyrics of the songs. Not all subgenres can be covered and three Melodic Death Metal bands from Finland have been chosen for study, especially in relation to their feelings about nature and the cosmos. It is evident that their songs are often based on classical and popular poems learned at school, by the legacy left by the great Finnish poets, and even by the literary creations of musicians for that school resonance.

Keywords: Extreme metal and education, Personal identity and music, Informal education, History of Heavy Metal.

^a Departamento de Pedagogía y Didáctica. Facultad de Formación del Profesorado. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (Campus de Lugo). Avenida de Ramón Ferreiro s/n, 27002 Lugo. Spain. otero.urtaza@usc.es  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1697-418X>

Resumen. *La música es un arte que define muchas veces la educación y valores de las personas. El Metal Extremo es un género musical controvertido que a veces, en alguno de sus subgéneros, ha provocado episodios de excepcional violencia. Los metaleros conforman un movimiento cultural que está presente en todos los continentes. Las corrientes metaleras son difíciles de disolver en el magma de la aceptación social: crean una conciencia de solidaridad transnacional, de contestación al derroche y ostentación que destruye el planeta, al mismo tiempo que reivindican el lugar en que se vive. El Metal Extremo no es una moda artística, está cambiando profundamente la mentalidad de muchos jóvenes que rechazan la organización social del mundo capitalista y cristiano y tratan de encontrar alternativas de futuro. En este artículo nos preguntamos cómo se forman sus convicciones y en qué sentido les influyen las enseñanzas de la escuela. Una de las maneras de estudiar el fenómeno es analizando las letras de las canciones. No se puede atender a todos los subgéneros y se ha optado por estudiar a tres grupos de Melodic Death Metal de Finlandia, especialmente en relación con el sentimiento que tienen sobre la naturaleza y el cosmos. Se evidencia que sus canciones parten, con frecuencia, de poemas clásicos y populares que se conocen por la escuela, por la herencia que han dejado los grandes poetas fineses, e incluso de las creaciones literarias de los músicos por esa resonancia escolar.*

Palabras clave: *Metal extremo y educación; Identidad personal y música: Educación informal; Historia del Heavy Metal.*

Nothing here is built to last
Neverlast (2019). Niilo Sevänen

INTRODUCTION

Musical movements that have resulted from heavy metal are often rarely known beyond their loyal fan circles. They make music with distorted guitar sounds, with a strong prominence of bass and drums, guttural voices with bellows and howls in high or low tones that sound aggressive for those who are settled to more popular and comfortable music. These are musical styles ranging from delicate, operatic and melodic voices to torn roars that carry the vehement denomination of *growl*¹ in English language: it is extreme metal. However, Extreme Metal is popular music that has

¹ *Death growl* is a very common technique in this type of music. It is a voice that sounds like an animal cry, which must be trained so that it does not damage the vocal cords. On its musical properties see, Keizo Kato and Akinori Ito, "Acoustic Features and Auditory Impressions of Death Growl and Screaming Voice", in *Proceedings of the 2013 Ninth International Conference on Intelligent*

generally settled within amateur artists who operate in social backgrounds in which they have gained an inclusion space. Metalheads are usually well integrated into their environment, even if they dislike social organisation. Their way of life is not usually scandalous, and it is certainly less shameless than many classic rockers. Few of them play at becoming archetypes manipulated by commercialism: they are not usually interested in enriching themselves with music and they hate “being fashionable”. Although their appearance worries people who maintain conventional lifestyles, they do not always smoke or drink excessively and the post-millennials², Generation Z, very rarely use drugs. They are calm people. Some practice veganism and it is not uncommon for them to militate in animal rights organisations. Concern about preserving the environment is often among their priorities.

Music serves many young people to develop a social identity. When some rock groups began to give bass and drummer a more prominent role, the style known as *hard rock* led to a musical genre where guitars began to accelerate tempos and voices were released in low timbres or howls, with more aggressive and darker lyrics. This style is known as *heavy metal*³. But that movement began around 1980 to transform into bands that, seen from the outside, present a diversity of ideas and styles that are not always identifiable as rock, with a surprising recurrence to classical music themes and folk trends, and powerful sounds, particularly in the voices. Heavy metal has diversified into many specific styles that in some cases have been criticised because academic music, which they sometimes refer to, is diluted in complex shapes “with a distinctive

Information Hiding and Multimedia Signal Processing (Beijing, China,: IEEE, 2013), 460-463. <https://doi.org/10.1109/IH-MSP.2013.120>

² Michael Dimock, “Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins”, Pew Research Center (January 17, 2019). Available on <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/> (Accessed 12/12/2019). Dimock considers Generation Z among those born between 1996 and 2012.

³ The term “heavy metal” first appears in William Burroughs’ novel *The Soft Machine*, published in 1961, through the character “Uranian Willy The Heavy Metal Kid”. However, the term was popularised by Steppenwolf’s song “Born to be Wild”, written by Mars Bonfire. It says: *I like smoke and lightning/Heavy metal thunder/Racin’ with the wind/And the feelin’ that I’m under*. As it is well known, this song opens *Easy Rider* (1968) by Dennis Hopper. See Deena Weinstein “Just So Stories: How Heavy Metal Got Its Name—A Cautionary Tale”, *Rock Music Studies*, 1, no. 1 (2014): 37-38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19401159.2013.846655>

sound that is then fragmented by audience and artist”⁴. *Extreme metal*, could be defined “as a popular musical trend based on rock, whose origins date back to the early eighties, characterised by encompassing a large number of musical forms and styles under this *umbrella term*, many of them with few common features, although all based on the search for the most extreme sounds - dark, fast, slow, violent that music can create”.⁵

The social rejection of these movements is still very much alive, despite the fact that some of the great music festivals are nourished by tens of thousands of young people who come to listen to these bands, which allows them to strengthen their communities and show their power.⁶ However, it is a very little accepted style of music in the academic world. The stereotype of a metalhead is often associated with poorly educated young people, drug and alcohol abuse, risky sexual behavior, suicidal tendencies, and satanic and occult beliefs.⁷ They are characterised by long hair that they shake with the rhythm of music, tattooed arms and a predominant use of black T-shirts, with funeral motifs. It is often thought that they are self-destructive and in the United States their ideals have been considered to have a strong capacity to influence young people into harming themselves.⁸ This movement was consolidated after the rise of punk, but unlike punk, it is not intended to create “a sociopolitical rejection of the world in a *squatter* refuge”, but to firmly embrace “the darkest, sardonic, irreverent side and contrary to the unfortunate world that was upon them”.⁹

⁴ Ross Wilson, “Folk Metal Case Study”. In *Immortalis Productions*. Available on <https://rosswilson-drmetal.wordpress.com/> (Accessed 16/10/2019)

⁵ Salva Rubio, *Metal Extremo. 30 años de obscuridad (1981-2011)* (Lleida: Editorial Milenio, 2011), 25.

⁶ Deena Weinstein, “The Concert: Metal Epiphany”, in *Heavy Metal. A Cultural Sociology* (New York: Lexington Books An Imprint of MacMillan Inc., 1991), 222-225.

⁷ Carrie B. Fried, “Stereotypes of Music Fans: Are Rap and Heavy Metal Fans a Danger to Themselves or Others?”. *Journal of Media Psychology* 8, no. 3 (2003): 2. Available on: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228772092> (Accessed 14/10/2019)

⁸ Jeffrey Arnett, “Adolescents and Heavy Metal Music. From the Mouths of Metalheads”, *Youth & Society*, 23, no. 1 (1991): 76-77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X91023001004>. In the United States there was a strong concern among the parents’ associations about lyrics referring to suicide and Satanism, with destructive or autodestructive content, and the frequency young patients in psychiatric hospitals referred to heavy metal as their favourite music.

⁹ Rubio, *Metal Extremo*, 51.

There are no previous studies to the subject raised in this article in the history of education in Spain. How does affiliation with a musical movement influence the mentality of young people? Are metalheads the product of a rejection to the school values of naturalised capitalism as a common sense reality?¹⁰ These movements have an impact in the final period of adolescence, and it is possible that in those years they mark a permanent set of values. In Extreme Metal there is a typical use of lyrics about Satanism and fantastic creatures, sacrifice, suffering, end of all hope, political corruption, destruction of nature, death, terror, blood and revenge and return to paganism, which seem to mark a profile of people living on the edge of an abyss. Metal movements are difficult to dissolve in the magma of social acceptance: they create an awareness of transnational solidarity, a response to the waste and ostentation that destroys the planet, while claiming the place in which one lives. They provoke a “cultural disorder” that mixes its own and ancestral elements with cosmopolitan ideas, shared by underground channels or social networks, seeking to move away from the vigilance of political superstructures.¹¹

Extreme Metal musical movements do not want to be controlled by the instituted powers. It is a resistance identity involving a lifestyle that is assumed in everyday life and manifests itself artistically. It is true that all social movements are incorporated over time into the core trends of a more complex social organisation, although this involves changes in the central flow, which ends up assuming the marginal flows. However, Extreme Metal is off-putting in its musical expression and leads to stay aside from it. Subgenres such as Black Metal, Doom Metal, Power Metal, Death Metal are very widespread not only in the United States or Germany. Finland has a strong metal scene, and in Spain, although it rarely attracts the attention of the media, the movement is present in all

¹⁰ Peter McLaren, “Revolutionary Pedagogy in Post-revolutionary Times: Rethinking the Political Economy of Critical Education”, *Educational Theory* 48, no. 4 (1998): 435.

¹¹ This concept refers to Jesús Martín-Barbero’s analysis in “Jóvenes: des-orden cultural y palimpsestos de identidad”, in *Viviendo a toda. Jóvenes, territorios culturales y nuevas sensibilidades*, ed. Humberto J. Cubides et al. (Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia: Siglo de Hombre Editores, 1998), 22-37. To explain the meaning of “cultural disorder” he makes a comparison with a palimpsest, where “a blurred past emerges, tenaciously though blurred, in the spacing that writes the present”. A ‘de-historising’ and ‘de-territorialising’ movement across the cultural boundaries and thus, de-localised “cultures tend to hybridize like never before”.

cities and it is common in big towns to also have one of these subgenre bands. According to the *Encyclopaedia Metallum* there are currently 3,848 music bands of these subgenres in Spain.¹²

METAPHORS IN EXTREME METAL SONGS

Informal education¹³ is not always a simple field for historical-pedagogical research. It is a process that does not usually leave official documentation, nor does it take place in spaces or places reserved for educational activity. Education outside the institutions and the intentionality of adult control is a constituent element of great strength to an individual. The influence of peers is sometimes much more powerful than school and family. But it is often invisible to institutions whose closure to the marginal culture of emerging generations produces everlasting conflict. Youth rebelliousness is a frequent theme of sociological analysis and social pedagogy studies it as a sphere of regulated intervention, rather than as a heritage that breaks with a constituted mental order. However, these movements have an extraordinary force that changes the world, the individual behavior habits, the idea of family, political attitudes, or artistic inclinations. Phenomena that occurred in the second half of the last century such as Woodstock Festival, May 68 or the Free Speech Movement, resulted in a sexual freedom that has been transformed nowadays into legislation, allowing the existence of family models and affective relationships that were unthinkable after the end of the Second World War.

Cultural changes caused by emerging generations have artistic expressions that clash with the mental order of the constituted values. Music is one of them, starting in 1960 with the inclusion of electric instruments, a drummer and the vinyl record, it lead a way for a generation who caused the emergence of a new popular music that spread rapidly

¹² *Encyclopaedia Metallum. The Metal Archives*, <https://www.metal-archives.com/lists/ES> (Accessed 9/03/2020)

¹³ We follow the meaning of informal education established by Coombs and Ahmed: “*lifelong process* by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experience and exposure to the environment – at home, at work at play; from the example and attitude of families and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to radio, or viewing films or television”. See Philip H. Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed, *La lucha contra la pobreza rural. El aporte de la educación no formal* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1975), 27.

among young people born after 1945. Now it is not a question of observing the evolution of these musical models until the present time, but there is a need to clarify that the transnational movements built ways of life that were not always accepted. Being a beatnik, a hippie, a teddy boy, a rocker, punk, or more recently grunge, metalhead or hopper, implies a set of values to be experienced and the need of a suitable environment to thrive. Focusing on Extreme Metal, what kind of people are we talking about?

Most young fans of these musical types tend to have a very strong emotional structure, an open mind and do not suffer from great psychological imbalances, but their identification and belonging in these communities provide them with a great deal of personal freedom and awareness of the life boundaries.¹⁴ They remain on the sidelines but are not marginalised. As if it were an initiatory community, music introduces them to their own generational and vital problems with a soulful depth that a religious organisation or political party is not capable of reaching. Metalheads are very independent people, and at the same time, they are warned against political machination and the power of money; aware that death will arrive after life. Darkness, cold, tragedy, failure, impiety, nothingness, are common themes in the lyrics sung by these music bands. The lack of future is usually a recurring theme and even a visible trademark in the title or content of their songs.

Extreme Metal is a social phenomenon from which information can be easily obtained, but it is usually discarded from pedagogical research. However, its influence is universal. When young people refuse to consume industrial food, oppose the forest destruction or animal cruelty, or avoid formal events organised by authorities, we may be dealing with metalheads. What do they think of those who are not like them? How do they develop their real values? To what extent is there a rejection of the

¹⁴ Several studies point in this direction, among others: Viren Swami and colab., "Metalheads: The Influence of Personality and Individual Differences on Preference for Heavy Metal", *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 7, no. 4 (2013): 380-381. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034493>. Swami and his collaborators conclude that this musical genre attracts open-minded people because they seek new unconventional experiences and metal is an intense, attractive and challenging music. This is also often accompanied by a negative attitude towards institutional authority, irreligiosity and a very basic need to feel unique, both individually and as a group, that escaping from the mainstream, which some researchers have pointed out as a search to improve their self esteem.

common and consensual values of the culture in which they are embedded? What have they learnt from their school learning?

The song lyrics are an identity rubric for a rock band, as well as for a revolutionary group. One way to understand their reality is to read their songs and try to understand what messages they share; what kind of testimony they reveal and which meanings can be attributed to them from an educational perspective. A superficial analysis could offer a disturbing panorama, but the satanic and suicidal lyrics, cynical at times and dark at other times, are not the reflection of an insane horror. Christenson and Roberts point out that metalheads often ignore the “message” when listening to music, so there is no direct connection between the individual philosophy of the listeners and the literal content of the songs, Purcell says. Indirectly, he adds, there may be a connection between the rejection of lyrics to social norms and what they live on a daily basis, relying on the model of their “ethical subjectivism”. Actually, the most *gore* songs serve as a metaphor to support alternative opinions and lifestyles. They force them to rethink the rules they take for granted. Positioning themselves at one end of the ethic that places them in an absurd, they manage to project their entire ethic in a different light.¹⁵

The songs of the Extreme Metal groups are not always clearly heard in a concert, because the frequent use of guttural voices prevents it. Fans of this music must many times transcend the staging, and discover what their favourite bands are transmitting with their songs. Lyrics are usually dark, skeptical and tragic. They are often depressing, but they also sing about friendship, love, and the courage of a feat. It is a subculture that has a connection with contemporary epic fantasy stories, but metalheads do not live in fantasy, or in false paradises or hells. Their lyrics are often raw and merciless, without forgiveness or compromise, without consolation. Hidden behind the *growl*, the songs are the key to understanding a revolution in values, whose depth has yet to be discovered.

¹⁵ Natalie J. Purcell, *Death Metal Music. The Passion and Politics of a Subculture* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2003), 127-130. To comment on the philosophy of life and ethical values of metalheads, she widely uses Peter G. Christenson and Donald F. Roberts’ work, *It’s not only rock & roll: popular music in the lives of adolescents* (Crestkill, NJ: Hampon Press, 1998).

Oksanen points out that “Finding one single interpretation for rock lyrics is often an unfruitful pursuit”¹⁶ because their different connections require attention: it is convenient to ask not only what is narrated, but what does it stand for. Hard rock is often associated with excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs, and some bands praise drinks, but it does not always align with ruined lives, nor does it adopt the attitudes presented in the songs. Sometimes they talk about *hypermasculinity* in their aesthetics, but they are radical in defending equality between men and women and it is quite common for bands to have girls as vocalists and instrumentalists. Extreme rock is influencing on the social consciousness of young people. It is true that the songs usually present desolate and hopeless themes, but they have a purgative effect on their followers that alleviates their anger and makes them feel better.¹⁷

What do Extreme Metal songs talk about? Undoubtedly, there is a great variety of topics, although looking from the outside only the most rejected subjects stand out – such as Satanism or nihilism, which is not unusual among the great aesthetic movements.¹⁸ However, referring to *Swedish death metal*, which includes the sound of the Finnish bands, Rubio states that “an album may contain a story about serial killers, a blasphemous criticism of Christianity or an abstract reflection on the process of dying”. There are satanic and anti-Christian hymns, terrifying and postmortem fantasies, murderous perversions, and about the “war and its apocalyptic consequences”. But the lyrics also contain social criticism, existential themes and more recently the songs speak “of beauty, reflection on aesthetic and artistic themes or the reflection of traditional poetic tropes in music, such as love or eroticism”. As the movement progresses, “language becomes sophisticated in high ways, to the point of being able to consider its lyrical, *educated poetry*”.¹⁹ It is not

¹⁶ Atte Oksanen. “Drinking to Death: Traditional Masculinity, Alcohol and Shame in Finnish Metal Lyrics”, *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 28, no. 4 (2011) 359.

¹⁷ Arnett, 83.

¹⁸ Rubio recalls the fascination that Satan has aroused in some of the great writers and composers of history, from Dante and Telemann to Carducci, Paganini, Flaubert or Wagner; before approaching recent times, based on the idea of a nihilistic Satan, who “embodies evil detached from all divine things, man’s own responsibility and its drive for self-destruction”. See Salva Rubio, “Metal extremo: orgullo y prejuicios (I)”, in *Jot Down*, available on <https://www.jotdown.es/2016/11/metal-extremo-orgullo-prejuicios-i/> (Accessed 23/11/2019).

¹⁹ Rubio, *Metal Extremo*, 250-252.

that the lyrics are softened, instead more complex and unfathomable poems are written now. Musicians not only want to offer original themes in their style, but the lyrics they sing contain strong emotion and denote extensive literary training. When *Swallow the Sun*, a Finnish Melodic Death Metal band, released the triple album *Songs from the North* in 2015, *Metal Hammer* magazine dedicated a commendable article written by Toni-Matti Karjalainen, noting how often journalists referred to the location of this northern country, to its severe climate, to the isolation of its forests and nature, to its melancholic mentality, people of few words; topics that determined the narrative genre of their Extreme Metal bands. This style, he adds, led to a wide recognition of Finnish Extreme Metal in the global Metal community in the 21st century, creating “a sort of canon” that is very present in the media, literature and the scene.²⁰

FINLAND. EXAMPLE OF EXTREME METAL MUSIC

Finland is one of the countries where Extreme Metal is one of the most powerful music trends. Altogether it has more metal groups than Spain, 4,002. While the United States reaches 28,420²¹ Finland is the country with most Metal bands per capita. Their educational system is usually presented as model. And this exemplarity not only has an important development in its most conspicuous pedagogical evidence, in its milestones of international relevance such as the results it achieves in the PISA report, but it also affects ordinary young people, without great academic successes, who acquire a personal identity throughout school. All Metal Extreme subgenres thrive in Finland. It is not our intention to analyse these currents as a whole, but to approach examples of Melodic Death Metal, a subgenre that does not only use *gore* themes and low-pitched voices, but also contains more epic tracks and the alternation between clean and deep voices.

We only want to point out the typology of songs made by three bands that at some point could have been defined as “melodic death

²⁰ Toni-Matti Karjalainen, “Tales from the North and Beyond: Sounds of Origin as Narrative Discourses”, en *Sounds of Origin in Heavy Metal Music*, ed. Toni-Matti Karjalainen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Academics, 2018), 6-8.

²¹ *Encyclopaedia Metallum. The Metal Archives*, <https://www.metal-archives.com/browse/country> (Accessed 20/03/2020).

metal”, although they can also be considered as folk metal or other styles, and analyse the profiles of intellectual interests in their underlying statements: Amorphis, Insomnium, y Wintersun. These bands’ topics refer to nature, its power and its secrets, with ideas that vindicate the paganism of their ancestors, and we are going to refer only to them. We have examined 153 songs from Amorphis between 1992 and 2018, and 72 from Insomnium between 1999 and 2019. Finally, from Wintersun, we have recorded 17 songs between 2004 and 2017. There is no gentle praise of the land, the outdoors or the beauty of the landscape, nor is their speech densely about identity. They simply use those resources to bring out their sensitivity, to consummate a real musical experience that reflects a set of ideals that are expressed artistically. Nature is here used to express the innermost folds of the mind, the limits of existence, the truth of death and the absence of salvation, and to ask ourselves what we live for.

Amorphis is the most senior band of the three. From their first musical demo in 1991, *Dismant of Soul*, they have evolved from a pure Death Metal style to melodic rhythms, already present on their first album, *The Karelian Isthmus* (1992) in which they use folk-style beats. They become fully transformed in their next album *Tales from the Thousand Lakes* (1994), in which a clean voice is introduced, eliminating the *blast beats* on the drums, but at the same time maintaining the *growl*, which allowed them to be part of a style known as “Gothenburg metal”, based at the core sound of Melodic Death Metal. However, they did not settle in that style, their third album *Elegy* (1996) took a new turn towards progressive metal, with songs where “guttural voices coexist with clean, pianos and keyboards, sitar, influences of seventies rock, complex structures and developments, psychedelic sound...” using the Kanteletar’s collection of poems.²² Insomnium, on the other hand, is a band that has maintained a very unmistakable style throughout their career, using a tone that some experts have called “gothic doom”. It was rising in appreciation until their most recent work *Heart Like a Grave* (2019). Finally, Wintersun is a band with little production but very representative of this style, including nature and the cosmos as the axis of their themes and using more symphonic resources.

²² Rubio, *Metal Extremo*, 282.

Amorphis: between the national epic and the search for a pagan spirituality

The epic poem Kalevala is so deeply embedded in Finnish identity that even some scholars have wondered if Finland would stand as a nation-state, if this poem did not exist.²³ Amorphis uses Kalevala tales in many of their songs and shows a music style that at first was *Death Metal* to later adapt to a *doom* and more melodic standard, until it evolved into Gothic metal.²⁴ The band plays abundantly with elements of national identity, although there is also quite a lot of social criticism in their songs and they appeal to the elements of nature to explain their narrations. The *Encyclopaedia Metallum* does not consider them a strictly Melodic Death Metal band. Their long career led them to show strong identity imprints in their country's traditions, without using much folk instrumentation, more explicit in other bands that only express themselves in Finnish language.

The Kalevala was published by Elias Lönnrot in 1835. It was a selection of legends, popular poetry, folklore and mythical tales of Finnish culture that he collected by traveling around the country and listening to the elderly and continued with the task until 1849 when he published a definitive edition. Although the Finns are generally related to the Nordic peoples, their identity is determined by their Asian origin that both history and time have moved towards West. Finnish or Suomi is not an Indo-European language, but an Uralic language that had serious problems surviving in the Nordic context,²⁵ and Kalevala helped considerably to fix it between the pressures of Swedish language on one hand, and Russian on the other. It is a European country but very particular in its westernism, with a strong identity, built by resistance to not allowing itself to dissolve among the Scandinavians with whom they quite culturally converge. Amorphis already introduced one of the most important territorial issues in Finland in their first album, *The Karelian Isthmus*, released in 1992: the dispute with Russia for the Karelia region. There are bellicose songs, praising courage and loyalty and the meaning of death, far from a Christian

²³ Urpo Vento, "The role of the Kalevala in the Finnish Culture and Politics", in *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 1, no. 2 (1992): 82. <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol1num2/vento.pdf> (Accessed 17/11/2019).

²⁴ Rubio, *Metal Extremo*, 45.

²⁵ Pirkko Suihkonen, "The Uralic language", *Fennia* 180, no. 1-2 (2002): 167-168. <https://fennia.journal.fi/article/view/3774/3565> (Accessed 17/11/2019)

conception. Except for the first song there is no direct reference to the subject, they even use medieval poems from Irish literature, but all within a pagan spirit, where nature is severe and magnificent. They use their culture but without eagerness to highlight any nationalist sentiment. It is the context in which they live without any other emphasis than what they express, as in this verse of one of the songs on the album, *Misery Path*.

We sail across the sea,
 In our thoughts we float over mountains
 All this vanity that we could hide
 The truth
 The truth is to be alive
 And to live your life in fear by hate
 And create our own gods²⁶

The identity of an Extreme Metal band has value through the narrative and visual concepts that it transmits in its “cultural landscape”²⁷ which in Amorphis’ case moved from a local context to become a global phenomenon that transcends the borders of its country. Their sound *ethos* is determined by the use of a national tradition but which is perceived by young people in a global world who follow values within their generational identity. The Finnish identity cliché is strongly rooted in the albums that followed *The Karelian Isthmus*, *Tales From A Thousand Lakes* (1994), *Elegy* (1996) and *Tuonela* (1999), albums in which they use the Kalevala narrations and reveal *kantele* to the world, a kind of zither that symbolizes their traditional music.²⁸

Once settled in popularity, already in the 21st century, they presented an album with Turkish and Persian songs, *Far from the Sun* (2003) to return to the Kalevala tales in the following years. *Eclipse* (2006) unveils

²⁶ All the song lyrics were collected from the website darklyrics.com.

²⁷ Toni-Matti Karjalainen, Antti Ainamo, Laura Laaksonen, “Occult, a tooth, and the canopy of the sky: conceptualizing visual meaning creation of heavy metal bands”. In *Design and semantics of form and movement 5: DeSForM 2009*, ed. Lin-Lin Chen, et al. (Taipei: s.n., 2009), 23. Available on https://www.academia.edu/30479623/Occult_a_tooth_and_the_canopy_of_the_sky_conceptualizing_visual_meaning_creation_of_heavy_metal_bands (Accessed 16/11/2019)

²⁸ Hannu Tolvanen, “The Quiet Past and the Loud Present: the Kalevala and Heavy Metal”, *Volume!* 5, no. 2 (2006): 78. Kantele was traditionally used to accompany the poems collected in the Kalevala. Available on <https://journals.openedition.org/volume/498> (Accessed 17/11/2019)

the story of Kullervo, who had already inspired Sibelius, according to the interpretation that Paavo Haavikko wrote for a television series, *The Age of Iron* in 1982, with music by Aulis Sallinen.²⁹ In *Silent Waters* (2006) they recovered Tuonela's swan hunt tale by Lemminkäinen, which is also part of the *Suite* that Sibelius had composed in 1895. In 2009 Amorphis released the album *Skyforger* that tells stories about Seppo Ilmarinen, the blacksmith who appears in the Kalevala. Other albums have appeared more recently: *The Beginning of Times* (2011), *Circle* (2013), *Under the Red Cloud* (2015) and *Queen of Time* (2018). What is most interesting about their career is the use of traditional poetry and mythological stories which gave them an international visibility that is highly appreciated in countries like the United States and Japan, as it was possibly the first Extreme Metal band to use those resources.³⁰

It is a legendary universe tied in with the *Death Metal* topic. In the last albums they evolved towards a subtle progressive rock style, while continuing to be inspired by the themes of the Kalevala, songs that are frequently written by Pekka Kainulainen, an artist who is not a member of the band. Throughout their long career, the band have succeeded in creating gloomy atmospheres, full of existential harshness that attracts their followers' attention. Their poems are often bitter, expressing unmerciful realities through epic's metaphor. And that is indeed the perception of nature: not to forget that fatality is part of who we are and that we die at the mercy of its forces. And also how we survive, meditate and face our luck in the face of fatality and the hardness of living. The examples are frequent as in this song:

I retired a towering mountain
Laid down in a circle of stones
For three days and for three nights
I listened to the skull of a bear
The sun burnt its sigil into my chest
The rain washed the evil away
Time spun itself around me

²⁹ Vento, 88. Until then, the author calculated that there were more than 350 musical compositions based on the Kalevala

³⁰ Karjalainen, Ainamo, Laaksonen, *Occult, a tooth*, 28.

The moon cast its silvery shell³¹

The Kalevala inspired many of the current sagas that recreate medieval and pagan environments, such as the well-known works of Tolkien or Martin, author of *Game of Thrones*, which also became popular as a television series. The novel that inspires it, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is closely related to the values of Extreme Metal, which have withdrawn many young people from traditional religions, conventional politics and capitalist consumption. But it also inspired many other bands to create their own stories such as Kivimetsän Druid, whose singer, Joni Koskinen, wrote *The Land of the Crystal Mountain and Stone Forest*, a fantasy novel on which they base all their lyrics. Turisas used the Kalevala in his songs, but he also evoked the migration of a group of Eastern Vikings to Byzantium, through the “route from the Varengos to the Greek”³² on two of his albums. In the first album, *The Varagian Way* (2007) he describes the path they followed according to a 12th century chronicle; in the second, *Stand Up and Fight* (2011) describes life in Constantinople, including a race at the hippodrome and the view of a frozen Bosphorus.³³ Concluding with these examples, Ensiferum is a band whose first album bears the same name, released in 2001. It is dedicated to Väinämöinen, the wise old man with a magical voice, who will appear on the cover of this as well as other albums. In this album, he is depicted carrying a sword and a shield with the flag of Finland. He possibly is the main character of the Kalevala.³⁴

³¹ *Under the Red Cloud* (2015)

³² It was a route that departed from the Baltic Sea and reached various rivers all the way to Novgorod. From there one reached the Upper Dniéper, stopped in the city of Gnëzdovo, and went down the river until one reached the Black Sea. These Vikings became the Varagian Guard of the Byzantine emperors, subject of one of the songs. On this Viking migration route, see Marta Peña Escudero “La ruta del Este: vikingos y eslavos” in *Los vikingos en la historia: I Jornadas de Cultura Vikinga* (3-6 de marzo de 2014), Universidad de Granada, ed. Manuel Espinar Moreno and Alberto Robles Delgado (Granada, Nativola, 2014), 149-153. CD-ROM.

³³ There is a very detailed study on these two albums, explaining the routes between the Scandinavian peoples and Byzantium during The Middle Ages and discovers the extensive documentation that Turisas used to create songs. See Antje Bosselmann-Ruickbie, “Heavy Metal Meets Byzantium! Contact between Scandinavia and Byzantium in the Albums ‘The Varangian Way’ (2007) and ‘Stand Up and Fight’ (2011) by the Finnish Band Turisas”, in *Menschen, Bilder, Sprache, Dinge. Wege der Kommunikation zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen 2: Menschen und Worte*, ed. Falko Daim et al. (Mainz, Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2018), 391-419.

³⁴ Kimi Kärki, “Forging Metal: the Kalevala in the Finnish Heavy Metal Performance”, in *Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures. International Academic Research Conference, June 8–12*,

Insomnium: the course of life and the need to slow down

In the case of Insomnium, nature has been addressed in several songs since their first album, *In the Halls of Awaiting* (2002). There are solid poems that respond to the good literary background of their lead singer, Niilo Sevänen, who collects verses from the most acclaimed Finnish poets such as Eino Leino, although he also uses excerpts from Poe, Bourdillon or Hölderlin. One of his songs “In the Groves of Death” from the album *Above the Weeping World*, is inspired by a well-known poem by Leino. Several expressive songs connected to nature stand out in their repertoire, but it is in their penultimate work *Winter’s Gate* (2016), where they were able to combine nature with human experience in a single long poem. It is based on a laureate short story by Sevänen that tells the story of a group of Vikings who sought a legendary island in the west of Ireland as winter approached.

Insomnium is a band founded in 1997. In their early days they used the Kalevala in some songs like “Song of the Forlorn Son” from their second album, *Since the day it all came down*, but they opened up to new literary tastes and Sevänen soon looked for other sources of inspiration like the Gilgamesh. Their songs are melancholic and gloomy as if they wanted to delve into Finland’s saddest legends and chants. Nevertheless, Ville Friman claims: “We do not try to sound depressive but that is something that comes naturally. And if you look around you will see that the world is full of sadness, so we often try to put less stress on us and focus on the happiest things in life. Otherwise life would be very hard. Music is a kind of relief from those depressing thoughts and it slightly lifts the weight on our shoulders”.³⁵

From their first musical demo released in 1999 until today, the band has composed 81 songs. As early as 1999, the lyrics and music were created by Niilo Sevänen and Ville Friman. In their first demo, there is a very peculiar song that fits into what Rubio³⁶ describes as “the cosmic

2015, Helsinki, Finland, *Proceedings*, ed. Toni-Matti Karjalainen and Kimi Kärki (Helsinki: Aalto University & Turku: International Institute for Popular Culture, 2015), 136. <http://iipc.utu.fi/MHM/> (Accessed 16/11/2016). *Ensiferum*, in Latin, el “wielder of the sword”.

³⁵ *Hellpress*. “Interview with Insomnium. Talking to Ville Friman”. 28/07/2014. Available on <http://www.hellpress.com/entrevista-a-insomnium-hablamos-con-ville-friman/> (Accessed 23/11/2019)

³⁶ Rubio, *Metal extremo: orgullo y prejuicio*, s.p.

sublime” of metal: *Numen Divinum*. A type of poetry that we will also find in *In the Halls of Awaiting*, mainly in the title song of the album, although perhaps the atmosphere of their lyrics is the most unsettling. Whilst referred in some cases to the loss of love, loneliness and some tale in the Kalevala, the lyrics have such receptiveness to daunting and frightening thoughts, to feeling the universe, to asking ourselves what we live for. An atmosphere of concern that is reinforced in the following three albums: *Since the Day it All Came Down* (2004), *Above the Weeping World* (2006) and *Across the Dark* (2009). Nature, the primary elements, light and water, are present in the lyrics. In one of the songs, “Drawn to Black”, Sevänen embeds one of the best-known poems by Francis William Bourdillon (1852-1921). However, there will be other songs where he addresses the feeling of nature, especially in “Into the Woods” whose call to be part of the forest, is almost a manifesto both deist and a prayer to nature:

The arch of sky is roof where I call it home
 Drizzle of rain, the only music from now on
 My bed is made from juniper’s boughs
 Of mire and moss my pillow.

What *Insomnium*’s music seems to show is a very great distance with other bands, especially with the Norwegian Black Metal and Neofolk, who generated a movement that went as far as burning Christian churches, murders, persecution of priests and that intended to eradicate all traces of Christianity in the country. A movement that was also rooted in the extreme right, present in some trends of this subgenre.³⁷ However, the

³⁷ The ascription of some Black Metal bands to Nazism was more a commercial operation than an ideological option. As Rubio points out in *Metal Extremo*, p. 442, it was a movement defined by the rejection of the herd mentality “by which the individual renounces his beliefs, objectives and personal identity to join the mass, in the form of religious beliefs, social norms, mainstream tastes or of submission to a political leader”, which would mean the denial of this mentality. Some members of Black Metal wanted to overturn Christian influence over Scandinavia and by 1990 this movement had quite ascendancy in some bands that claimed being satanic, especially in Norway. A secret group, Inner Circle, started burning churches, over fifty between 1992 and 1996, in some cases of medieval construction. Norwegian society was alarmed and in addition Varg Vikernes, a member of Burzum, claimed in 1993 committing arson and the murder of Euronymous, Mayhem’s guitarist. All these events caused a great commotion in the country that entered into “moral panic”, after a very hard press campaign against this type of music. See Kennet Granholm, “Sons of Northern Darkness’: Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music”, *Numen*, 58 (2011): 529–530. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852711X577069>

conflict developed less virulently in other Nordic countries. The claims to paganism and epic traditions by the Finnish bands have not led to such fanaticism. As a whole, the different music styles form a “complex cultural system” shaping mentalities that rehearse forms of authenticity and search for spirituality, steering away from the main movements of the major religions; and even from deeply rooted mystical or esoteric organisations. “The religious atmosphere in the West is changing - says Granholm, and one of the results of this change is that we must look for alternative scenarios of religious life”.³⁸

Insomnium does not raise that dense conflict but their songs are resounding, of radical cut with a complacent and economically comfortable society, but at the same time their poetic message is very elaborate. In other Extreme Metal bands the song lyrics shake up for their perversity but those beliefs do not eventually lead to a destructive way of life among their followers. It does not seem that the members of Insomnium live on the edge of a precipice either, but their vital questions are overwhelming; they question why we live, why we seek a goal in life when love is left behind, and therefore, we must walk slowly, slow down, wait for each other and walk forward, towards the unknown. They express it with a unique beauty in their most popular song:

When you realize that your life is a one-way road
When you realize that there's no point of return
When you understand that you can't go back anymore
When you understand you can only move onwards
And we drift far away in our dreams
Gather further distance while we sleep
Build a wall of glass thick and deep
We hear but choose not to listen
And we drift far away in our dreams
Gather further distance while we sleep
Still the bridge is enflamed with fire
Leave all the love we had behind
Slow down
We need to slow down
So I can catch you

³⁸ Granholm, 539.

We need to slow down so I can catch you
 We need to slow down so you can catch me
 Slow down.³⁹

Insomnium's message became much more explicit in *Winter's Gate*, narrating an adventure that led to demise, beautiful and tough as well as desperate. The description of tragedy and frozen death at the edge of the world as the ultimate destination for those who left their home without heroism, only suffering. The band's last album is very recent *Heart like a Grave* (2019). It contains a crepuscular tone, sensing the end of all things, or as a verse heading this article says: "Nothing here is built to last". A topic that is also used by similar bands such as Dark Tranquility, with a lower degree of pessimism, or indie bands like Rebel Aces that perform a song with a very similar title "Nothing Built Last (Springfade)". Or even further from that musical style, the former Californian *synth pop* band Big Deal, had an almost identical verse in one of their songs: "Nothing here was built to last". However, the vision of these music groups, and the purpose of their songs, is entirely different from the Extreme Metal bands.

Wintersun: season of the year and the perception of the passage of time

Wintersun's career is shorter. They only released three albums, but in all of them, nature and the cosmos are the core that drives their songs. The lead singer, Jari Mäenpää, performs screaming in a very peculiar way: he seems aggressive and feels angry. Rather than listening to what he says, his followers identify with a way of expressing themselves that must be interpreted. It is convenient to closely read their lyrics: a selection of epic poems, of Nordic origins. The third album, *The Forest Seasons* (2017), features a work about the four seasons of the year, introducing strong symphonic elements, bringing together several styles, which was compared with Vivaldi by the band themselves and many of their followers without hesitation. It is not a matter of appealing to classical works to understand this musical composition: they have nothing to do with it.

³⁹ "While We Sleep", *Shadows of the Dying Sun* (Dortmund: Century Media Records, 2014). Audio CD.

But it is worth pointing out the milestones of a movement that opens remarkable ways in art, to new life experiences, to uncover deep idiosyncrasies in people's mindsets that will be reinforced in the future. The album features four long songs, which are also instrumentally performed: *Awaken from the Dark Slumber* (Spring); *The forest That Weeps* (Summer); *Eternal Darkness* (Autumn), and *Loneliness* (Winter). This comparison with such an emblematic and universal composer may seem impertinent, but it certainly includes a significant restlessness in other Finnish bands: the concern about the passage of time, the transformation of the landscape, the difficulties of living in extreme habitable spaces, the loneliness of the long polar night, the arrival of the sun on the icy landscapes, and the praises to the strength and power of other natural elements.

This study has no purpose in judging music, but rather trying to find some signs in the song lyrics that explain how an important part of a generation thinks. Wintersun, with only three albums and with a considerable impact on the metal environment, allows a very complete analysis of their song lyrics. The first album, named after the group *Wintersun* (2004), sings about the end of life and the loneliness of death, the frozen world, endurance of the wilderness, the inexorable passing of time, infinity, daydream, the light in the shadows... These are eight songs that Jari Mäenpää recorded alone with the sole accompaniment of a drummer, which made him leave his former band, Ensiferum. What do all these songs mean in such a coherent and personal work? It is undoubtedly a piece, music and lyrics, which can be described as a work of art, or what Deleuze and Guattari call a work of art: a mixture of sensations that "supports itself".⁴⁰ But, the reality of those sensations does not imply a spirit of a funereal identity. Following Deleuzian thinking we could use the idea of "conceptual characters". These are poems within the artist's mind, originated by the experience of very harsh winters, that create repulsive images, bad perceptions, bad feelings, or negative movements that, according to the philosophers, would inspire original concepts.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *¿Qué es la filosofía?* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), 165.

⁴¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *¿Qué es la filosofía?*, 65.

Thus there is a great distance, not between the lyrics and the musicians' real life, but in their irreverence towards the transcendent. Despite the use of pagan deities, there are no religious beliefs, but questions about what we live for. The distancing of the Nordic metalheads from Christianity is not an unsustainable encounter with primitive paganism, but approaching what the real ground of existence is, which is behind life. Their paganism is nothing more than a world of "conceptual characters" who have emerged using their epic songs in a new layer of identity that is far from the dominant political idiosyncrasy, although the common narrative learned in school is used lavishly. Mäenpää owns a world populated by unusual images and directs his own relationship with chaos towards dimensions where he is capable of creating his own universe, in which the beyond is in our dimension and does not imply the need for believing in gods who judge us and handle us as they please. There are many examples in his songs, but it is enough listening to the first and well-known one of this album, "Beyond The Dark Sun", verses that contain this iconic verse of this skeptical speech:

The dawn will never rise again for my eyes
 And I will never sleep again
 I've lost my hope time after time
 'Cause the light has vanished from the sky.

The second album *Time I*, was released in 2012 after a long production. It contains the most valued song by his followers. There are only five tracks, three songs and two instrumental pieces: Mäenpää's idea is to release a second part that, in 2019, has not been released yet. In this work there is a greater connection to the world created by Martin, rather than by Finnish mythology. These are complex compositions, of a symphonic nature, that demand a way of feeling the world rather than a territorial identity. "Sons of Winter and Stars" is the most popular song of the three poems in the album. It is a romantic text, in its most historical and faithful sense, in what we understand as imaginary corners:

We fly beyond the birth of the worlds
 So old I've become –Thousand years staring into emptiness
 But now I realize– That it was just an illusion
 All this time I thought it was you that would save the sun
 Oh rain comes and washes the hate away

Now I am at the crossroads with questions
Somewhere, someday I will find what I am here for
Who am I.

Without forgetting the depth of field of the previous one, the other two songs have a very melancholic atmosphere. However, in “Land Of Snow And Sorrow” we observe some signs of weakness and a plea for mercy when he begs “oh carry me away from the cold”. In the third song, “Time”, he wonders about the passage of time, what dies and is left behind, time that departs forever and ever, without waiting for anyone and in which we dissolve: “And I fade away!/When time fades away!/And I’ll never feel the same”. Finally, they published *The Forest Seasons*, song already mentioned for its origins and impact, but what do the lyrics state? Spring as an awakening from the darkness, leaving an old world behind; the fertile summer in which we are both ground worms and tree branches that reach the sky: the result of decay; autumn that takes us beyond the infinite universe, that tears down the layers of the mind: without a beginning, without an end, without truth, only with darkness, with death, with eternity. Finally winter: loneliness, feeling the unique consciousness that is fading and being home at last, when there is nothing left. Mäenpää introduces the different seasons of the year that a Finnish forest bears, according to his musical sensitivity, but marking Melodic Death Metal highlights in the poems he sings. He is referring to his surroundings, as a “point of order” in a “circle of control” that marks a territory,⁴² but also visited by followers from other backgrounds who will be influenced by these signals (behavioral affinity and adherence to ideologies transmitted by mechanisms that usually lead to generational gatherings such as large concerts), which will define trends and mindsets that are shared and exchanged.

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND A POSSIBLE MODEL FOR FUTURE INVESTIGATIONS

Extreme Metal songs contain abundant similar topics in all regions of the world. Lyrics are deterritorialized and re-territorialized in other grounds, where ideas and sung stories find points of similarity, either in

⁴² Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze's Way. Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (Hampshire/Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007), 27.

the Scandinavian countries or elsewhere in Europe, Asia, Latin America or the United States. The bands usually mix cultural traditions with literary licenses that seek the roots of a certain outline, in relation to other artistic manifestations that try to mark distances with the dominant culture. In Spain, the former band Runic from Castellón, merged Galician and Scottish traditions with a background Celtic warp, expressing themselves in English. Is it an acculturation process or a trend pursuing the success of certain tracks to build new identities? They only released two albums and the second was conveniently entitled *Liar Flags*.⁴³ There is a group of Spanish bands that consider themselves as “Viking Folk”, uniting some local signs of identity with the Nordic style, but without bothering very much to examine historical sources or traditions. In other parts of the world there are bands that merge their local traditions with Extreme Metal: Xipe Totec, is a Death Metal band that sings in Nahuatl, using Aztec mythology and Spanish conquest as themes.⁴⁴ The Melodic Death Metal band Ephemerality (朝生暮死) from Beijing sings in Chinese, with a female vocalist, Tiina, who uses the *growl* technique.⁴⁵ In some countries these bands receive great social appreciation, such as Skálmöld in Iceland, whose deep voices merged with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra in a legendary concert, which thrilled all Icelanders.⁴⁶

⁴³ We highlight this band because it is a very clear example of how globalisation dismantles identities due to the saturated flows of information and the resonance that a musical model can achieve in foreign cultures outside the territory of origin.

⁴⁴ Xipe Totec is a deity originally from Yopi region, in the Southwest of Oaxaca and Guerrero strip, in the so-called Costa Chica and inland, which was adopted by the Aztecs. It is documented by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún and means our “skinned lord”. See Gabriel Pareyón, “La música en la fiesta del dios Xipe Totec”, *III Foro Nacional sobre Música Mexicana*, Zacatecas, 2006. Available on <https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/25643/XipeTotec.pdf?sequence=6> (Accessed 29/12/2019)

⁴⁵ In Extreme Metal bands the presence of very powerful female vocalists is frequent on stage. Angela Gossov and Alissa White-Gluz are particularly well known, both subsequent singers of Arch Enemy, a Swedish band of Melodic Death Metal, who broke the stereotypes of strong and aggressive masculinity in these musical subgenres. These stereotypes were no longer predominant in the early 21st century, when sexual diversity became more explicit. For an approach to this question, see Florian Heesch and Niall Scott (ed.), *Heavy Metal, Gender and Sexuality. Interdisciplinary approaches* (Oxford/New York: Routledge, 2016). Deena Weinstein’s chapter “Playing with gender in the key metal” is particularly relevant. After examining the changes from hegemonic masculinity to diversity, she considers that she is witnessing a post-feminism process where sometimes women play with masculinity because this kind of music has been coded as masculine. Gender, she concludes, is no longer an outstanding problem as it has been in the 20th century.

⁴⁶ Band created in 2009 that exclusively speaks Icelandic. All their lyrics have been written by Snæbjörn Ragnarsson, a band member. Although the stories are original, he recreates Viking tales and legends, and he recovers the story of the Völva: the female shamans and priestesses who appear in Elder Edda. The concert with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra gives a very exact dimension on the

In Finland, the analysis of the song lyrics does not automatically lead to establishing a relationship between their content and the academic strength of the students, but it does suggest that schools may be responsible for maintaining a cultural activity that helps to understand themselves better⁴⁷, to feel part of a community through literature and their own language, and using at the same time elements of transnational circulation. The songs often come from classic and popular poems learned at school, by the great Finnish poets' heritage, and even by the literary creations of musicians. It is a new poetic, scarcely academic but valuable and it reveals the strength of its school learning. The bands analysed express themselves in English, but there are others that do so in Finnish. Local mythology is frequently used, between a generational rejection of the dominant values in the European Christian civilisation and the recurrence to universal features or topics of the metal subculture. The fusion between Extreme Metal and its literary tradition was certainly not a casual spark, Finnish rock was earlier inspired by influences throughout the world, especially Anglo-Saxon, and they did not look into their own traditional culture background until the early 1990s, which suddenly served to enrich a musical style with a lot of cosmopolitan hybridisation.

Tolvanen points out that the Finnish government campaigned for providing a kantele in every school in 1985, through the Helsinki Institute of Folk Music, when kantele had almost disappeared and had never

educational and social cohesion repercussions that his work has. Available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yHsmZy-YS8> (Accessed 29/12/2019).

⁴⁷ Although these musical styles could currently be considered as a part of the Finnish "national identity" they are not very present in school activities. The Opetushallitus (National Board of Education) carried out a reform in 2004 that gives more freedom to music teachers to instruct different styles with great flexibility; in fact, each teacher organizes the music lessons as he deems appropriate, without being subject to any established curriculum. In conservatories subsidised by the public authorities, the music lessons are almost exclusively classical and in some cases there is jazz and free styles, but not extreme metal. See *Marja Heimonen and David G. Hebert, "Nationalism and Music Education: A Finnish Perspective"*, in *Patriotism and Nationalism in Music Education*, ed. David G. Hebert and Alexandra Kertz-Welzel. (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2012), 167. More recently, between 2014 and 2017, Finland has reformed its curricula, both in early childhood education, primary and lower secondary education, with a more multidisciplinary approach that puts learning experiences at the center of reform, in which 13-15 year old students were thoroughly interviewed, particularly with regard to what was perceived as important in school culture. Aspects such as friendship, respect, cordiality, trust, equality and a peaceful work environment, were the most valued. *Irmeli Halinen, "The New Educational Curriculum in Finland"*, in *Improving the Quality of Childhood in Europe. Volume 7*, ed. Michiel Matthes, Lea Pulkkinen, Christopher Clouder, Belinda Heys (Brussels: Alliance for Childhood European Network Foundation, 2018), 80.

been taught in schools. According to Tolvanen, these experiences must have been key in some children and adolescents who would form these bands a few years later. The current relationship between the Kalevala and the Extreme Metal music genres in Finland is very surprising because it has made possible to adapt traditional culture to the interests of young people. Metal musicians, unsociable and taciturn are engaging students into their own history and culture.⁴⁸ It is a model difficult to find in other countries whose musical education is excessively academic and formal.

There is a thin line linking informal education with school culture. It is common for these young people to live in libertarian environments that reject school culture, but school is indeed the place where they collected ideas that helped them develop their musical creations, and even an imaginary that distinguish them as a generation. This is not something exclusive to a group of young people from a Nordic country. It is a lifestyle immersed in a context of *detritoriality*. On one hand, this style is based on a native epic, on the other, it is diluted in a network that has no boundaries. Finnish Extreme Metal became pregnant by foreign cultures but in turn now infiltrates the music that is being created in other countries and continents. Metalheads are still minorities unable to adapt to the highlights of the dominant cultural space in their countries. It is among a minority who display their creations pointing to the different situations on the scene, and the territory, where Deleuze and Guattari place music as an active and creative operation to deterritorialize *refrain*.⁴⁹

Using this set of ideas by French philosophers, we can implement an explanatory scheme that could open up a specific methodology to deal

⁴⁸ Tolvanen, 87.

⁴⁹ Bogue, *Deleuze's Way*, 35. This word would be translated into Spanish by "refrain" but it does not reflect well what the authors mean. The image they use in their speech is the repetitive song of the birds, not a stanza or verse. It can also be understood from the musical concept of "ritornelo". According to Bogue the refrain "can be freely defined as any rhythmic pattern that is part of a network of relationships between creatures and their environment within an environment, territory or social domain". In the case of Rock and Extreme Metal, it could be applied to repeating parts, especially with the guitar, known as *riffs*. The refrain as well as the riff marks on the one hand the territory, at the same time that they spread the sound beyond the "control circle", distributing and fixing the spaces; but on the other, they identify a "species", an animal or human group that has characteristics that make it a participant in the environment.

with this phenomenon from an educational perspective, because the territory does not completely determine who we are. Human beings have autonomy and the ability to explore, moving to other territories and modify their culture, or going into remote places and returning with developments that will transform the environment. Personal identity is not determined by the cultural narrative transmitted at school. In such a strongly interconnected global society, a “refrain” echoes further, and as the dominant groups can redirect the messages and control their effect, tremors do not break the landscape. Obviously, there are serious consequences when drastic changes are made and life scenarios are modified. The burning of Christian churches in Norway by Vikernes and some of his followers, his virulent extremism vindicating evil, death, the devil and other hidden forces,⁵⁰ produced such extraordinary “moral panic” in his own society that it even stimulated a controversial “Christian Black Metal” that was not recognised by followers of this movement. This does not exclude that Norwegian Black Metal, like other extreme musical genres in Finland, is currently an important source of foreign income and is protected by the authorities.

However, rather than unleashing phenomena of violence, Extreme Metal seeks the transgression of established norms, questioning the *status quo* of the society in which they live. The music, the lyrics, their presence on stage, the preferences and opinions expressed, and of course their dressing style and tattooed bodies want to shake the mentalities installed in a comfortable life with firm beliefs. It is not strange that they can produce “moral panic”,⁵¹ not so much because they lack strong ethical convictions, but because they question the dominant morality in the territory and propose a way of life that produces disorder. Transgression is perhaps the key word to understand this subculture, because the main element of their cultural assets is a peaceful and free transgression landscape, although on the edge of being acceptable as Kahn-Harris points out.⁵²

⁵⁰ Deleuze and Guattari have studied this phenomenon. See Bogue, “Violence in Three Shades of Metal Death, Doom and Black”, in *Deleuze’s Way*, 35-52.

⁵¹ Titus Hjelm, Keith Kahn-Harris, Mark LeVine, “Heavy metal as controversy and counterculture”, *Popular Music History* 6 no.1/2 (2011): 7-8.

⁵² Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2007), 30.

The most interesting thing from a historical-pedagogical analysis is that these songs that we have reviewed are impregnated with Finnish traditions and education that is possessed by the learning sediment of the school's input, but at the same time there is a perception of belonging to a community, finding similarities in other countries and continents. We ignore how this bursts into environments that organise cultural values considered central in young people's education. What we learn at school, with either love or hate, develops a sediment not so easy to control at a later time. What remains of the school culture in young people when they begin to feel independent and in control of their life? What becomes evident in these bands is that they have a wide baggage of school culture that allows them to write, create and reflect on their interests. They carry traditions that are learned in the school environment, which transmits basic ideas of music, history and literature, and, of course, outdoor activity in the midst of nature, essential to a way of life that marks their character and conception of the world with an invisible *sigillum*. However, all these material collected from school is transferred to another space, through a tinkling noise that echoes in the distance and is recognised by co-participants in the *refrain* showing solidarity by raising their hands to do the "maloik".⁵³ The rejection sustained by the metal culture to the mental standards and lifestyle of the western world in our time, is not a phenomenon without consequences. It is causing a transmutation of values in an important segment of the population who generate educational methods that must be studied.

Note on the author

EUGENIO OTERO URTAZA is Full Professor of Contemporary Theory and Institutions of Education. Since 1979 he has been lecturer at the University of Santiago de Compostela at the Lugo Campus. He was the Director of the former Teacher Training School between 1994 and 2003. Since

⁵³ Sam Dunn, Jessica Joy Wise and Scot McFadyen. *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* [Film documental]. Toronto, Canada: Banger Productions Inc., 2005), 38:00. The hand gesture "maloik" or "mano cornuta" of the metalheads was popularised by Black Sabbath's second vocalist, Ronnie James Dio. It is a greeting that symbolises warding off of bad luck. "Maloik" is an alteration of the Italian word "malocchio", evil eye.

2011 he promoted and coordinates the Master in Management of Educational Activities in Nature, with a multidisciplinary and unique profile in Spain. Outstanding specialist in the study of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Free Teaching Institution), a subject on which he has published several books and more than seventy articles and book chapters, in which he has addressed different aspects of the cultural and educational flourishing unleashed by Francisco Giner from 1876. He has especially dealt with the study of the Board of Educational Missions in the Second Spanish Republic, the intellectual career of Manuel B. Cossío, some of his unpublished letters, his travels and pedagogical ideas, as well as his international dimension and relationship with prominent European educators.

REFERENCES

- Arnett, Jeffrey. "Adolescents and Heavy Metal Music". *Youth&Society* 23 no.1 (1991): 76-98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X91023001004>
- Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze's Way. Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics*. Hampshire/Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007.
- Bosselmann-Ruickbie, Antje. "Heavy Metal Meets Byzantium! Contact between Scandinavia and Byzantium in the Albums 'The Varangian Way' (2007) and 'Stand Up and Fight' (2011) by the Finnish Band Turisas". In *Menschen, Bilder, Sprache, Dinge. Wege der Kommunikation zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen 2: Menschen und Worte*, edited by Falko Daim et al., 391-419. Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2018.
- Coombs, Philip H. and Manzoor Ahmed. *La lucha contra la pobreza rural. El aporte de la educación no formal*. Madrid: Tecnos, 1975.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *¿Qué es la filosofía?*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993.
- Dimock, Michael. "Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins". *Pew Research Center*, January 17 (2019). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>
- Dunn, Sam, Jessica Wise and Scot McFadyen. *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* [Film documental]. Toronto, Canada: Banger Productions Inc., 2005.
- Fried, Carrie B. "Stereotypes of Music Fans: Are Rap and Heavy Metal Fans a Danger to Themselves or Others?". *Journal of Media Psychology* 8, no. 3 (2003): 1-27.

- Granholm, Kennet. “‘Sons of Northern Darkness’: Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music”. *Numen* 58 (2011): 514-544. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852711X577069>.
- Halinen, Irmeli. “The New Educational Curriculum in Finland”. In *Improving the Quality of Childhood in Europe*. Volume 7, edited by Michiel Matthes, Lea Pulkkinen, Christopher Clouder, Belinda Heys, 75-89. Brussels: Alliance for Childhood European Network Foundation, 2018. http://www.allianceforchildhood.eu/files/Improving_the_quality_of_Childhood_Vol_7/QOC%20V7%20CH06%20DEF%20WEB.pdf
- Heimonen, Marja and David G. Hebert. “Nationalism and Music Education: A Finnish Perspective”. In *Patriotism and Nationalism in Music Education*, edited by David G. Hebert and Alexandra Kertz-Welzel, 157-174. Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Karjalainen, Toni-Matti. “Tales from the North and Beyond: Sounds of Origin as Narrative Discourses”. In *Sounds of Origin in Heavy Metal Music*, edited by Toni-Matti Karjalainen, 1-40. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Academics, 2018.
- Karjalainen, Toni-Matti, Antti Ainamo and Laura Laaksonen. “Occult, a tooth, and the canopy of the sky: conceptualizing visual meaning creation of heavy metal bands”. In *Design and semantics of form and movement 5: DeSForM 2009, October 26-27*, edited by Chen, Lin-Lin. et al., 20-32 Taipei: s.n., 2009. https://www.academia.edu/30479623/Occult_a_tooth_and_the_canopy_of_the_sky_conceptualizing_visual_meaning_creation_of_heavy_metal_bands
- Kärki, Kimi. “Forging Metal: the Kalevala in the Finnish Heavy Metal Performance”. In *Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures. International Academic Research Conference, June 8–12, 2015, Helsinki, Finland, Proceedings*, edited by Toni-Matti Karjalainen and Kimi Kärki, 131-137. Helsinki: Aalto University & Turku: International Institute for Popular Culture, 2015. <http://iipc.utu.fi/MHM/>
- Kato, Keizo and Akinori Ito. “Acoustic Features and Auditory Impressions of Death Growl and Screaming Voice”. In *Proceedings of the 2013 Ninth International Conference on Intelligent Information Hiding and Multimedia Signal Processing*, edited by Kebin Jia et al. Beijing, China: IEEE, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1109/IIH-MSP.2013.120>
- Martín-Barbero, Jesús. “Jóvenes: des-orden cultural y palimpsestos de identidad”. In *Viviendo a toda. Jóvenes, territorios culturales y nuevas sensibilidades*, edited by Humberto J. Cubides et al., 22-37. Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia: Siglo de Hombre Editores, 1998.
- McLaren, Peter. “Revolutionary Pedagogy in Post-revolutionary Times: Re-thinking the Political Economy of Critical Education”. *Educational Theory* 48, no.4, (1998): 431-462.

- Oksanen, Atte. "Drinking to Death: Traditional Masculinity, Alcohol and Shame in Finnish Metal Lyrics". *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 28, no. 4 (2011) 357-372.
- Pareyón, Gabriel. "La música en la fiesta del dios Xipe Totec". In *III Foro Nacional sobre Música Mexicana*, Zacatecas, 2006. Inédito. <https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/25643/XipeTotec.pdf?sequence=6>
- Peña Escudero, Marta. "La ruta del Este: vikingos y eslavos". In *Los vikingos en la historia: I Jornadas de Cultura Vikinga, 2, 4, 5 y 6 de marzo de 2014*, Universidad de Granada, edited by Manuel Espinar Moreno and Alberto Robles Delgado, 149-153. Granada: Nativola, 2014. CD-ROM.
- Purcell, Natalie J. *Death Metal Music. The Passion and Politics of a Subculture*. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2003.
- Rubio, Salva. *Metal Extremo. 30 años de obscuridad (1981-2011)*. Lleida: Editorial Milenio, 2011.
- Suihkonen, Pirkko. "The Uralic language". *Fennia* 180, no. 1-2 (2002): 165-176.
- Swami, Viren and colab., "Metalheads: The Influence of Personality and Individual Differences on Preference for Heavy Metal". *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 7, no. 4 (2013): 377-383. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034493>
- Tolvanen, Hannu. "The Quiet Past and the Loud Present: the Kalevala and Heavy Metal". *Volume!* 5, no. 2 (2006): 75-89. <https://journals.openedition.org/volume/498>
- Vento, Urpo. "The role of the Kalevala in the Finnish Culture and Politics". *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 1, no. 2 (1992): 82-93.
- Weinstein, Deena. *Heavy Metal. A Cultural Sociology*. New York: Lexington Books An Imprint of MacMillan Inc., 1991.
- Weinstein, Deena. "Just So Stories: How Heavy Metal Got Its Name - A Cautionary Tale". *Rock Music Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 36-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19401159.2013.846655>
- Weinstein, Deena. "Playing with gender in the key metal". In *Heavy Metal, Gender and Sexuality. Interdisciplinary approaches*, edited by Florian Heesch y Niall Scott, 11-25. Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Wilson, Ross. "Folk Metal Case Study". In *Inmortalis Productions*. <https://ross-wilsondrmetal.wordpress.com/>