

A semiotic analysis of Nightwish's *Dark Passion Play*  
(2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011)

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## Statement of originality

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted for the qualification Doctor of Philosophy in Music at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work for a qualification at/in another University/faculty.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Strauss', written over a faint, illegible background.

Signed: Suzanne Strauss

26 January 2018

Date:

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## Abstract

Despite the ever-increasing interest in scholarly research on metal, the sonic investigation of metal songs remains essentially neglected. My study aims to contribute to the musicological investigation of metal. In this regard, my study is an analysis of four of Finnish symphonic metal band Nightwish's songs from two of their most recent studio albums, *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011). These four songs are "Scaretale" (*Imaginaerum*); "Turn Loose the Mermaids" (*Imaginaerum*); "The Poet and the Pendulum" (*Dark Passion Play*); and "Meadows of Heaven" (*Dark Passion Play*).

I show how Philip Tagg's commutative analytical model – specifically designed for the analysis of popular music – aids in the contextual reading of the selected Nightwish songs. In addition to Tagg's model, I employ Allan Moore's idea of the *soundbox* in two of the analyses, in order to uncover how in-studio sound effects influence the aesthetics of a song. Tagg's model encompasses a mode of analysis where *musemes* or *museme stacks* and their connotations of the *analysis object* (AO) is compared to that of other material (*interobjective comparison material* or IOCM), in order to establish shared *paramusical fields of connotation* (PMFCs). Tagg's model relies on a high degree of intertextuality and genre is a deciding factor in selecting IOCMs.

I expand both Tagg's model and Moore's visual representation of the *soundbox*. In terms of Tagg's model, I contextualise each analysis within a broader range of theoretical/philosophical discourses. Intertextuality plays an integral role in my analyses. It is an essential and inherent part of Tagg's model, but I extend the role of intertextuality in my thesis as it serves an additional role as an overarching theoretical frame of reference. Furthermore, I expand the role of genre à la Umberto Eco, so that genre serves as a "road map" that informs and governs Nightwish's construction (and communication) of meaning in their songs. In terms of Moore's *soundbox* I add a second perspective of the textual space: a view from above. This tilted view gives a better idea of where the emitters and sound effects are placed within the textural space.

I identify six main themes in the selected songs by means of Tagg's model, namely: fantasy, horror, violence, escapism, children and childhood, and nature. I show how these six themes are intertextually connoted and how they complement and influence one another to communicate meaning to the receivers (audience). Fantasy is an especially central theme and features in all four of the selected songs. Escapism has links with fantasy, fiction and nostalgia. Childhood and nature are associated with escapism and fantasy, while horror is linked to Gothic horror and fantasy in the songs. Violence has a connection with fantasy and the band communicates violence differently from the violence associated with extreme metal subgenres. Thus, fantasy, escapism, nature and childhood act as "counterbalances" to horror and violence.

These themes interact lyrically and sonically to create a unique listening experience for Nightwish fans and other receivers across the globe. The themes are recurring and in this way, the band creates a narrative link between songs. Thus, they actively establish, maintain and explore the band's self-created Nightwish mythology. The Nightwish 'world' creates a space where fans, based anywhere in the world, can share in the experience of the band's songs, while forming part of a subculture community.

My study is an example of a musicological investigation into the sonic features of metal songs. It demonstrates the types of insights that Tagg's model yields and shows how Tagg's model sheds light on the way in which intertextuality establishes meaning in popular culture in general, and Nightwish's selected songs in particular. It also reveals how Allan Moore's *soundbox* can be utilised to demonstrate how in-studio sound effects affect the aesthetics of metal songs.

**Keywords: NIGHTWISH; PHILIP TAGG; ALLAN MOORE; SEMIOTICS; POPULAR MUSIC ANALYSIS; INTERTEXTUALITY; HEAVY METAL CARNIVAL; FANTASY; ESCAPISM; HORROR**

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Background and rationale

My study focuses on selected songs by the Finnish symphonic metal band Nightwish. Symphonic metal (see Chapter 2.2.2), as the name suggests, contains features of Western art music (choirs, symphony orchestras, acoustic instruments or a digital keyboard that can produce orchestral sounds) and metal (distorted electric guitar sounds, tremolo picking, blast beats). I aim to undertake a semiotic analysis of selected songs of two of Nightwish's most recent full-length studio albums: *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011).

My choice of this band is primarily located in Nightwish's prominence in the international metal scene as the symphonic power metal band that is credited with "pushing the genre all the way to the mainstream" (see Dunn & McFadyen 2011). Furthermore, as a classically trained musician, the band's symphonic style of metal was a gateway for me to explore other metal subgenres since I heard their song "Nemo" in 2004.

### 1.1.1 Metal studies: Origin and trends

There has been an increasing interest in the academic study of metal since the 1990s (Hickam 2015:5-6). It is clear from numerous sources that three eminent publications that saw the light in the 1990s played a crucial role in the founding of scholarship on metal (see Scott & Von Helden 2010:ix; Hickam 2015:6; Brown, Spracklen, Kahn-Harris & Scott 2016:8-9). These publications are sociologist Deena Weinstein's *Heavy Metal Music: A Cultural Sociology* (1991, reprinted in 2000 as *Heavy Metal Music: The Music and its Culture*), Donna Gaines's 1991 publication *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead-End Kids* and musicologist Robert Walser's 1993 book *Running with the Devil: Power and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. Keith Kahn-Harris's book *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (2007) is an influential and more recent publication (Brown et al. 2016:9; Hickam 2015:6).

The main difference between Walser's 1993 contribution and the other two watershed publications from the 1990s is that Walser uniquely includes the analysis of sonic

parameters as part of his contextual, musicological inquiries.<sup>1</sup> Weinstein's book was a response to claims from a variety of sources including the media and the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) that metal has – almost exclusively – associations with aggression, violence, destructive behaviour and Satanism (Weinstein interviewed in Hickam 2015:9; Weinstein 2000:1-3). The PMRC was especially preoccupied with metal's lyrics and claimed that metal promotes (among other things) suicide, violence and promiscuity (Weinstein 2000:249-250). Weinstein's publication explores metal as a subculture and from a sociological standpoint. She focuses on the contextual aspects of metal, without a detailed analysis of sonic features.

Donna Gaines's book details her (sociological) investigation of suburban teen life as a type of subculture following the rise of teenage suicides and specifically, teenage suicide pacts in the 1980s (Gaines [1991] 1998:6-9). Gaines's material was originally submitted for the purposes of a doctorate in sociology in 1990 and was later published as the book in 1991. In the book, Gaines mentions the role of music and specifically of metal in the teen subculture she studied, but – like Weinstein – she does not analyse specific sonic features of metal.

The continual intensifying interest in metal is also clearly visible in "Metal Studies – A bibliography" that comprises a list of articles, papers and books on metal (initially), compiled by sociologist and author Keith Kahn-Harris (Khan-Harris 2009). This comprehensive list is an indication of the increasing number of metal studies and plays a crucial role in furthering the development of metal scholarship (Brown et al. 2016:10). Brian Hickam is the current editor of the list of contributions that has since been renamed as the *Metal Studies Bibliography Database* or MSBD (Brown et al. 2016:10).<sup>2, 3</sup>

Studies on metal had grown so significantly between 1990 and the late 2000s that a conference for studies on metal was held in November 2008 in Salzburg, Austria. This

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<sup>1</sup> Walser's output includes popular music studies and also research on a broader range of musical genres and styles.

<sup>2</sup> The MSBD lists contributions up to and including 2012. The reason for the backlog may be that the sheer volume of (new) contributions is difficult to keep up with (see Hickam 2015:5-6).

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ucmo.edu/metalstudies/metal\\_studies\\_home.html](https://www.ucmo.edu/metalstudies/metal_studies_home.html)

conference (*Heavy Fundamentals – Music, Metal and Politics*) was the first international conference of its kind (Scott & Von Helden 2010:ix) and has occurred annually since 2008. The idea that metal research is a legitimate field of study was “seriously entertained” for the first time during this interdisciplinary, non-hierarchical conference that had neither a keynote address nor divisions governed by subject. Subsequently, the field “metal studies” was born (Brown et al. 2016:8-9).<sup>4</sup>

After the official establishment of metal studies, the pioneering and watershed pre-2008 studies on metal were, in Weinstein’s words, “grandfathered” into the field (Weinstein 2016:25). The International Society of Metal Music Studies (ISMMS) – a society dedicated to the study of metal – originated in 2013. This society has its own peer-reviewed journal called *Metal Music Studies* (Brown et al. 2016:10). In the following paragraphs, I provide an overview of the trending topics in research on metal. It is apparent that studies which focus on extra-musical, or rather “paramusical” as Philip Tagg ([2012] 2013:22) calls it, aspects of metal make up the vast majority of academic research on metal.

A collection of papers presented at the 2008 conference was published as *The Metal Void: First Gatherings* (2010), edited by Niall W.R. Scott and Imke von Helden. These contributions focus on a wide range of topics such as metal phenomenology and existentialism, the role of race, racism, gender, identity, mythology, religion, suicide and alcohol abuse, as well as politics, ethics and sociology (Scott & Von Helden 2010:v-vii). The topics of these papers emphasise that most (if not all) of these papers are interdisciplinary studies.

The (interdisciplinary) papers presented at the first international metal conference in Salzburg may be regarded as representative of research on metal during the time period between Walser’s 1993 publication and 2008. The topics of these papers also give a very strong indication of the trending themes in research on metal before 2008. When the majority of other scholarly publications on metal, during the same era (and even more recently), are examined closely, it is evident that these mostly

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<sup>4</sup> For Gerd Bayer (2009:3), metal’s potential for providing room for interdisciplinary studies was already made “obvious” by the disciplinary backgrounds of Weinstein (in the field of sociology) and Walser (musicologist with training in art music and jazz among other things).

interdisciplinary publications provide integral and invaluable information on the paramusical aspects of metal music. These studies include extensive research on metal's fan base (see Arnett 1996), "subgenres and regional scenes" (Bayer 2009:3), the development of the genre (Christe 2003) and the metal music industry (Bayer 2009; Wallach, Berger & Greene 2011).

Similarly, Sam Dunn, Scot McFadyen and Jessica Wise's influential documentary titled *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (2006) focuses specifically on the sociological and cultural aspects of metal. It provides a glimpse into the metal world: the musicians, their views on the metal music industry and the ideologies they espouse, and live performances at festivals, as well as the fans. It includes a substantial number of interviews with metal musicians and their fans.

Other academic research on the paramusical aspects of metal include research on gender, extremist ideologies and nationalist themes (Wallach et al. 2011), identity, performance conventions related to race, politics, culture and American history (Pillsbury 2006:xii), as well as geographically specific studies (see Bayer 2009). Another very popular feature of metal studies – and numerous interdisciplinary studies based in other disciplines – is the study and interpretation of metal song lyrics.<sup>5</sup> Two isolated examples are Bruce Friesen and Warren Helfrich's (1998) exploration of the lyrical representation of gender and themes in the Canadian heavy metal music of 1985-1991, as well as Adam Rafalovich's article (2006) on masculine individualism in the lyrics of 603 songs from 16 popular metal bands since the 1990s.

Studies on the lyrics of metal songs tend to concentrate primarily on specific metal subgenres, namely black and death metal. This trend may, in part, be ascribed to the often controversial content of the lyrics in these genres (e.g. Satanism, death, substance abuse and violence). Few studies – whether conducted by musicologists or literary scholars – have been conducted on non-black or non-death metal lyrics. Two

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<sup>5</sup> In his introduction to the book *Analyzing Popular Music* (2003), Allan F. Moore asserts that the analysis of the lyrics of popular songs was initially introduced into academic research as part of literary studies that investigate these lyrics as poetry or, more specifically, the extent to which they could be regarded as such (Moore 2003:11). Simon Frith (1988:117-118; 1998:176-177) attributes the "problematic[s]" – as Moore calls it – of pop as poetry to a specific period in the history of popular music. Examples of artists (or "singer-songwriters") associated with this period are Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, and later, Bob Dylan.

examples are Kai Leikola's 2009 study of the lyrics of contemporary Finnish metal bands to show different metaphors of death, and Linn Olsson's 2010 essay, which focuses on the lyrics of the Swedish band Falconer.

Overall, analysts tend to approach song lyrics as something separate from the soundscape (which encompasses all sonic features including studio effects, not just musical sounds); in other words, this type of research usually comprises a close reading of the lyrics without an emphasis on the *performance* of those lyrics and how they interact with other sonic features or gestures in the songs' soundscapes. This practice has its roots in neo-Marxist approaches that trended in popular music studies during the 1980s. These types of studies were popular before the focus of research shifted more to "musical meaning" due to the influence of the "new musicology" (see section 1.1.2).

It is evident from sources such as the *Metal Studies Bibliography Database* and the recent publication by Brown et al. (2016) that the vast majority of academic research on metal has a social and/or cultural focus that concentrates mainly on the examination of paramusical aspects.<sup>6</sup> Andy Brown differentiates between "social" and "cultural" as he notes that there is a "qualitative shift" in the subjects of metal research from that of "a social problem" or risk topics to "a cultural aesthetic worthy of study in its own right" (Brown 2011:231). Later, more recent publications that trace the origin and development of and trends within metal scholarship include those by Andy Brown (2011), G r me Guibert and Jedediah Sklower (2013) and Brown et al. (2016).

### **1.1.2 The "new musicology"**

The tendency to focus more on the paramusical dimensions (social and cultural) of metal has its roots in the establishment and development of the so-called "new musicology" of the 1980s, as well as the then-emergent field of popular music studies. In his iconic publication *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (1985) Joseph Kerman continued the debate on music analysis he started in his article "How

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<sup>6</sup> Sociological research on heavy metal music tends to favour two types of approaches, namely studies about the social reactions that metal has provoked (for example, the so-called "moral panics") and studies on metal subcultures ("scenes"; Hjelm, Kahn-Harris & LeVine 2011:5).

"We Got Into Analysis and How to Get Out" published in 1980. Kerman criticised music analytical approaches for being stereotypically formalistic and positivistic, ignoring the deep rooted cultural nature of music. He called for a higher premium on research that does not rely on a work's internal structure alone and an approach to music scholarship that was critically informed.

Nicholas Cook describes Kerman's view as follows: "Under the slogan of 'criticism', Kerman created the vacuum that was filled by what came to be called the 'New Musicology'" (Cook & Everist 1999:viii). Musicological positivism and formalism refers to what Kofi Agawu describes as a concern with "connections between patterns within a piece", while ignoring other matters like expression, affect, cultural context or meaning (Agawu 1997:299). Agawu describes musicology's break with formalist approaches as follows:

To escape the dilemmas of formalism, you must attach the patterns you have observed to something else: a plot, a program, an emotional scenario, a context, an agenda, a fantasy, or a narrative. You must, in other words, problematize the gap between the musical and the extra-musical. The findings of formalist analysis are like a severed phallus; ideally, they should be re-attached. It was in this anti-formalist climate that the so-called "new musicology" emerged (Agawu 1997:299).

Cook and Everist (1999:vi) broadly describe the developments within "new musicology" as a reaction to musicological positivism, where the author and the status of the work is imbued with an authority that remains tacit and unproblematic:

[M]any musicologists have sought to resolve ... uneasy tensions through an unquestioning adherence at all costs to some fixed theoretical point; not just Schenker or Marx, but Adorno, Benjamin, and even Dahlhaus have acquired the status of authorities who do not require (and maybe do not admit) question or challenge (Cook & Everest 1999:v).

The "uneasy tension" in the quoted paragraph refers to the tension that Cook and Everist identified between "a self-critical stance and the day-to-day practice of musicology" (1999:v).

Since the publication of Cook and Everist's *Rethinking Music* (1999), practitioners of "new musicology" emphasize that the study of music is entwined with trends and is thus never "neutral" or "un-ideological" (see Kramer [1993] 2006:45). Music was/is no longer viewed as an autonomous realm and musicologists attempt to understand and explain music as a social construct which meant a shift in importance and attention away from the score to the social context wherein a musical work was/is composed.

Notions like the authority of the composer, the authority of the musical text (or score, if it is available/exists in the case of popular music), canons, universality, et cetera, are questioned and challenged within the "new musicology" (Moore 2003:5). The challenging of these notions in music scholarship and has its roots in post-structuralism which in turn may be described as

a group of methodologies which go beyond the seeking of solutions in the ways cultural products and practices are structured. This is an aspect of a wider cultural shift in industrial society, a paradigmatic change conveniently known as 'postmodernism' (Moore 2003:5).

The "new musicology" takes the broader context in which a composition is written into account, i.e. the biography of the composer, the state of mind of the composer, the socio-political climate, et cetera. Thus it is not uncommon to find interdisciplinary music studies with links to, for example, anthropological, psychological or sociological studies (as was seen in the discussion on metal research previously in this Introduction). Feminism played a crucial part in broadening the musicological field by creating other possible approaches by which to view musical texts. Griffiths credits feminism as being an extra-musical filter through which music could be seen (Griffiths 2010-2011).

John Covach highlights the fact that feminist perspectives could also be employed in the academic courses lectured by musicologists who do not specialise in the field of feminism which in turn aided in the redesigning of North American university curriculums after the 1980s (Covach 1999:454). Musicologist Susan McClary is well known for her ground-breaking work in the field of feminist musicology.

In this regard, Philip Bohlman asserts that:



[the] different domains within the study of music [...] no longer simply co-exist, but rather interact to change the spatial construction of the field. No domain is spared from the approaches of its discursive cohabitants – say, historical musicology from analysis, ethnomusicology from history, or music theory from cultural contexts” (Bohlman 1993:435-436).

In this way, the scope of research questions has broadened significantly, with previously unquestioned canons and unexamined terrains increasingly explored in musicological scholarship. It also means that topics that previously “belonged” to a certain field or discipline could be examined within “other” fields, ultimately resulting (in my opinion), in a more holistic exploration of topics or research subjects. The call for a newfound acceptance of approaches borrowed from other fields and the knowledge they bring to the field of musicology resonate in Ellen Rosand’s 1994 statement that “[u]nless there is place for all kinds of fine scholars (...) the discipline of musicology will be sorely impoverished” (Rosand quoted in Van der Meer 2005:70).

Another consequence of “new musicology” that is particularly relevant to my study is that the gaps in and boundaries between the different approaches to ethnic, art and pop music were blurred and closed. Nicholas Cook’s statement that “we are all ethnomusicologists now” (Cook 2001) further corroborates this blurring of disciplinary boundaries. A possible contributing factor in the closed gaps in the approaches to different musical styles is the more inclusive vocabulary brought about by the “new musicology”. Dai Griffiths states that there has been a shift in the meaning of the word “contemporary” in contemporary music. This term not only implies contemporary classical music, but also music of “the present and recent past” which also includes “sonic art [...] folk, jazz, rock and world music” (Griffiths 2012:381). Richard Cohn (2001) has made a similar observation in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*:

Several developments in the late 20th-century academy – notably a suspicion of historicizing teleologies and the re-evaluation of the distinction between “classical” and “vernacular” – stimulated recognition of diatonic tonality as a living tradition. Perhaps the most important trend in practical harmony at the beginning of the 21st century is the reintroduction of contemporary music, in the form of folk music, jazz, show-tunes, rock, and so on, into manuals of

practical harmony, in both Europe and North America, in the service of compositional and improvisational as well as analytical training (Cohn 2001:873).

Other types of current music are included in the umbrella term “contemporary music” as another development within the “new musicology” creating a type of bridge between the study of classical and non-classical music as equally legitimate fields of study with equally legitimate analytical methodologies associated with it – a welcome change as this scenario was not always the case. As the term “contemporary” in “contemporary music” encompasses various musical styles, the term “popular” in “popular music” underlines the plurality of this phenomenon. Middleton argues that “popular” in its historical sense may refer to something inferior (it is of *the people*, the *commoners*), but with the influence of other ideologies and shifts in power structures (he mentions post-revolutionary America as an example), the term may “become a *legitimizing*” one (Middleton 1990:3).

What is very salient are the ways in which various approaches (especially essentialist approaches) engage with popular music; that popular music is often “established through comparison with something else, an absent Other” (Middleton 1990:6). The term “genre” when used in the context of popular music does not have the same (fixed) connotations as in Western art music. In popular music, genre is flexible and it “extends beyond the fact that a given song can belong to two or more genres, or fall in the intersection of several of them; genre can change from performance to performance” (Hamm 1995:380).

The shift in meaning of the terms “contemporary” and “popular” also sparked a scholarly interest in “high” and “low” (formerly marginalised) musics as equally legitimate fields of study. Two examples of the inclusion of popular music into academia are *The Oxford Companion to Popular Music* – published as early as 1991 – by Peter Gammond and, more recently, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology* (2009), edited by Derek B. Scott. The idea that (previously) “high” and “low” musics are equally legitimate fields of study brought about the idea that popular music studies (and thus research on metal) exhibit the same kind of sociological and cultural foci as those engaging with analyses of art music within the “new musicology”.

The inclusion of approaches drawn from other fields in music scholarship was/is not always embraced with acceptance and it has sparked (sometimes heated) debates within the field of musicology (Korsyn 2003:15). Kofi Agawu was one of the first musicologists to highlight these debates in his presentation *Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime* at the American Musicological Society, Society for Music Theory and the Society for Ethnomusicology (AMS/SMT/SEM) conference in 1995.<sup>7</sup> In the introduction of his book, *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research*, Kevin Korsyn states that “[o]ften scholars are willing to acknowledge other methods only so long as they do not have to rethink their own” (2003:16). Korsyn gives some examples of renowned musicologists whose arguments illustrate the different – as he calls it – “hostile camps and embattled factions” (2003:15). He refers to the conflicting viewpoints of Susan McClary and that of “one of [her] most virulent” critics Pieter C. van den Toorn, as well as Lawrence Kramer, an advocate for the priority of music in musicological studies, and Gary Tomlinson (Korsyn 2003:15).

Interdisciplinary studies may encourage a productive interaction between music and other disciplines, but Georgina Born (2010) identifies certain pitfalls concerning the integration of diverse disciplines. She explains that the different disciplines in interdisciplinary studies are approached by 1) *integrative-synthesis*, where “antecedent disciplines” are integrated in “relatively symmetrical form” and the schools of thought from the disciplines are integrated; 2) *subordination-service*, where the disciplines are ranked according to subordination; and 3) *the agonistic-antagonistic mode* where the “antecedent” disciplines form a new “interdiscipline” that is “irreducible to its ‘antecedent disciplines’” (Born 2010:211).

Within this framework of music scholarship that tends to favour interdisciplinary studies, there has been a trend to conduct interdisciplinary music research where the emphasis is no longer on the investigation of soundscapes but rather music’s link to/role in other disciplines. Subsequently, the reduced role of sonic features has resulted in (lopsided) musicological studies where “music is no longer the topic” (Viljoen 2012:73). This phenomenon is also visible in popular music studies:

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<sup>7</sup> Published in 1997 in *The Journal of Musicology*, 15(3).

[A] disciplinary chasm is reinscribed between musicology and popular music studies, the latter associated firmly with sociology – such that any concern to trace the mutual mediation of musical sounds and social processes is placed outside the conceptual bounds of musicology. At the same time there is a refusal to take seriously the challenges issued to this dualism by popular music (Born 2010: 214).

Popular music studies, as mentioned in the quote above, has its roots in sociology and is subsequently open for interdisciplinary approaches. Popular music scholars in general, and metal scholars specifically, seem to approach their topics or research subjects from an entirely sociological or cultural angle. While the “new musicology” brought with it much needed changes and improvements, the overemphasised cultural angle in metal research deprives the music scholar from delving deeper into its sonic features.

In current art music studies, some scholars reassert the prominence of the musical text; for example, Lawrence Kramer and Martina Viljoen. Viljoen describes the value of musical analysis within the framework of current art music studies as follows:

The methodological misnomers of postmodern musicology [...] suggest however that a semantic study of music may involve a complexity of aspectual concepts incorporating and even exceeding all the various matters traditionally associated with the construction of musical meaning. This leaves room for both the formalist purity of the now so disfavoured structuralist approach, and for a more liberating musical hermeneutics (Viljoen 2012:90).

Art music scholarship is reasserting the importance of the musical text meaning; that is, the sonic features of compositions. This reassertion of the musical text also translates into a newfound interest in musical analysis within the reconfiguration (see Born 2010) of the discipline of musicology. A need for reconfiguration is not unique or restricted to art music as this need is also expressed in popular music discourse.

Invaluable contributions have been made in metal scholarship to establish the field from its conception in 2008. The topics and methodologies are interdisciplinary; in this way reflecting trends in other research that involves music, but the very scarce musicological research on metal’s sonic features tends to signal that metal studies

have not quite caught up with trends in popular music studies in general (as I have shown in the previous paragraphs). This notion is supported by Keith Kahn-Harris who recently stated that metal studies “see[m] to be developing without reference to popular music studies” (Kahn-Harris 2011:251-252). This means that the musicological examination of sonic features do not enjoy the same attention as in popular music studies.

Deeper, more detailed musicological investigations into metal’s sonic features, together with current interdisciplinary approaches may provide a more holistic, substantive academic representation of metal’s potential for commentary and critique through its sonic features. It is specifically in this regard that my study aims to contribute by providing detailed analyses of selected songs that are further contextualised by productive theoretical/philosophical frameworks.

A more substantive examination of metal soundscapes may even benefit studies with a primary focus on lyrics:

Analysis of heavy metal lyrics must be informed by figurative and contextual interpretation rather than by a literal reading. Lyrics are not intended to be tightly integrated systems of signifiers, although there are exceptions to this rule. Most lyrics are best understood as a loose array of fragmentary and suggestive signifiers (Weinstein 2000:34).

In this regard, aspects of a soundscape can communicate figurative information and meanings. Weinstein further asserts that no specific element of a soundscape is privileged above the rest, not even the voice that acts as the carrier of the lyrics (2000:34). The total sound (or soundscape) merits attention (Weinstein 2000:34). This statement highlights the importance of the *performance* of the lyrics as something that interacts with other sounds within a song’s soundscape, rather than the importance of lyrics as independent “poems”: “[a]ny lyrical theme, even despair or suicide, is empowered by the heavy metal sound” (Weinstein 2000:35). Weinstein’s statements underline the need for and importance of the musicological analysis of metal soundscapes.

### 1.1.3 Popular music analysis

The relationship between the “new musicology”, popular music studies and later the score analysis of popular music has provoked a (in some instances, heated) debate which has been at the forefront of music studies since the 1990s. It is clear from some earlier popular music studies that analytical approaches associated with Western art music were employed to analyse pop and rock songs, country music, folk music, et cetera. Although these analytical approaches were familiar ground for music scholars, some authors strongly discourage their application to popular music.

Robert Walser and Susan McClary question the productiveness of using formalist analytical methods designed for analysing art music. They call for a reconfiguration within the discipline of musicology (McClary & Walser 1990) and propose closing the gap between popular music studies and musicology by integrating (traditional) musicology – and thus art music – with the sociological and/or cultural (contextual) approaches of popular music. In this regard, Walser (1993) argues that traditional analytical models fail to explain and illuminate “specific fusions at particular historical moments or to probe the power relations implicit in all such encounters” (Walser 1993:58).

Like McClary and Walser (1990), David Brackett asserts that the academic enquiry of popular music should not focus only on the interpretation of the music (songs), but also “understand why we interpret a given song in the manner that we do” ([1995] 2000:201). He, like McClary and Walser and true to the *Zeitgeist* in which his book was published, places much emphasis on the re-evaluation of musicology, and he demonstrates how analytical methods derived from established Western art music analytical models may prove to be inadequate in the study of popular music, as a way to introduce his alternative methods (Dibben 2002:142, 144).

John Covach notes that “musicologists almost never approach popular music styles as being interesting *in their own right*” (1999:454). Taking into consideration that Covach’s 1999 chapter was written over a decade ago and that his notion may be representative of the thoughts associated with a particular time in Western music historiography, this may be posited as a possible reason why some music scholars investigated/analysed popular music in ways associated with Western art music: it was

done to *legitimise* an academic interest in popular music. Ironically, a 1997 collection of essays edited by Covach and Graeme M. Boone titled *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, seems to be an example of such legitimization:

[T]hey seek to prove the worthiness of rock music by locating within at least some of it a number of already prestigious traits, such as organic unity, formal complexity, and resemblances to European classical music. The main purpose of this volume thus appears to be the reciprocal legitimization of rock music and modernist analytical techniques (Walser 2000:355).

For Walser, this also holds true for the study of metal music (1993:58-59). Links between popular music and works by the so-called Great Composers were also highlighted and established to increase the value and validity of popular music scholarship and thus also metal scholarship.

In a later publication, Covach advocates for other methods of studying popular music rather than traditional art music approaches. Although he does not see Richard Middleton's approach as flawless – or more specifically, unproblematic – Covach refers to Middleton's viewpoints on the examination of popular music through approaches associated with Western art music to further elucidate his own:

The general conclusion that Middleton comes to in his critical survey is that popular music simply cannot be studied in the same way as art-music; scholars applying traditional methods to popular music produce distorted readings. These readings emphasize harmony, melody, and form, but neglect what are often key components in popular music – components such as timbre, rhythmic structure and its subtle deviations, and expressive pitch deviations (Covach 1999:461).

In this regard, Middleton identifies three factors that contribute to rendering art music approaches associated with what he calls “mainstream musicology” ineffective: (1) terminology; (2) notation and methodology; and (3) the development of musicology (Middleton 1990:104-107). Firstly, the terminology in “mainstream musicology” may be a fruitful vocabulary to describe elements and nuances of art music, but it is an “impoverished” one when it concerns other musics outside the realm of Western art music. Terminology and the connotations it invokes are ideological in basis, since

“they always involve selective, and often unconsciously formulated, conceptions of what music is” (Middleton 1990:104). This involuntary strategy also speaks to musical meaning and that which we regard as “value” or “something of a high standard”.

Secondly, Middleton ascribes the tendency to privilege “musical parameters which can be easily notated” to what Philip Tagg calls “notational centrality” (Middleton 1990:104). This methodology leaves no room for less obvious aspects and nuances of music that cannot be seen in the score. Furthermore, “notational centrality” places the emphasis in the score as being “the music” and this means that specific listening skills are required which, in turn, suggest that all listeners hear the same things when listening to music. This is not the case for people listening to the same kind of music and thus it would be an inaccurate assumption made about people listening to other kinds of music (Middleton 1990:105). The third factor is located in the development of a specific type of music (Western art music):

The construction of a ‘classical’ repertory went hand in hand with the construction of a new audience ... and both were legitimated by a historical-aesthetic vision stressing the gradual emergence of music as an autonomous, transcendent form with cognitive value (it opened a window on Truth, rather than simply providing social pleasures; Middleton 1990:107).

Studies that focus only on formalist analysis or sociology instead of the *sounds* of popular music may alienate both the consumers and makers of popular music (Fast 2000:52). The study of popular music may call for a mode of thinking that combines both the possibilities that the formal analysis of music offers (as suggested by Viljoen), as well as context sensitive interdisciplinary approaches to form a new “interdiscipline” (as suggested by Born). This call for a new mode of thinking is not a recent idea; a number of authors, as early as the 1990s, have mentioned the inclusion of sound into the scope of popular music research.

Kofi Agawu hinted at the possible fruitfulness of musical analysis by viewing it “not as an end but as a means to an end” (1997:301) which would mean that formal musical analysis can be compatible with the vast possibilities offered by the anti-formalist “new



musicology” and thus also with popular music scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Other examples of how sonic features are included in popular music studies can be found in the works of Allan F. Moore, Richard Middleton, David Brackett, Robert Walser, Nicholas Cook and Susan Fast to name a few. Although Middleton is wary of notation-centric analytical methods, he does not condemn referencing the musical score when analysing popular music:

Clearly the application of notation-centric methods to popular music may be problematical. Of course [...] many forms of popular music have been and are notated. To that extent, the difficulty is not an absolute one, and it can be legitimate to make use of such scores as exist (Middleton 1990:106).

I use scores in my study as a tool to aid in the investigation of soundscapes as per Philip Tagg’s model. In this way, an investigation of the realisation of the score (i.e. the sounds of the songs) and other sonic features (whether notated or not) remains the central focus of my study. I shortly describe Tagg’s model in section 1.4 and I discuss it in detail in Chapter 3.2.1.

Georgina Born describes the diversity in music scholarship as “an urge to reconfigure the sub-disciplinary boundaries signalled in current debates about moving beyond the terms musicology, ethnomusicology, popular music studies, the sociology and psychology of music and so on to a new, integrated music studies” (Born 2010:205-206). Born’s call for an “integrated music studies” is not a recent one (see Walser & McClary 1990). Either Born takes too much credit for the idea of reconfiguration and integration, or it should be regarded as a comment on the (incomplete) state of the reconfiguration and integration of the field of musicology in this present day and age.

#### **1.1.4 Metal and musicology**

An extensive literature review shows that despite the increased interest in the academic study of metal, the sonic dimension of songs has not received much scholarly (and specifically musicological) attention after Walser’s (1993) initial contribution. This notion is echoed by Brown, Spracklen, Kahn-Harris and Scott in their

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<sup>8</sup> An earlier version of Agawu’s 1997 article was published by *Music Theory Online* in 1996, 4(2).

recent publication (2016) that investigates current trends in metal scholarship. Although they are few and far between, a small number of scholarly works or publications explore the sonic features of metal after Walser's 1993 musicological contribution to metal scholarship.

Susan Fast's 2001 book on Led Zeppelin is a seminal publication in the sense that it is one of the first books in heavy metal scholarship to focus on a single band/artist. *In the Houses of the Holy* contains the analysis of musical and sonic detail in order to "better understand how the music works as part of 'cultural practice'" (Fast 2001:10) but does not include a discussion of music analysis as a main topic. Fast believes that sound is a "critically important" factor in the construction of (cultural) meanings and she combines conventional musical analysis with a contextual reading of some of Led Zeppelin's songs to highlight the "cultural significance" of the band (Fast 2001:10):

While there are those who may think that musical sound is not a primary locus of cultural meaning in popular music or that sound "transcends" culture, it is my belief that the sounds are critically important to the construction of meanings. It is this musical construction of meaning, in conjunction with visual imagery, the use of the body in performance, and the discourse that was created around the band by fans, the rock press, and band members themselves that I explore in the pages that follow (Fast 2001:10).

Musicologist Harris Berger utilises musical analysis in conjunction with an ethnographic approach in his book *Metal, Rock and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience* (1999). His study is geographically specific as he focuses on different music genres in the American state of Ohio.

Unlike Berger, Glenn Pillsbury's interdisciplinary work *Damage Incorporated: Metallica and the Production of Musical Identity* focuses on one band, namely Metallica. Pillsbury explores identity, performance conventions relating to race, gender and genre, as well as politics, culture, music analysis and American history (Pillsbury 2006:xii). It is "a response to two books", namely Susan Fast's 2001 publication, as well as Robert Walser's 1993 book (Pillsbury 2006:xii). Pillsbury "take[s] musical detail seriously" and employs a modus operandi that includes both the analysis of musical material cultural and is context-sensitive (Pillsbury 2006:xv).

Andrew Cope's 2010 book on Black Sabbath provides valuable insights into how Black Sabbath's music and the sonic features of their songs have influenced other bands' songs. In this regard, Cope includes details of sonic features, the form structures of songs, harmonic progressions, et cetera, in his exploration of Black Sabbath's songs (see for example, Cope 2010:11, 22, 111, 117). Since Cope's book covers Black Sabbath's influence on many bands, he does not analyse a selection of songs in great detail. He provides pertinent sonic information to show the similarities between Black Sabbath's songs and other metal bands' songs. What is especially relevant to my study is that Cope shows how Black Sabbath's music has influenced bands such as Nightwish in terms of the use of the tritone and flat second which has sinister connotations (Cope 2010:42, 51, 124).

Ross Hagen is the only contributing author of *Metal rules the globe: Heavy metal music around the world* (2011) which provides some insights into the sonic features of Norwegian black metal. He gives a description of the chords, intervals and playing techniques favoured by Norwegian black metal musicians to achieve a "black metal sound", but he does not provide detailed musicological analyses.

## **1.2 Starting point of the research and connections to previous studies**

A number of interdisciplinary studies have touched on Nightwish and/or their oeuvre. The topics of these interdisciplinary studies range from fantasy themes in some of Nightwish's songs (Lucas 2009:153-154), the Finnish music industry and the influence of geography in Finnish music (Järvi 2008), and the discourse on metal in different types of written Finnish media (Lukkarinen 2010) and marketing.

Toni-Matti Karjalainen, Laura Laaksonen and Antti Ainamo focus on marketing and entrepreneurial aspects such as how personal (band) ideology plays a role in the visual identity of metal bands from Finland (Karjalainen & Ainamo 2011a; Karjalainen & Ainamo 2011b); the role of visual meaning creation and the creation of symbolic value (Laaksonen, Karjalainen & Ainamo 2009a; Karjalainen, Laaksonen & Ainamo 2009b); cultural export and entrepreneurship (Laaksonen, Karjalainen & Ainamo 2009b); the application of the entrepreneurial effectuation theory to analyse

musicianship as a form of entrepreneurship with regard to Finnish metal bands (Laaksonen, Ainamo & Karjalainen 2010a; Laaksonen, Ainamo & Karjalainen 2011); and the entrepreneurial passion of a number of metal bands (Laaksonen, Ainamo & Karjalainen 2010b).

Toni-Matti Karjalainen has published extensively on different aspects of marketing that include Nightwish as an example or that focus on Nightwish specifically. Karjalainen has published numerous books and journal articles on Nightwish as an example of the branding of heavy metal bands and has presented a myriad of papers at conferences around the world (see Karjalainen 2017a; Karjalainen 2017b). In terms of Nightwish's second phase output, he presented a paper on the "ideological, cultural and commercial aspects of the *Imaginaerum* concept of Nightwish" (Karjalainen 2012) in which he focuses on the intent of the band and Tuomas Holopainen, the marketing of the *Imaginaerum* concept, as well as possible topics for further studies (Karjalainen 2012). Karjalainen investigates the role of narrative in Nightwish's songs on the global Nightwish community (2016:59-78).

All the contributions I have mentioned above feature Nightwish in their research, whether as the main focus of the research or one of the examples being studied, but none of them provides detailed analyses of sonic features. It should be noted that none of these authors is a musicologist, which may explain the absence of detailed musicological analyses or the interpretations of sonic features in their contributions as discussed above.

Investigations into Nightwish's lyrics have also been undertaken. Two examples of such studies are a conference paper that investigates emotion in the lyrics and music of four Nightwish songs from both the band's first and second stylistic phases, although none of these songs features on the band's 2011 *Imaginaerum* album (Efthemiou 2013), and an article that investigates eight different types of metaphors in the band's second phase album released in 2007, namely *Dark Passion Play* (Sampoerna & Silitonga 2014:300).<sup>9</sup> Neither of these research outputs incorporates

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<sup>9</sup> The four songs that Efthemiou (2013) includes in his paper are "Dead Boy's Poem" (*Wishmaster*); "Ever Dream" (*Once*); "Eva" (*Dark Passion Play*); and "Master Passion Greed" (*Dark Passion Play*). The first two are from the band's first stylistic phase and the latter two from the second phase.

analyses of the songs' soundscapes. Furthermore, Sampoerna and Silitonga (2014) do not provide any detail of their analytical process. Their article is a linguistic investigation and not a musicological one, which may explain their exclusion of musical detail.

Ivo Cote's research essay explores how Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum* and Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* have influenced and shaped two of Nightwish's longest songs "The Poet and the Pendulum" (*Dark Passion Play*) and "Song of Myself" (*Imaginaerum*). Cote's essay includes some references to sonic features in these two songs, but he does not provide detailed analyses of the songs' soundscapes as it lies beyond the scope and purposes of his literature-oriented essay.

Another publication with a focus on literature is Cyril Brizard's (2010) chapter on intertextual fantasy references in Nightwish's song lyrics. Although the chapter provides valuable information in this regard, it does not investigate the songs' soundscapes for additional intertextual references.

It is evident that most academic research projects to date on Nightwish's output are primarily interdisciplinary studies with no detailed (musicological) analyses of the songs' soundscapes. However, a few studies do include an investigation of certain sonic features of some of the band's songs, although the analyses vary in the level of detail.

In his article "La Fusion de la musique metal et de la musique classique, Nightwish et les voix chantées: Une étude de cas" (2006), sociologist Cyril Brizard examines three vocal styles (the "standard" singing voice, lyrical singing voice and guttural singing voice) used in Nightwish's music and draws parallels between them and characters found in the compositions, so that these vocal styles act as the representatives and interpreters of the characters (Brizard 2006:115). Although his article includes a discussion of sonic features, it does not include a detailed analysis of the songs' soundscapes. Brizard's study focuses on songs where Tarja Turunen is the vocalist using these different vocal styles, whereas my research pertains to songs where Anette Olzon is the female vocalist.

His doctoral thesis (2011) explores the combinatorial dimension of symphonic metal in Nightwish's music by means of socio-anthropological approaches. He argues that a musical art work is a continuous process and, as such "a mythic creature" is "resurrected" at every listening (my translation; Brizard 2011). Brizard's study takes the emitters, receivers and the songs as well into account as he investigates, among other things, by means of a questionnaire, how receivers experience certain aspects of songs such as "Ghost Love Score" (see Brizard 2011:623-630).

Sami Boman's thesis (2007) explores the types of tonal structures in the songs of all Nightwish's full-length studio albums from 1997-2005; in other words the band's first-phase songs. Boman collects data by means of MATLAB technology (Boman 2007:30). Furthermore, he compares the tonal structures of the audio files to graphic visual material gained from creating MIDI files of the songs in order to determine whether the songs' tonal structures correspond with their form structures (Boman 2007:30). In this regard, Boman's research on tonal structures also highlights the form structures of Nightwish's first phase songs of his selected Nightwish songs (2007:44-63, 66) which may prove valuable in terms of my musicological study of selected second phase songs.

Both Brizard (2006, 2011) and Boman (2006) examine Nightwish's oeuvre in the period 1997-2004; i.e. the band's first phase output. Therefore, Nightwish's *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* 2011 albums lie beyond the scope of Brizard's and Boman's research.

It is evident from the existing research on Nightwish that a musicological study which centres on a detailed musicological analysis of the sonic features of the band's second phase output in general, and the *Dark Passion Play* and *Imaginaerum* albums in particular, has never been undertaken. Thus, my thesis aspires to contribute to research on Nightwish's music.

### **1.3 Research problem and objectives**

I aim to undertake a contextual, semiotic analysis of selected songs from two of Nightwish's most recent full-length studio albums: *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011). In this regard, I analyse two songs from *Imaginaerum* and two

songs from *Dark Passion Play*: “Scaretale” (Chapter 4, *Imaginaerum*), “Turn Loose the Mermaids” (Chapter 5, *Imaginaerum*), “The Poet and the Pendulum” (Chapter 6, *Dark Passion Play*) and “Meadows of Heaven” (Chapter 7, *Dark Passion Play*). These four songs are representative of two albums’ main themes and ideas.

The four selected songs have a multitude of intertextual links to other songs and genres that communicate certain sonic associations and meanings to the band’s receivers (audience). In this regard, Philip Tagg’s commutative model for popular music analysis may prove to be a productive analytical tool. It allows for a very high level of intertextuality as Tagg’s method is dependent on intertextual links (part of his process of *interobjective comparison*; see Chapter 1.4) to explore how meaning is constructed and communicated in songs. In addition to Tagg’s model which serves as the primary music-analytical framework in my analyses, I utilise Alan Moore’s conceptualisation of the *soundbox* at relevant points in two of my analyses to illustrate how the aural staging of instruments and vocals as well as studio effects influence the meaning of those songs.

The following research questions underlie my study:

- What insights may Philip Tagg’s *interobjective comparison* yield?
- In what ways do the aural staging of vocal soloists, other instruments and sounds within the textural space influence the soundscapes and ultimately inform the meaning of the selected songs?
- How can Tagg’s model – as a theory of gestural connotations – elucidate meanings generated by stylistic plurality in Nightwish’s songs?<sup>10</sup>
- How do the sonic features of the selected songs, the lyrics and the vocal costumes of the soloists interact to constitute meaning?
- What insights may Allan F. Moore’s conceptualisation of the *soundbox* yield in terms of a visual representation of the aural staging of instruments and voices as well as what the effects that the studio manipulation of sound have on the aesthetics and meaning in regard to selected Nightwish songs?

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<sup>10</sup> For example, in Nightwish’s arrangement of Jean Sibelius’s *Finlandia*, the uilleann pipes play the melody in their rendition – an Irish Celtic instrument obviously not associated with Finnish music.

## 1.4 Research design and methodology

In terms of academic research on Nightwish, very little or no attention has been paid to the sonic aspects of the band's output. I aim to provide a contextual analysis of selected Nightwish songs by drawing on a range of fitting, productive theoretical-philosophical models (for example, Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of the mediaeval carnival, intertextuality and Karen Halnon's "heavy metal carnival"), as well as Tagg and Moore's music analytical models in order to investigate the soundscapes of the selected Nightwish songs. Tagg's method may prove especially fruitful as the Nightwish songs are highly intertextual and Moore's *soundbox* provides a clear visual representation of the textural space at any given moment in the songs (see Chapter 3.2.1; Chapter 3.2.2).

Philip Tagg (1979) applies a commutation method that he specifically adapted for popular music analysis. He borrows the idea of the *museme* ("the basic unit of musical expression which in the framework of one given musical system is not further divisible without destruction of meaning"; 1979:71) from Charles Seeger (1960:76), although Tagg regards the size and nature of the *museme* to be flexible (Middleton 1990:189). He argues that once the meaning of *museme stacks* (*musemes* heard simultaneously) is established, the "syntactic analysis of melodic phrases" illuminates the structural hierarchy (Tagg 1987:292).

Tagg's method centres on a process he calls *interobjective comparison* (Tagg [2012] 2013:229, 238). In this process that relies heavily on intertextuality (see Tagg [2012] 2013:238), the analyst identifies *musemes* in the *analysis object* (AO) and compares it to those in other soundscapes or *interobjective comparison material* (IOCM) in order to establish *paramusical fields of connotation* (PMFCs; Tagg [2012] 2013:229-230).

His *hypothetical substitution* elucidates content rather than segmentation:

For any musical message [...] the analyst carries out substitutions of the various constituent elements and parameters, with the aim of discovering how the "meaning" of the message is changed. As this description suggests, Tagg is mostly concerned with elucidating content, rather than with segmentation as



such: his technique is a way of confirming or falsifying interpretations of meaning gained by other means (Middleton 1990:180).

Tagg's method illustrates how substitutions concerning parameters such as tempo, dynamics, lyrics, instrumentation, a different performer, et cetera, affect the overall meaning of the song (1987:292). His method provides a means by which to illuminate the "relative distinctiveness and importance" of the so-called *elements* (rhythm, timbre, et cetera; Middleton 1990:180).

My application of Philip Tagg's method to the selected Nightwish songs may show how musical parameters (tempo, instrumentation, et cetera) influence the meaning of the musical material. Tagg's approach provides an investigative tool to analyse aspects of performed music (including music on a CD) that is not shown in the score such as timbre. A method of analysis that includes timbre will be very useful to show, inter alia, how the use of different vocal techniques (clean vocals, jazz style vocals, techniques and a sound associated with musical theatre, et cetera) and what Tagg calls the "vocal costume" of a singer (Tagg [2012] 2013:360-375) in the Nightwish songs that I selected, may contribute to the meaning of those songs.

Tagg's method also encompasses the examination of a song's lyrics. In this regard, Tagg's method moves beyond a close reading of the lyrics and includes the performance of the lyrics by including dialect, accent, timbre, idiom, et cetera, as "paramusical types of expression" (Tagg [2012] 2013:270). These "paramusical types of expression" may aid in the establishment of PMFCs, which may ultimately affect a song's meaning (Tagg [2012] 2013:270).

One of the features of Tagg's model is that it can be utilised to include an investigation of how in-studio sound manipulation can affect the reception of a *museme* or *museme stack*. In this regard, I utilise Allan F. Moore's views on the manipulation of sound and how it affects the aesthetics of a section or song in addition to Tagg's. For Moore, the different sounds of a song intersect in a textural space which he calls the *soundbox*. His idea of the *soundbox* enables the analyst to identify the manipulated sound, where it appears within the *soundbox*; how it interacts with other features within the *soundbox*; and how it influences and/or determines the aesthetics and overall meaning

of a section or song. I provide more detailed descriptions of Tagg and Moore's respective models in Chapter 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

Even though Tagg's model could be considered dated, I argue that his method as he describes it in his recent publication ([2012] 2013) and especially, his ideas of *interobjective comparison* and *hypothetical substitution* are ideally suited to analyse the four representative songs that I chose, as these songs are highly intertextual and stylistically pluralistic. His *interobjective comparison* is explicitly designed to analyse a vast number of intertextual gestures that include, but are not limited to, sonic gestures (Tagg [2012] 2013:238). In this regard, his method is ideal for the analysis of the high level of intertextuality in the selected Nightwish songs.

Tagg's method is not specifically designed for the analysis of metal song soundscapes such as, for example, Robert Walser's. Nevertheless, it is very well suited for this role as it is an inclusive mode of analysis that does not favour specific styles or genres within the broad framework of (Western) popular music, which of course, includes metal.

In addition to Tagg and Moore's respective models, I draw on a broad range of theoretical-philosophical frames of reference. These frameworks include Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of the medieval carnival and communal comedy (Chapter 4), Karen Halnon's idea of "heavy metal carnival" where the performance aspect of metal creates a liminal space where both the audience and performing artists partake in a communal act of degradation in order to be rejuvenated (Chapter 4), critical writings on "Celticity" (Chapter 5), the influence of place and space (Chapter 7) as well as respective critical reflections on nostalgia and utopia (Chapter 7).

Although Tagg's model (which serves as the primary analytical framework in my analyses of the selected Nightwish songs) relies on intertextuality through *interobjective comparison*, it serves an additional role as the theoretical underpinning of my analysis in Chapter 6. In addition to this expansion of Tagg's model, my readings of the Nightwish songs also offer a speculative dimension to his more structuralist method of analysis.

## **1.5 Value of the research**

My study aims to contribute to metal scholarship. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to a specific type of metal scholarship where the perceived sounds are the main focus of the study. I hope to provide a basis for future research where the semiotic analysis of the soundscapes of songs is used as an investigative tool within a contextual framework as applied to popular music, and more specifically to metal music. My study aspires to contribute to musicological research on the soundscapes of a sample of four songs from Nightwish's recent output.

## **Chapter 2 – Nightwish – A short biography of the band, their idiom and their legacy**

As a starting point to my analysis of selected songs on the albums *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011) which I present in the following chapters, this chapter focuses on a biography of Nightwish; definitions of both power and symphonic metal; a discussion of Nightwish's idiom and positioning within the genre; and lastly, an exploration of Nightwish's influence on symphonic metal and other bands/musicians.

Since detailed biographical information is readily available on the internet and in *Once Upon a Nightwish: The Official Biography 1996-2006* (2008) by Mape Ollila, the biographical section in this chapter will not be an in-depth study of the band's history. Rather, I provide a summary that outlines their most important milestones up to and including the release of their *Imaginaerum* album in 2011. The short biography also includes the key stylistic elements of the music and self-reported influences on Tuomas Holopainen, the band's main songwriter and sole lyricist.

### **2.1 A short biography of Nightwish**

Nightwish's output may be understood in two phases, namely 1996-2005 and 2007 up to the present. The band's second phase output features new elements that are unique to this phase such as Irish Celtic instruments and a children's choir (see Chapter 1.3). I explore these two phases in section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 respectively.

#### **2.1.1 The first phase (1996-2005)**

Nightwish is the brainchild of songwriter and lyricist Tuomas Holopainen. The idea of a music project was born around a campfire at the Holopainen family's cabin at Lake Pyhäjärvi, Kitee, Finland, in the summer of 1996, although the name "Nightwish" was decided on only later (*Biography* 2015). Holopainen's original idea was to form a band which plays acoustic "mood music" (as he calls it) fronted by a female vocalist (*Biography* 2015). Here, "mood music" refers to music that evokes certain moods or emotions. Philip Tagg uses the term "mood music" to denote music collections composed and produced "in anticipation of film, TV and radio production needs" (Tagg 1982b). The "mood music's" link with film music is significant in terms of Nightwish's

music as Holopainen's aim specifically in the band's second stylistic phase is to produce music that is highly inspired by film music scores. He mentions James Newton Howard, Hans Zimmer and Vangelis as his biggest influences (*Nightwish – Tuomas Holopainen on his top three musical influences* 2013) and in my opinion, Danny Elfman should also be on this list. The founding members of the band are: Tuomas Holopainen (keyboard and piano); Erno "Emppu" Vuorinen (guitar); and Tarja Turunen (vocals).

Nightwish produced their first three-song demonstration recording in 1996, but it "was never officially released" (Ollila 2008:45-46). The songs on the demonstration recording are: "The Forever Moments", "Nightwish" and "Etiäinen". Tuomas Holopainen (composer and lyricist of all three songs of the first demonstration recording) describes these songs as follows:

We just did that three-song demo that turned out pretty nice. Three songs of acoustic guitar, flute, Tarja's vocals, keyboards [...] Two girls, Anni Summala and Anna-Mari Pekkinen, played the flutes. Everything Nightwish originally strived for can be heard on that demo. It was a huge personal accomplishment (Holopainen in Ollila 2008:46).

Holopainen notes that the songs of bands such as The Gathering, The 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Mortal, Children of Bodom, My Dying Bride and Tiamat, inspired Nightwish's earlier songs (Ollila 2008). Stratovarius (a Finnish band) is listed as Holopainen's main musical influence for the *Oceanborn* album (*Biography & facts* 2017).

Drummer Jukka Nevalainen joined the band in early 1997. The band's second full-length demonstration recording – the first album recorded at the new Huvikeskus studio in Kitee – resulted in a record deal with the metal record label, Spinefarm Records and was released in 1997 as their first album, *Angels Fall First* (Ollila 2008:50-51, 53). Their first single, "The Carpenter", was released in Finland on 1 November 1997.

Bassist Sami Vänskä joined the band before the recording of their second studio album, *Oceanborn*. *Oceanborn* was released in 1998 and also features acoustic string instruments and flutes (*Nightwish: Oceanborn lineup* 2016). The album is described as "significantly more powerful and professional" than *Angels Fall First* (*Biography*

2015). With the joining of Jukka Nevalainen on drums, Sami Vänskä on bass guitar and Turunen's operatic vocal style, it also meant that the original idea to make acoustic mood music could no longer be realised. Holopainen explains why the band chose to move from acoustic mood music specifically to metal music:

The acoustic stuff gave way to metal partly because Jukka and Emppu had a metal background and we all dug bands like that [...] Writing only acoustic music got a bit boring in the end. We tried to find more facets to what we were doing. Additionally, we realized that Tarja's voice is so forceful and so dramatic that the contrast is just too extreme – the music must also be grand to suit a voice like that (Holopainen in Ollila 2008:52).

As Holopainen suggests in the quote above, Turunen's operatic voice was the main reason behind the band's intentional shift to power metal (also see Rees 2016; *Nightwish and band member split-ups* 2017). Holopainen considers *Oceanborn* to be their first album, since to him, the *Angels Fall First* album "was meant only as a demo" (*Biography & facts* 2017).

*Wishmaster* was released in 2000 and after the conclusion of the *Wishmaster* world tour, Tarja Turunen appointed Marcelo Cabuli (owner of NEMS Enterprises and Turunen's future husband) as her personal manager. Jouni "Ewo" Pohjola was appointed as Nightwish's manager and Sami Vänskä was dismissed from the band (Ollila 2008:125, 147-151, 153-154). Nightwish released their first DVD (*From Wishes to Eternity – Live*) in Finland in 2001. This DVD contains the band's full concert recorded on 29 December 2000 in Tampere, Finland (Idsøe 2003; *Limited editions of Tampere concert* 2001).<sup>11</sup> The DVD also includes bonus material, e.g. interviews with Holopainen and Turunen, music videos, et cetera.

Marko "Marco" Hietala (bassist and vocalist of the band Tarot), joined Nightwish as a permanent band member for their fourth album, *Century Child*, which was released in 2002 (Rees 2016). The band's second DVD (*End of Innocence*) was released in 2003

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<sup>11</sup> Idsøe writes under the pseudonym "Stormhelm".

and contains (among other things) a documentary, selected songs performed live and music videos.

*Century Child* was followed by *Once* in 2004. The last concert of the *Once* tour was played on 21 October 2005 at the Hartwall Arena in Helsinki. A live DVD was made of the concert and it was released in 2006 under the title *End of an Era*. After the concert, Tarja Turunen was dismissed from the band via an open letter which was also posted on the band's website on 23 October 2005 (Ollila 2008:16-17, 273-274). The departure of Turunen coincided with the conclusion of Nightwish's first phase.

Although the remaining members of Nightwish are associated with other musical projects, the year 2006 can best be described as a hiatus from touring and performing with Nightwish. Even though a new (female) vocalist had not been appointed, 2006 was allocated to the composition of the songs for the next full-length Nightwish album, as well as the search for a new female vocalist.

### **2.1.2 The second phase (2007- )**

Holopainen stated in an interview that the band had time to find a new female vocalist until January 2007 (*Interview with Tuomas Holopainen 2007*). In the same interview, he elaborated on the voice quality that the remaining members were looking for in a female vocalist (*Interview with Tuomas Holopainen 2007*):

The only thing that we knew at that point was that we didn't want to have another similar singer to Tarja. We did not want to have another classically trained, operatic singer because we thought that Tarja did her thing so well. She was really, really good at what she did with her singing, performance and interpretation in her own way that there wouldn't be anybody on the planet who would do it equally good. And even if she would have been really good, she would have always been considered like a cheap copycat of Tarja. So we just felt that the fairest thing to do was to find somebody who would sing in a completely different way, but who would still have the power and the emotion.

It was announced on the band's website on 24 May 2007 that Anette Olzon would replace Turunen as the female vocalist.<sup>12</sup> The first single ("Eva") from the new album *Dark Passion Play* was released on 25 May 2007. According to the official Nightwish website, the single's entire European revenue was donated to a children's charity foundation named "Die Arche" (*Nightwish – First single from upcoming album announced!* 2007). The *Dark Passion Play* album was released on 28 September 2007.

The official release of the second and final album with Olzon, *Imaginaerum*, was on 30 November 2011 in Finland. Olzon was hospitalised during the *Imaginaerum* world tour and thus she could not perform during the American leg of the tour. On 1 October 2012 it was announced on the band's website that Nightwish and Anette Olzon would part ways (Nightwish & Olzon 2012). Floor Jansen (ReVamp and ex-After Forever vocalist) replaced Olzon as a session musician for the remainder of the tour.

10 November 2012 saw the world premiere of the Nightwish movie, *Imaginaerum*, written by Stobe Harju and Tuomas Holopainen and directed by Harju. The film's score includes music from the *Imaginaerum* album, as well as reinterpretations (by Petri Alanko) of songs from the album.

In a press release on 9 October 2013 – which can be found on the band's website – Nightwish stated that the band has become a six-piece band with the (permanent) joining of Floor Jansen as the new female vocalist and Troy Donockley on low whistles, vocals and uilleann pipes. Donockley featured on the albums *Dark Passion Play* and *Imaginaerum* as a session musician.

Nightwish's latest (and eighth) full-length studio album *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* was released on 27 March 2015. This album was the first featuring Floor Jansen as Olzon's replacement. For the purposes of this thesis, the first two albums of the band's second phase (*Dark Passion Play* and *Imaginaerum*) will be examined as both these albums feature the vocal contributions of the same female lead vocalist, namely Olzon.

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<sup>12</sup> "Anette Olzon" is the stage name used by Swedish singer Anette Olsson.



## **2.2 Between a *rock* and a hard place: A definition of power metal and symphonic metal**

Nightwish's first phase can be characterised as symphonic power metal. In this regard, I provide a definition of power metal and symphonic metal in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 respectively.

### **2.2.1 A definition and succinct history of power metal**

Power metal (a subgenre of heavy metal) originated in Europe during the 1990s. It served as a type of "place holder" for traditional metal after its decline in popularity during the grunge period (Dunn & McFadyen 2011) and can be regarded as a "reaction to the harshness of death and black metal" (Kegan 2015:12). Sam Dunn describes power metal as a subgenre that is "based on nostalgia" as it initially served as a revival of traditional metal (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). Since power metal is not an extreme subgenre of heavy metal such as death metal, black metal, metalcore or deathcore, very little research and scholarly attention has been given to the subject (see *Metal studies bibliography* n.d.).

The characteristics of power metal include – but are not exclusive to – the following (Dunn & McFadyen 2011; Kegan 2015:12, 30, 242, 266):

- The hallmarks of traditional metal (extended guitar solos, anthemic choruses and stupendous basslines);
- Clean, usually high-pitched vocals;
- A clearly identifiable melody and the music is very melodic;
- Double bass drumming patterns with accented snare drum beats;
- Double bass drumming with a double kick;
- Large-scale song arrangements; and
- The lyrics and song titles are influenced by history, fantasy and mythology.

A strong link exists between power metal and traditional European culture, with the former drawing strongly on the latter; for example, the utilisation of folklore, poetry and mythology in lyrics and band names (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). The inclusion of fantasy, mythology and poetry in power metal is rooted in traditional metal, since

quotidian references to these themes are made in numerous songs (Sharpe-Young 2007:251; Bukszpan [2003] 2012:43). In this regard, Rainbow vocalist and lyricist Ronnie James Dio played a key role (Dunn & McFadyen 2011; Sharpe-Young 2003:8). Kai Hansen, guitarist, vocalist and founding member of both the bands, Helloween and Gamma Ray, is seen as “the godfather of power metal” (Kegan 2015:10) and he asserts that Ronnie James Dio’s “way of storytelling was really amazing. Everything was left to imagination. It was like painting pictures in someone else’s head” (Hansen interviewed in Dunn & McFadyen 2011).

Deena Weinstein credits Dio with being one of the vocalists (together with Ozzy Osbourne, Geoff Tate, Eric Adams and Rob Halford) who is especially revered for his powerful voice, even though vocalists are considered “a notch lower in the pantheon than lead guitarists” (Weinstein 2000:125-126). This notion that the guitarist is of higher importance is challenged by bands such as Led Zeppelin where the interplay between Jimmy Page (guitarist) and Robert Plant (vocalist) becomes a type of “musical dialogue” (Fast 2001:44-45), and Iron Maiden where the guitar and vocal melodies are interchangeable (Steve Harris interviewed in Dunn & McFadyen 2011).

Power metal musicians developed the role and importance of the vocalist even further with the inclusion of classically trained or influenced singers in bands. The clean, vocal style of power metal singers can be traced back to Judas Priest frontman, Rob Halford (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). Martin Popoff describes Halford as a “classical studied” vocalist (Popoff interviewed in Dunn & McFadyen 2011) and Halford attributes the development of his boundary shifting vocal style to technology – or rather the lack thereof (Halford interviewed in Dunn & McFadyen 2011). He regards the absence of, for example, inner-ear on-stage monitors as a reason for the sheer volume of his vocal lines (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). One can argue that as a “classical studied” singer, Halford is equipped with the necessary technique to adequately project his voice (with the aid of a microphone) over a screaming crowd, drums and guitars and to keep the correct pitch, despite the lack of inner-ear monitors, a scenario that Halford describes in an interview with Sam Dunn (Dunn & McFadyen 2011).

Helloween – a German metal band formed in the 1980s – are considered to be the “founders of German melodic speed metal” (*Helloween: History* 2017). Speed metal is

a metal subgenre that focuses on speed and a more bombastic sound, with ties to the New Wave of British Heavy Metal of the 1980s (Kegan 2015:256). Helloween's formative albums *Keeper of the Seven Keys Part I* and *Part II* are considered to be the most influential albums in modern power metal (*Helloween: History* 2017), contributing to a faster, more aggressive approach to power metal music (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). The band is named as the forerunner of bands such as Sonata Arctica and Stratovarius, both from Finland (Dunn & McFadyen 2011).

Just like the interplay between the electric guitar and vocal lines influenced the soundscape of power metal, the interchangeability of the guitar, and the electronic keyboard laid the foundation for the explosion of the subgenre (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). The two musicians credited with the further development of this combination are Swedish guitarist Yngwie Malmsteen and fellow countryman, keyboardist Jens Johansson (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). Both these instrumentalists are well known for their virtuosity and classical approach to heavy metal music. Malmsteen is heavily influenced by Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Sebastian Bach and Niccolò Paganini (*Legendary rock guitarist cites Paganini, Bach as influences* 2013), while Johansson lists Bach, Beethoven, Bartók and Stravinsky as his main classical influences (Putaux 1999).

The central role of the keyboard and its shared spotlight with the lead guitar and vocals is a key element of songs from Nightwish's first phase. The reason for the keyboard's prominence may be linked to the power metal influences that are audible in Nightwish's first phase songs. In the band's second phase, the keyboard and guitar still feature in most of the songs, but the orchestra shares centre stage with these instruments and the orchestra is even at the forefront at times. Nightwish (with Holopainen as composer), has taken symphonic metal to new heights with the inclusion of a full symphony orchestra that features on all three of their second phase albums to date. The band has also broadened the scope of symphonic metal from metal music with (sometimes superficial) symphonic features to a soundscape where the band and orchestra create what can best be described as well-balanced, integrated "film music metal". The less prominent role of the guitar and keyboard also make room for the inclusion of other instruments that have shaped the soundscapes

of some of the band's songs such as the uilleann pipes, low whistle, tin whistle, violin and the sorna (in "Arabesque").

### **2.2.2 A definition of symphonic metal**

Symphonic metal is a metal subgenre that combines traditional metal music features such as electric guitars, the bass guitar and drum kit, with instruments associated with classical music (Kegan 2015:264). In some instances, as is the case with numerous Nightwish songs, especially from their second phase, an entire orchestra and/or choir features in symphonic metal songs (Kegan 2015:264). The combination with "classical" creates a unique sound that differs from that of traditional metal. When the term "symphonic" is added to the names of other metal subgenres to describe songs that include orchestral or symphonic elements, the term points to a "cross-generic designation" rather than "symphonic" as a subgenre (Kegan 2015:265); for example, symphonic power metal or symphonic black metal. Examples of symphonic metal bands are Dimmu Borgir (symphonic black metal), Epica (symphonic progressive metal and symphonic power metal) and My Dying Bride (symphonic doom metal on the *Evinta* album set).

The incorporation of elements of Western art music is not unique to metal. A number of bands from the 1960s and 1970s (such as Yes, the Beatles, the Moody Blues, Genesis, Pink Floyd and Deep Purple) combined rock and pop elements with instrumentation and arranging practices associated with Western art music (Covach 1997:3), signalling the birth of art rock, progressive rock or symphonic rock – three terms that are often used interchangeably. This fusion of rock and art music afforded a new compositional standard to rock music and instilled the music with a type of classical "seriousness" that is often criticised as pretentiousness (Covach 1997:4). A tenet of this pretentiousness was the (in my opinion, Romantic) notion that this "new" style of music was a "modern" brand of classical music that will be listened to and studied by future generations (Covach 1997:4).

The orchestra also has ties with the notions of opulence, high culture and hierarchical structure. The use of orchestras in film scores can be traced to 1930s Hollywood where film music composer Max Steiner (known for the scores of *King Kong* and *Gone with the Wind* among others) who employed the sound of a full symphony orchestra as a

“luxury, but also a necessity in the 1930s” (Slobin 2008:11). The dominance of the orchestra (a construct with its roots in the past and which emanates a type of historically imbued power) lend studio heads in Hollywood the opportunity to, in turn, imbue their films with a type of dominance through the films scores’ ties with the orchestra and its history (Slobin 2008:11-12:

[F]rom the beginning, the orchestra – the most complex of all musical ensembles – was often explicitly (and even more often, it would probably follow, tacitly) regarded as a social microcosm, a compact mirror of society. The orchestra, like society itself, was assumed to be an inherently hierarchical entity (Taruskin 2005:290).

The way in which the orchestra was incorporated into 1930s Hollywood film scores to lend a type of “dominance” or importance to the films they underscore and represent, reminds of the way in which elements from Western art music was incorporated into popular music to add “seriousness” to the music as I have discussed in previous paragraphs.

Another example of the fusion of art music aspects with popular music is thrash metal band Metallica’s live performance with the San Francisco Symphony in 1999. Nightwish’s use of symphonic elements is not unique metal or even the time period in which the band features, but their incorporation of film music-inspired elements sets them apart from a plethora of other bands in the symphonic power metal subgenre. In fact, their sound palette has changed and evolved so dramatically from their first albums like *Oceanborn* and *Wishmaster* that the band’s power metal roots are almost indistinguishable in the band’s second phase output. However, the band’s lyrical themes like fantasy which are still a key stylistic feature in the band’s second phase songs, still has its roots firmly in power metal ideology (fantasy, make-belief, mythology, joy and positivity).

Instrumentation and arrangement practices are not the only aspects of Western art music that is incorporated into popular music styles. Certain aspects of opera have an influence on rock songs such as the sheer duration of songs and elaborate stage sets in the songs of bands such as Genesis (with Peter Gabriel as lead vocalist). These aspects are also visible in metal in terms of the duration of some metal songs and

elaborate set designs during live shows (for example, the organ pipes or boat that Nightwish displayed during their *Imaginaerum* tours; Covach 1997:4). The temporality of metal songs may also have a link in the endeavour to separate metal from “mainstream” genres like pop as longer songs have a lesser chance of radio play time, signifying “anti-mainstream”, “authentic”, “anti-commercial” and even “exclusive” or “underground”.

Another remnant of opera’s influence on popular music may be located in the vocals of some symphonic metal band’s songs. In some instances, classically trained singers front mainstream symphonic metal (in other words, less extreme symphonic metal than, for example, symphonic black metal which fuses black metal with instrumentation associated with classical music) bands. In the case of classically trained female-fronted bands, in addition to being symphonic in nature, their music may also be labelled “operatic metal” (*Symphonic metal* n.d.). Examples of bands with operatic female vocals are Nightwish (with Tarja Turunen from 1996-2005 and Floor Jansen from 2012 until present), Within Temptation (with Sharon den Adel) and Epica (with Simone Simons). Some female fronted bands include interplay between operatic vocals by a female singer and death growls, usually by a male singer. This technique is referred to as “beauty and the beast” vocals and may be regarded as a sonic feature that supports the traditional notion of gender roles (Weinstein 2016:21; *Symphonic metal* n.d.). Examples of Beauty and the Beast vocals can be found in the music of Epica, After Forever and Nightwish (among others).

Floor Jansen notes that the term “female-fronted” does not give an accurate description of the particular sound of different bands (*Nightwish’s Floor Jansen: It’s about time that people stop referring to bands as “female fronted”* 2015), since there are significant differences between the vocal styles of, for instance, classically trained Jansen and Angela Gossow, previous lead vocalist of the band Arch Enemy. Gossow primarily uses growling as her singing style. Moreover, it does not necessarily follow that classically trained vocalists will sing in an “operatic” style. For example, both Simone Simons (Epica) and Tarja Turunen are classically trained, and their contributions to their respective bands are thus labelled “operatic”. However, the heard effect of their voices differs enormously, as Simons is clearly a trained soprano who

prefers a more “popular” sound approach, while Turunen’s approach and sound is overtly operatic on Nightwish’s first two albums.<sup>13</sup>

Women’s visibility in metal as, in many cases, the “face” of mainstream symphonic metal bands has its roots in the more prominent and active role women played in rock music-making during the 1990s (Weinstein 2016:20). The prominent role of women in symphonic metal suggests a shift in the power and position of women in metal as artists and consumers of the genre. This shift in power is visible in (a) the attire of the majority of women who front these bands and also in (b) what could be described as the general sonic features of more mainstream symphonic metal.

Contrary to the image of the male-dominated metal bands of the 1970s and 1980s as well as the “bitch-goddess” (as Deena Weinstein calls it) image of women in music videos from the 1980s, women in mainstream symphonic metal generally tend to cast themselves as elegantly-dressed heroines (Weinstein 2016:20). Here, the women’s attire and role in the band are not meant for objectification and the male gaze, but rather for the female gaze as these front-women emanate confidence and skill which the female members of the audience may find deeply empowering (Weinstein 2016:20-21).

Nightwish’s former vocalist, Tarja Turunen, is a prime example of this type of image. While she was a member of the band, she usually dressed in long-flowing dresses or coats. In her interview with Sam Dunn on Nightwish’s role in the development of power metal (and specifically symphonic power metal), Turunen points out that she was definitely not the first front-woman in symphonic metal, but that her voice quality (and her considerable skill, which she does not mention) as an operatically trained soprano set her (and also, in my opinion, the band) apart from others in symphonic power metal (Dunn & McFadyen 2011).

Sociologist Sam Dunn credits Nightwish with “pushing power metal all the way to the mainstream” (Dunn & McFadyen 2011). This notion is significant, as it is not only the band’s unique sound that reached mainstream audiences, but also Turunen’s image

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<sup>13</sup> Comparative examples: Sharon den Adel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ifTjdKrTPw>), Simone Simons from timecode 2’46” ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-7X1\\_xolZk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-7X1_xolZk)) and Tarja Turunen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L08l0QbOQ78>).

and position in the band as an equal to her male counterparts. This type of equality in the band reflects women's general shift in power in metal from objects of desire to the post-feminist combination of self-assertion with the notion of a "modern romantic heroin" which underlines that "[mainstream metal's gender play in the new millennium does not reverse metal's traditional gender hierarchy; rather it tends to equalize the balance of power between received roles and their performers (Weinstein 2016:21)].

Although Turunen's image as an equal counterpart and the "face" of band that has its roots in a genre that is traditionally male-dominated and associated with hyper-masculinity may have proven ground-breaking to the band's newfound international fan base, Finland (where the band is from) is known for gender equality (see Miettinen, Basten & Rotkirch 2011:471). The band's choice of having a female lead vocalist possibly has less to do with empowering women than an endeavour to create a sound combination of traditional metal instruments, the "symphonic" keyboard and an operatic soprano to target a (very lucrative) gap in the metal market.

Nightwish's image has, in my opinion, changed with each female vocalist that the band has had. Turunen exuded the image of an ethereal beauty dressed in flowing attire, presenting a visual affirmation of the fantastical and mythical content of the songs' lyrics. Olzon's dress style, while still decidedly feminine, shows a departure from Turunen's, perhaps reflecting the former's personality while also showing a visual and sonic change in the band's attempt at what can best be described as a type of "relaunch" after Turunen's departure. Classically trained, athletic and tall Jansen wears skirts, but these skirts are made of leather, possibly playing into the idea of an "Amazonian"-yet-feminine-type of female strength and power – an image that, at times, contradicts with the band's "folky", Irish Celtic-inspired songs like "Élan" (*Endless Forms Most Beautiful*) and "My Walden" (*Endless Forms Most Beautiful*).

The equal role of women in symphonic metal is (as I mentioned previously) also echoed in the music's sonic features. Weinstein sees this equality in the way in which neither the female vocalist nor predominantly male instrumentalists are dominant (Weinstein 2016:21). The equality of genders in mainstream symphonic metal does not erase the factor of gender within mainstream symphonic metal, but rather echoes



the “acceptance by middle-class men and women of the [positive] changes in women’s position in postindustrial economies” (Weinstein 2016:21).

Nightwish’s blending of aspects of classical music (such as the use of an orchestra) with metal broadens the band’s fan base to include both classical music and metal supporters while the culture-specific traditional instruments (like the sorna, uilleann pipes and Hardanger fiddle) in some of the songs create the possibility for the band to feature in markets that are world music oriented. The band’s image is in line with the general image of mainstream symphonic metal bands to include an equal yet prominent female vocalist which broadens and diversifies the possible audience in terms of gender.

I explore Nightwish’s idiom and their link to power metal in section 2.3.

## **2.3 Nightwish’s idiom**

As stylistic differences are the main reason for the crystallisation of two phases within Nightwish’s output, I explore the main features of their idiom in both of their phases to better illustrate the main developments and changes within each phase. This discussion of songs from their first phase will be provided in section 2.3.1 and their second phase in section 2.3.2.

### **2.3.1 The songs of Nightwish’s first phase (1996-2005)**

As I stated in section 2.1.1 of this chapter, Holopainen’s original idea was to play what he calls acoustic “mood music” (see section 2.1.1). The three songs on the 1996 demonstration recording – despite Turunen’s operatic, “classical” approach to the songs – prove to hold truer to this ideal than any of their subsequent songs. Turunen’s vocal style contributes immensely to set Nightwish’s demonstration recording apart from other examples of “mood music”. Her operatic approach differs greatly from the “light” and almost “transparent” vocal approach of, for example, Enya or Sandra (in some songs of the German new age music band, Enigma).

Turunen’s operatic voice on the first two albums sets the band’s overall sound apart from other symphonic metal bands during the time the albums were first released. The vocals of the songs from the *Oceanborn* album are especially high-pitched and

technically demanding. Overall, the songs on *Oceanborn* pose greater technical challenges than *Angels Fall First*. In an interview during the band's first phase, drummer Jukka Nevalainen explained that "the tempos of songs on *Oceanborn* are very fast which, coupled with a thousand hooks to each song", were challenging for the band to play as they were not very experienced at the time (Nevalainen interviewed in Ollila 2008:76).

Turunen paints a clear picture of the technical demands and difficulty level of *Oceanborn* in her interview with Mape Ollila:

That album – and that whole period in my technical development as a singer – was a lot to deal with [...] there were parts that were just too high or too low [...] some parts, like the end of 'Passion and the Opera' ... Maybe I wouldn't have problems singing that today, but back then – phew. It demanded coloratura singing, you know [...] And 'The Pharaoh Sails to Orion' was extremely difficult as well (Turunen in Ollila 2008:77).

It should be noted that Turunen was around 21 years old at the time *Oceanborn* was recorded and performed live. It is understandable that certain passages may have been technically too demanding at that stage in her development and career. Holopainen admits to the difficulties created by the very high vocal melodies, especially in "Stargazers", claiming that he did not think about the song from the singer's perspective (Ollila 2008:77).<sup>14</sup> Turunen expands her operatic singing by performing a coloratura section in the song "Passion and the Opera" that seemingly resembles the signature passage of the Queen of the Night's aria "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Here, the coloratura passage creates an interesting colour effect and contrasts with the accompanying distorted electric guitar, drum kit and keyboard. In my opinion, this passage represents a type of "Beauty and the Beast" technique, where the growling male voice is substituted with the distorted guitar sound and contrasted with Turunen's clean vocals. Turunen adapted her vocals for *Century Child* in the sense that her

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<sup>14</sup> Holopainen overcame these challenges on later albums with Turunen and further, when the lead vocalist was changed from Turunen to Olzon and later from Olzon to Jansen.

approach is much less operatic than in *Oceanborn*. Holopainen explains that the band's more operatic sound was left behind "three albums" before *Dark Passion Play* (Holopainen interviewed in Kastner 2008), in other words on *Wishmaster*. I do agree that the band's – and more specifically Turunen's – sound is less "intentionally" operatic after *Oceanborn*, but I believe that Turunen's timbre and quality (especially in higher-pitched passages) on *Wishmaster* and onward are still influenced by her classical roots and training.

In keeping with Holopainen's original acoustic music concept, the songs "Angels Fall First", "The Carpenter" and "Once upon a Troubadour" (*Angels Fall First*) have a sound palette reminiscent of "mood music", as well as the band's 1996 recorded songs. Two of the band's later songs (incidentally, both are Irish Celtic-inspired ballads) draw on the "mood music" idea. The song "Turn Loose the Mermaids" from the *Imaginaerum* album sees lengthy sections that mainly the acoustic guitar plays while the low whistle plays interjected melodies. In some sections of "The Islander" (*Dark Passion Play*), the acoustic guitar features prominently.

The inclusion of the electric guitar creates room for new sound possibilities on *Angels Fall First* and all subsequent albums. The electric guitar and keyboard play interchanged solos on *Angels Fall First* (for example, in "A Return to the Sea"). In other songs both the guitar and keyboard play the melody (for example, in "Tutankhamen"), lending equal importance to these instruments. The interplay between the guitar and keyboard developed from the use of "dual guitars" by bands such as Iron Maiden, Scorpions and Judas Priest.

The combination of the guitar and keyboard was taken to a new level of virtuosity by guitarist, Yngwie Malmsteen and keyboardist, Jens Johansson even though they were not the pioneers of this (interchangeable) combination of instruments. Holopainen's primary influence when he was writing the songs for *Oceanborn* was the Finnish power metal band, Stratovarius (*Biography & facts* 2017). This may be a reason for the more dominant role of the keyboard on this album, as keyboard legend Jens Johansson was the keyboardist of Stratovarius during the time that *Oceanborn* was composed. The interplay between the keyboard and guitar is a key feature of many of Nightwish's first

phase songs such as “Gethsemane” and “Sacrament of Wilderness”, reaching a high point in the fast and technically demanding songs “Wanderlust” and “Crownless”.<sup>15</sup>

The increasing importance and integral role of the orchestra on the band’s later albums (*Once* and onwards) have a great influence on the traditional roles and musical “responsibilities” of the guitar, keyboard and other band instruments in Nightwish’s songs. The greater prominence of the orchestra brings about more possibilities in terms of the instrumentation and arrangement of the songs. Other instruments with specific timbres can play solos that are traditionally reserved for the guitar or the keyboard with its synthesised sounds within a band setting and orchestral percussion can add to or substitute the drum kit’s contribution.

However, this does not mean that the solos performed by the keyboard and lead guitar have disappeared altogether. “Ghost Love Score” (*Once*) is a prime example of a song that features and almost exploits the different tone colours and contrasting atmospheres that the interchanges between the orchestra and metal band can create. This song is ten minutes long and the song is – as its title clearly suggests – greatly influenced and inspired by film music. “Ghost Love Score” is not the band’s only large-scale song. Other examples include “Lappi” (*Angels Fall First*); “FantasMic” (*Wishmaster*); “Beauty of the Beast” (*Century Child*); “The Poet and the Pendulum” (*Dark Passion Play*); and “Song of Myself” (*Imaginaerum*).

The existing dialogue (a feature that has its origin in the band’s power metal roots) between the keyboard, lead guitar and two vocalists (who are also sometimes engaged in a musical dialogue of their own) is expanded even further with the inclusion of the orchestra as an entity with many parts that can engage in the interplay between the existing band instruments (including voice), either as a whole or by utilising only specific sections.

The band’s first instrumental track features on the 1996 demonstration recording in the form of the song “Etiäinen”. Since the demonstration recording was never officially

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<sup>15</sup> “Wanderlust”, “Crownless” and “FantasMic” are excellent examples of songs strongly influenced by power metal as all the key features of the subgenre are found in them: the syncopated rhythms with strong accents on traditionally “weak” beats that the drum kit plays; interplay between the keyboard and guitar; and fantasy references in the lyrics and song titles, et cetera.

released, “Etiäinen” comprises the fourth section of the song “Lappi” on the *Angels Fall First* album. “Etiäinen” does not contain lyrics, but Turunen still features in the song. In this context, Turunen’s voice is not employed as a medium to convey meaning by means of the combination of language and sound, but as an instrument. Some of the band’s albums in both stylistic phases contain purely instrumental tracks such as “Witchdrums” (*Angels Fall First*) and a few songs on albums released during the band’s second phase; for example “Last of the Wilds” (*Dark Passion Play*); “Arabesque” (*Imaginaerum*); and “Imaginaerum” (*Imaginaerum*).<sup>16</sup>

Some of Nightwish’s songs borrow elements from other musical contexts. Scale-like passages in C-sharp harmonic minor are used in the song “Tutankhamen” (*Angels Fall First*) to connote an Egyptian soundscape to support the lyrics. This practice to borrow sounds and elements from other music traditions is continued in Nightwish’s second phase, especially on the *Imaginaerum* album. “The Islander” (*Dark Passion Play*); “I Want My Tears Back” (*Imaginaerum*); the ballad “Turn Loose the Mermaids” (*Imaginaerum*); and “Imaginaerum” (*Imaginaerum*) borrow elements from Irish Celtic music while “Arabesque” (*Imaginaerum*) draws on a soundscape inspired by Arabic music that features a woodwind instrument named the mizmār which sounds similar to its Persian counterpart, the sorna (the instrument that features in the Nightwish song).<sup>17, 18</sup> The band does not shy away from using clichés and stereotypes in their songs; in fact, their use of stereotypes is somewhat of a stylistic feature. The type of orientalism suggested by the Irish Celtic elements in the band’s songs as well as the Arabian-inspired “Arabesque” is an example of such stereotyping.

The orientalism in some of Nightwish’s songs and “Arabesque’s” “West meets East” soundscape most probably has its roots in the type of orientalism in some of, for

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<sup>16</sup> A version of “Last of the Wilds” with sung lyrics appears as a bonus track on some editions of *Dark Passion Play*. It is titled “Erämaan Viimeinen” and Indica’s lead vocalist Johanna Salomaa, better known as Jonsu, sings the vocal melody.

<sup>17</sup> Although Nightwish’s 2015 album *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* falls beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that this most recent album also contains Celtic influences, as Troy Donockley has been an official band member since October 2013 (as mentioned in section 2.1.2 of this chapter).

<sup>18</sup> “Turn Loose the Mermaids” is the “only real ballad on the album” (Holopainen interviewed in *Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011).

example, the Beatles songs such as “Norwegian Wood” that features a sitar (Covach 1997:4). This type of orientalism in popular music is, in my opinion, usually rooted in the incorporation of instruments that are associated with music traditions and culture practices outside that of West European music as is the case with numerous Nightwish songs in their second stylistic phase.

Nightwish’s 1996 song “Nightwish” includes the reading of a poem written for the song by Holopainen. The recitation of a poem is not limited to this song in Nightwish’s oeuvre; it can be considered the forerunner of the recitations in “Dead Boy’s Poem” (*Wishmaster*); “The Kinslayer” (*Wishmaster*); the “Christabel” section of “Beauty of the Beast” (*Century Child*); “Bless the Child” (*Century Child*); “Creek Mary’s Blood” (*Once*); and “The Poet and the Pendulum” (*Dark Passion Play*), as well as the extensive poem in “Song of Myself” (*Imaginaerum*). When the lyrical content of these songs is examined closely, it becomes apparent that a recited poem features in both these large-scale songs or in songs that are deeply personal to the composer.

Nightwish’s second phase songs are characterised by soundtrack-like soundscapes which are reminiscent of specific scores by Danny Elfman and Ennio Morricone, but the inclusion of a sound palette more akin to film music (one that features an orchestra, a choir and larger-scale arrangements) had already been introduced during the band’s first stylistic phase. Nightwish’s fourth full-length album, *Century Child* (2002), is described as a concept album. The songs are bound together by the themes of childhood, innocence and the loss of innocence. Holopainen describes the album as follows:

It’s gonna include more of these "soundtrack" elements than ever before, I think. We have always had some soundtrack influences in our music, but now there’s just even more. I also wanna point out that it’s our heaviest album so far [...] Also my lyrics have a bit darker vibe in them as well than before. I deal with more hopeless and darker topics this time around; in fact, the album’s atmosphere is quite dark and oppressive indeed, in my opinion (Lahtinen 2002).

Holopainen credits Hans Zimmer’s music as his main inspiration for writing the songs of *Century Child* that are more reminiscent of film music. Other film score composers

or scores that inspire him are James Newton Howard (specifically *The Village*) and Vangelis (specifically *1492: Conquest of Paradise*).

*Century Child* contains film score elements in songs such as the ten-minute song “Beauty of the Beast”. The film score sound palette is strengthened further by the implementation of the Joensuu City Orchestra (conducted by Riku Neimi), a choir consisting mainly of members of the Helsinki-based St. Thomas choir, as well as the GME Choir. The orchestra and choirs join the band for five of the ten songs on the album, namely: “Bless the Child”; “Ever Dream”; “Forever Yours”; “Feel for You”; and “Beauty of the Beast”.

The choir is introduced in the opening track of the album (“Bless the Child”) and it is awarded a very prominent role in the song. The song starts with the choir singing a *cappella* and this phrase is repeated when the other instruments join in. The choir, Turunen’s melody and the other band instruments are alternated with a poem read by Sam Hardwick, a boy of about 14 whose voice is digitally altered to sound lower and more mature. The song does not end with a perfect cadence in the home key, but instead, the end of the song is used as a bridge to “End of All Hope” – the second track. This transition links the ideas of hope and salvation in “Bless the Child” and hopelessness, sadness and the loss of innocence. The short length of the bridge may also suggest how closely the two are related; how fragile the disseverment between them is and how quick the change is effected from hopeful to hopeless, from innocent to “stained”. The choir also features in other songs on the album; for example, “Beauty of the Beast” and the male voices in the introduction of “Ocean Soul”.

The role of the orchestra is even more prominent as the size of the orchestra is expanded from about 35 musicians to a full symphony orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The orchestra features in nine of the eleven songs on the album. The orchestral arrangements were done by Pip Williams. Williams describes the process as follows:

It was important for me that it would not be just about over-dubbing a few orchestral parts on top of a Rock band [...] Tuomas’ compositions were brilliant also in the sense that the choir and the orchestra could be added naturally, so that they don’t sound pretentious or contrived. This is of the utmost importance.

The songs must be structured so as to allow the orchestra enough space. In the end, the results were quite emotive (Williams quoted in Ollila 2008:226).

And also:

There is always a degree of compromise when mixing a Metal band with a large orchestra, as it's such a huge sound, but all in all, I'm really pleased with the end result [...] The main thing is that we have established a great identity with Nightwish and the orchestra, and our cooperation could be even better in the future (Williams quoted in Ollila 2008:227).

The increasing importance of the role of the orchestra saw an upsurge of possibilities in terms of the creation of contrasting atmospheres, timbres, et cetera. Less emphasis was placed on contrasts between dactyl and anapaest metre in later songs, as great contrasts in different sections of songs could now be created by the orchestra. The band's combination of the longer duration of songs, the orchestra and choir(s) as well as film score elements (which are more pronounced in the band's second phase and show clear influences of composers like Danny Elfman's and Hans Zimmer's scores) within their brand of a metal-symphony-orchestra-hybrid sound, maximises a certain kind of screen music scoring practice and adds an even higher degree of theatricality and bombast to the band's initial power metal sound.

The "heavier" sound (distorted guitar and sometimes drum kit at the forefront; sometimes in conjunction with almost growled vocals) in some songs on the *Oceanborn* album (specifically in songs such as "Nightquest"; "Devil & the Deep Dark Ocean"; "The Pharaoh Sails to Orion"; and "Passion and the Opera") and subsequent albums is achieved through the inclusion of the bass guitar, as well as the more prominent and traditional role of the drum kit on these later albums. Initially, Turunen's operatic vocals, as well as the inclusion of session musician Tapio Wilska (lead vocalist of Finntroll in 1998 and current lead vocalist of Sethian) to provide vocals for the songs "The Pharaoh Sails to Orion" and "Devil & the Deep Dark Ocean", further support this "heavier" sound. Power and "heaviness" ("FantasMic", "Crownless" and "Wanderlust"), as well as precision (the previously stated three songs and "She is my Sin") are key features of most songs on *Wishmaster*. Marco Hietala officially joined the band before the recording of *Century Child* and thus this album not only includes bass



guitar (as Hietala is a bass player), but also a newfound male vocalist in Hietala. “End of All Hope”, “Slaying the Dreamer” and certain sections of “The Wayfarer” are the “heaviest” songs on *Century Child* and are characterised by distorted guitar sounds, as well as Hietala’s screaming vocals in “Slaying the Dreamer”.

Hietala’s ability to utilise contrasting and demanding vocal techniques creates new compositional possibilities such as a duet between himself and Turunen (as in the band’s cover of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “The Phantom of the Opera”) or an interaction between growling and clean, soprano vocals (Beauty and the Beast technique). The interaction between these sound extremes not only serves as an effective colour effect, but may also help to shape the musical meaning of certain phrases in the score or in the lyrics. The band continues the interplay between male and female vocals on all subsequent albums irrespective of which female vocalist is singing.

The main language of Holopainen’s lyrics is English, but some exceptions to this rule are found in Nightwish’s oeuvre. Song lyrics or parts of songs written in other languages include:

- The first section – “Erämaajärvi” – “Lappi” (*Angels Fall First*, 1997);
- The title of the fourth section – “Etiäinen” – of “Lappi” (*Angels Fall First*, 1997);
- “Kuolema Tekee Taiteilijan” (*Once*, 2004);
- The poem read by John Two Hawks at the end of “Creek Mary’s Blood” (*Once*, 2004); and
- The with-lyrics-version of “Last of the Wilds” (*Dark Passion Play*, 2007).

The first three songs mentioned above are in Finnish. According to a section of the conversation about “Creek Mary’s Blood” on the forum of Nightwish’s website, some controversy exists over the actual language in which the poem is read.

### **2.3.2 The songs of Nightwish’s second phase (2007- )**

All references to Nightwish’s second phase in my thesis include the songs and stylistic features up to and including the band’s *Imaginaerum* album. Nightwish’s sixth full-length album *Dark Passion Play*, was released in 2007. The London Philharmonic Orchestra plays in all the songs of *Dark Passion Play* and the choir parts are performed

by Metro Voices, a London-based choir that specialises in the performance of film music (Nightwish 2007a). Just as for *Once*, Pip Williams is the arranger of the orchestral and choral scores.

The songs contain many film score elements (for example, the addition of an acoustic orchestra and a soundscape especially reminiscent of Danny Elfman's scores for some of Tim Burton's Gothic horror fantasy films) and the traditional role of the metal band instruments has changed as I pointed out in section 2.3.1. This change is even more pronounced and exploited in the band's second phase as instruments "borrowed" from other music traditions are a key feature of the band's second phase output. Examples of such "borrowed" instruments are the Irish Celtic instruments especially on the *Imaginaerum* album, the percussion in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" where traditional metal drumming techniques make way for ethnic percussion as the Irish Celtic bodhrán plays a central role in the song and the Iranian (Persian) sorna in "Arabesque" (see *Imaginaerum* 2011:21).

Where the vocal sound of Nightwish's second phase output up to and including *Imaginaerum* is concerned, Olzon's interpretation of Nightwish's songs and timbre is less influenced by classical practices than Turunen's, but this difference in sound creates new compositional possibilities towards composing songs that require a more "popish" sound or even vocal techniques employed by singers associated with musical theatre. The former is audible in "Amaranth" (*Dark Passion Play*), while the latter is developed to its fullest in "Scaretale" (*Imaginaerum*). It should be taken into account that a great deal of expressive detail in popular music is communicated through vocal styles or techniques that are not notated in the score, that is, if sheet music for the relevant song(s) exists in the first place. This notion also holds true for metal music, and possibly even more so than for pop music. A versatile singer thus contributes not only to the overall sound of the band's music, but also to the expressive quality and musical meaning of their songs.

The band's versatility in style is not only audible in the vocalisations of Olzon and Hietala, but is also found in the diverse and contrasting musical styles of the songs on the album. These styles are:

- Film music: “The Poet and the Pendulum” and “Meadows of Heaven” (which also features a gospel choir) is representative of film score elements in Nightwish’s music, for example the Danny Elfman-esque accompaniment figures in “The Poet and the Pendulum”;
- Traditional and neo-traditional Irish Celtic music: “The Islander” exhibits Celtic influences and connotations as it features Celtic instruments such as the bodhrán and the uilleann pipes that session musician Troy Donockley play;
- Metal (“heavier” sound; see section 2.3.1): The “Dark Passion Play” section of “The Poet and the Pendulum and “Master Passion Greed” represent a “heavy” sound where growling-inspired vocals and the band instruments are at the forefront; and
- Other: “Amaranth” is reminiscent of pop music while the introduction of “7 Days to the Wolves” could well have been the introduction to a rap song.

*Imaginaerum* (2011), Nightwish’s seventh full-length album, may be regarded as the culmination of a new sound ideal that had already started to take shape in the songs of *Dark Passion Play*. It is a concept album linked to the band’s film of the same title that tells the story of an elderly composer with dementia whose only memories are flashbacks from his traumatic childhood, while his estranged daughter has to come to terms with her strained relationship with her father, as well as his impending death. Holopainen describes the album as their “most theatrical” album and the one most influenced by film music at the date of its publication since it was designed to either exist as an independent artwork or as an album that accompanies the band’s movie *Imaginaerum* (Holopainen interviewed in *Nightwish: Tuomas presents Imaginaerum to Musica Metal* 2011).

The integral role of the orchestra continues to be a defining characteristic of the band’s newfound sound ideal. *Imaginaerum* was Olzon’s second album with the band (*Dark Passion Play* being her first) which greatly aided the song-writing process as Holopainen had a clearer idea of her vocal capabilities, range and potential. Songs such as “Scaretale” showcase both her and Hietala’s stylistic range.

On *Imaginaerum*, the lead vocal timbre shifts between masculine, feminine, growling, screaming, soft, clean vocals and belting. The opening track (“Taikatalvi”) of the album

is a lullaby which Hietala sings in Finnish and his approach to the vocal melody in this song is significantly different from the “heavier” sound of “Rest Calm” and “Ghost River” or the musical theatre qualities of “Scaretale”. The fourth track on the album – “Slow, Love, Slow” – is inspired by Jazz and the latter style’s influences can be heard in Olzon’s sometimes “breathy” interpretation of the vocal melody. “Ghost River” sees an alternation between the vocals respectively, by Hietala and Olzon, representing a “dual between the Devil and Mother Gaia” (*Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011).

The placement of the Jazz-inspired “Slow, Love, Slow” between the “heavy” song “Ghost River” and the medium-tempo Irish Celtic rock-inspired “I Want My Tears Back” lends “Slow, Love, Slow” special significance. Here, the tempo, instrumentation and overall atmosphere of the song are a stark contrast to the songs heard directly before and after it. Drummer Jukka Nevalainen uses brush strokes to further connote a Jazz sound while guitarist Emppu Vuorinen plays an improvised solo instead of a repeated riff.

“Scaretale” is littered with musical horror references and incorporates circus music, film music and musical theatre elements. The Irish Celtic-inspired ballad “Turn Loose the Mermaids” contains a middle section that Holopainen calls a “Spaghetti Westernish C-part” (Holopainen interviewed in *Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011) and this section relies heavily on the brass section of the orchestra.

“Song of Myself” is greatly inspired by Walt Whitman’s poem of the same title. It is an almost 14-minute song that is divided into four sections. The song contains a six-and-a-half-minute poem read by some of the band’s loved ones and close friends. Holopainen describes the song as the “ultimate personal catharsis” and the long poem is meant to convey the impression that “it’s never gonna stop” (Holopainen interviewed in *Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011).

Nightwish’s more inclusive, universal narrative (Karjalainen 2016:60-61, 66), as well as the idea that the band’s total output does not represent only one subgenre, plays a

cardinal role in the band's perceived accessibility.<sup>19</sup> Another contributing factor may be the choice of a female lead vocalist, especially when Tarja Turunen was selected for this role in 1996 and 1997 with the band's first album release when there were very few female musicians in metal. Turunen's strong, charismatic presence and her central role in the band during the late 1990s and early 2000s played a role in redefining women's role in metal in general from sexualised "groupies" to active, "equal" musicians within the current metal community.

Karjalainen asserts that the personal experience of the songs weighs very heavily on Nightwish fans, but despite the individualistic emotional experiences, the music and the Nightwish world (the band's self-created mythology), inspire strong feelings of belonging and give comfort especially by addressing feelings of loneliness (Karjalainen 2016:66).<sup>20</sup> These feelings of belonging (to a tribe) are achieved by means of connecting with others through key narrative characteristics that fit within the larger Nightwish mythology and narrative (2016:66). Karjalainen points out that the Nightwish "tribe" is not a typical metal community as their fandom does not consist of exclusively metal fans, and many of their supporters do not consider themselves to be "metalheads" (2016:69).

## **2.4 Nightwish's contribution to metal and their influence on other bands**

Nightwish is credited as being an inspiration to the following bands:

- Visions of Atlantis from Austria;
- Sonata Arctica from Finland (*Sonata Arctica interview 2007*); and
- After Forever from the Netherlands (Elliot 2004).

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<sup>19</sup> Tarja Turunen elucidates this point by underlining the idea that supporters at both ends of the metal and classical spectrum (Dunn & McFadyen 2011) enjoy Nightwish's music.

<sup>20</sup> Karjalainen (2016) specifically focuses his research on the *Imaginaerum* album, but his conclusions hold true for the band's entire output. The 2002 *Century Child* album songs, in particular, have many references to loneliness. Examples of first phase songs that allude to or reference loneliness are: "Gethsemane" (*Oceanborn*); "Swanheart" (*Oceanborn*); "Wishmaster" (*Wishmaster*); "Crownless" (*Wishmaster*); "Dead Boy's Poem" (*Wishmaster*); "Bless the Child" (*Century Child*); "Dead to the World" (*Century Child*); "Forever Yours" (*Century Child*); "Nemo" (*Once*); and "Romanticide" (*Once*).

The band's greatest accomplishments and contributions lie in their expansion of the typical power metal (and ultimately, heavy metal) soundscape by composing songs with added "classical bombast" (Dunn & McFadyen 2011), initially featuring the vocal contributions of a classically trained full-lyric soprano, then expanding the songs' soundscapes into a palette reminiscent of film scores and lastly, by including features of Celtic and Arabic music in their songs. Their addition of a gospel choir ("Meadows of Heaven"), children's choir and mixed voice adult choir contributes to the multi-layered or "heavy" sound in some songs ("Last Ride of the Day", "Song of Myself") or horror in "Scaretale".

Although the keyboard with all the sound possibilities it can create is a standard feature of symphonic power metal, Nightwish – "genre-defining metal pioneers" (Sharpe-Young 2007:274) – pushed the boundaries of the subgenre by changing the scope of arranging, instrumentation, performance and sound possibilities with the inclusion of an acoustic orchestra and more specifically, with their shift in sound palette to be reminiscent of the film music scores by, for example, Danny Elfman, Ennio Morricone and Hans Zimmer.<sup>21</sup> The addition of the symphony orchestra may not be unique to Nightwish's music within the scope of symphonic power metal, but the soundtrack quality to their songs set them apart from bands such as Epica, After Forever, Rhapsody of Fire or Delain. Tarja Turunen's operatic vocals during the band's first phase contribute significantly to their unique sound during this phase. Even though the line-up of the band changed several times during the band's career, it seems that the best vocal qualities the new female vocalists contributed are almost exploited by Holopainen to add to the band's ever evolving soundscapes.

In this chapter, I outlined and discussed key features of Nightwish's idiom. In the following chapter (Chapter 3) I discuss the analysis of metal and provide a detailed description of Tagg and Moore's music analytical models that I employ to analyse the selected Nightwish songs which, in turn, comprise Chapters 4-7.

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<sup>21</sup> Nightwish's boundary-pushing contributions in terms of symphonic power metal do not, of course, erase similar contributions in other metal subgenres, such as Metallica's inclusion of the San Francisco Symphony on their *S&M* album.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter comprises two main sections, namely (1) popular music analysis and the musical analysis of metal; and (2) an overview of the analytical models selected to aid in the musical analysis of Nightwish's songs. In the first section, I discuss popular music analysis, the contributions to metal scholarship in general, and the key contributors who laid the foundation for musicological research within the field. In the second section, I provide an overview of the selected methods I utilise to analyse selected songs from two of Nightwish's most recent full-length albums (that will comprise the next chapters of my thesis), namely *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011).

### 3.1 Popular music analysis and the musical analysis of metal

Metal scholarship has grown significantly over the last two decades and – as a reverberation of the “new musicology” – the field incorporates knowledge and approaches from other fields to broaden the scope of research. Furthermore, the study of metal's inherent interdisciplinary nature has roots in a “politics of representation” very similar to that of queer studies, black studies and women's studies:

[Deena] Weinstein compares metal studies to women's studies, black studies, American studies, and queer studies, suggesting it arises out of a similar political ferment over the politics of representation. As such, metal studies is not a paradigmatic science but a study of a “content area”, one that applies multiple disciplines, multiple methods, and multiple theoretical paradigms to a particular content (Brown et al. 2016:10-11).

This inclusive, broad-ranged approach to the investigation of metal makes ample room for contextual research. The output within metal scholarship includes a wide range of studies that focus on the sociological and anthropological dimension of the music, the fan bases and metal scenes around the world, mythology, religion, gender and studies that investigate the reception of metal. The great diversity in the characteristics of metal music often brings about disagreements over which bands can be labelled as metal bands and subsequently, over which music should be included in the broad definition of metal (see Smialek 2008:16). This means that one scholar might define

the output of a band to be outside of metal's genre boundaries and exclude it from their research, while others argue for its inclusion. Authors who have made significant contributions to metal scholarship include (among others) Robert Walser, Deena Weinstein, Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, Laura Taylor, Susan Fast, Imke von Helden, Gerd Bayer, Andy Brown, Keith Kahn-Harris, Toni-Matti Karjalainen and Niall W. Scott.

The number of studies on metal music has increased exponentially over the past few years (see Introduction), but the overwhelming majority of studies do not place significant emphasis on the sonic dimension of metal songs. The 2016 book *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies* (edited by Andy R. Brown, Karl Spracklen, Keith Kahn-Harris and Niall W.R. Scott) gives a good idea of the type of research that is currently undertaken in metal scholarship, as suggested by the book's title. The editors of this aforementioned publication (see Brown et al. 2016:11) echo Keith Kahn-Harris's earlier claim that musicological metal research is still greatly neglected:

This increasing distance from other forms of music scholarship is manifested in what is undoubtedly the most critical weakness in metal studies as it stands: the relative paucity of detailed musicological analyses on metal. There have been very few studies of metal that have anywhere near the same level of musicological detail as appears in Robert Walser's now quite dated work (1993; Kahn-Harris 2011:252).

In this regard, *Global Metal Music and Culture* includes a section titled "Metal Musicology" comprising three chapters that respectively deal with the musicological examination of compositional structures in some Black Sabbath and Judas Priest songs, how 1980s metal guitarists' approach to playing and composing show influences of neo-classical art music and lastly, the role of the sound engineer in the definition of the timbral characteristics of classic heavy metal (Brown et al. 2016:12).

Possible explanations for the relatively small number of musicological writings that include (detailed) musical analyses of the sonic or other musical aspects of metal music were provided in the Introduction, where I show how the development of metal scholarship was brought in line with the development of the "new musicology" and



popular music scholarship in general. The field of musicology's inclusion and borrowing of approaches from other disciplines in order to be more intertextual and inclusive, brought about new research possibilities. Popular music (in broad terms), tends to be approached mainly as a social construct, and although this is a crucial and much needed outcome of the "new musicology", music's capacity to communicate and critique through its sonic parameters as an art form is still grossly neglected, especially in metal studies.

This practice is possibly borrowed from the field of ethnomusicology where – according to Wim van der Meer – the focus of the research and researcher is on music as a cultural construct, rather than music as art (Van der Meer 2005:64). Peter Brooks notes a similar tendency in literary studies and states that the aesthetic is constantly undermined by the ideological and political, thus reducing the aesthetic to a "mask for the ideological ... [ultimately] losing a sense of the functional role played by the aesthetic within human existence" (Brooks 1994:517). Markus Verne underlines the connection of both "art" music and popular music to the aesthetic as follows:

Music is an art that mediates sounds as well as experiences, and even if it is difficult to understand how music actually achieves this and what the true nature of these experiences is: The aesthetic experience of sound is music's core aspect, and each and every approach to music, popular as well as classical, needs to acknowledge its quality if it does not want to risk missing what music is about in the first place (Verne 2013:1).

Recent developments in Western art music studies refocus on the investigation of music in such a way that interdisciplinary approaches and schools of thought are still available to the scholar, but the importance of the musical sounds are readdressed to produce music studies where *music* is the topic. Susan McClary drew attention to the issue with the exclusion of musical material in popular music studies more than twenty years ago in her statement that "the study of popular music should also include the study of popular *music*" (McClary 1994:38; my italics). What can clearly be gathered from her statement is that the study of popular music should include a study of the soundscapes of songs. Including the sonic dimension does not have to come at the expense of contextuality as this would be a step in the opposite (equally counterproductive) direction and would result in distorted readings of the musical text

and other sonic aspects, as the one is dependent upon and influenced by the other. The same holds true for the musical analysis of metal.

Richard Middleton also brought the lack of attention to the soundscapes of songs into the spotlight during the early 1990s (Middleton 1993:177). The shift in focus to include soundscapes in academic work that contextually situate these soundscapes can also be seen in popular music studies. Susan Fast (2000:40) acknowledges the contributions of Robert Walser, John Shepherd, David Brackett, Steve Waksman, Sheila Whiteley, Richard Middleton, Paul Théberge, Timothy Taylor, Adam Krims, and Susan McClary to this new direction within popular music studies; Philip Tagg and Allan F. Moore's work should also be added to this list.

Any endeavours to reach a middle ground between focusing on the aesthetic and ideological or political aspects of music and music-making or "musicking", as Christopher Small (1998) calls it, necessitate suitable analytical modes of inquiry. In the initial phase of popular music analysis, models from Western art music theory were utilised. Their use can be explained by researchers' desire to employ music theory to understand the structures found in popular music and since many popular music scholars were/are already familiar with that system, it seemed/seems like a logical and valid choice. On the other hand, traditional theoretical methods of analysis were applied to popular music to legitimise the academic interest in the subject (Walser 1993:58-59; Walser 2000:35). Nevertheless, traditional music analytical methods fall short in the musical analysis of popular music or the experience thereof.

In this regard, Philip Tagg specifically points to the problem that emerges when the focus of popular music analysis is on the notated score, as popular music was/is never meant to be primarily consumed or stored in the form of a printed score (1982a:41). Moreover, formal music analysis places too much emphasis on aspects such as the song's form structure, themes and thematic construction, et cetera (Tagg 1982a:42). For Richard Middleton, traditional music analytical methods prove inadequate when applied to the type of popular music studies where analytic decisions are governed by the "experience of somatic movement" (1993:180).

In an effort to avoid using "formal"/traditional musical analysis in popular music studies, popular music scholars are cautious of focusing exclusively on musical "score detail"

(whether seen on an actual printed score or heard and transcribed). This said, their reservations do not lessen the necessity to include musical analysis in popular music research. Adam Krims acknowledges the “suspicion” brought on by the history of music theory and analysis, but he claims that the *need* for music analysis is not diminished by musicologists’ apathy towards and scepticism of theory and analysis (Krims 2000:18).

Susan Fast also argues in favour of music analysis:

Analysis matters to me and the musicologists I have named because we believe that important cultural work is being undertaken through the sounds of popular music, not exclusively through lyrics, dress, attitude, artist biographies, or the subcultural activity that might emerge around a style of music. Musical sounds, in fact, work in tandem with these other attributes as a very important site of social meaning [...] (Fast 2000:41-42).

Fast’s argument gives credit to the valuable research that has been done on popular music subcultures, artist biographies, et cetera, but her argument places special emphasis on the cultural importance of an investigation into the soundscapes of popular music (and also metal music) within a contextual approach to music scholarship.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the “close reading of music” (see Krims 2000:18) should be broadened to include a close reading of the soundscapes of popular music. Traditional analytical models limit the sonic parameters that are not included in the written score, which leads to a call for other approaches that do allow for the investigation into features of a song that do not appear in the score. Scholars who have made significant contributions to the development of analytical models that include the analysis of features that do not appear in the score are: Allan F. Moore, Philip Tagg, Richard Middleton and David Brackett. Examples of other mainstream scholars who also

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<sup>22</sup> The musical analysis of popular music has the potential to alienate a large number of popular music scholars and fans alike. A possible solution may be to relay the insights gained from these analyses in a more approachable way (without compromising the integrity of the analytical endeavours) to scholars and a wider spectrum of readers who possibly possess an encyclopaedic knowledge of the band(s) in question, their music and their fan base, but who do not have the necessary music training to productively use the insights gained through rigorous musical analysis.

include musical analysis in their work are: Susan McClary, Nicolas Cook, John Shepherd, Walter Everett and John Covach.

A deeper understanding of popular music's structures and sounds will enable the researcher to better understand *how* music communicates what it communicates and ultimately *how* it means what it means or, as Tagg summarises it, "how music communicates what to whom" (Tagg [2012] 2013:113, 146; Tagg 1982a:40). The "how" in the previous sentence does not only refer to the obvious communication of ideas through, for example, the lyrics but also speaks to the way in which musical gestures (such as the sonic features of a song that are not notated) are used to convey meaning.<sup>23</sup> Within this context, the breath taken by a vocalist at an unusual place in the phrase, the guitar set to produce a distorted sound at a specific moment, et cetera, is not only crucial to the enjoyment of the performance by an audience but also to the overall meaning of the song. The "how" also has to do with what Tagg calls "parameters of expression" ([2012] 2013:22), which can be defined as "structurally identifiable factors determining how music sounds and what it potentially communicates" (Tagg [2012] 2013:22).

Middleton's call for a "theory of rhythm" emphasises another musical aspect that was not included in traditional musicological analysis methods of the time (Middleton 1993:177). The analysis of the sometimes very small musical gestures is vital in the process towards the understanding of songs, their context and their meaning.<sup>24</sup> Moore and Tagg's models include these gestures and also leave room for the initial findings to be further informed by their context. Analysis, in the broad sense, not only sheds light on structure, melody, timbre, rhythm, harmony, et cetera, but also on the creative process itself, as well as the music's link to technology and commerce (*Pop music analysis* n.d.). This also holds true for metal music.

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<sup>23</sup> Wilfrid H. Mellers has noted as early as 1973 that "written notation can represent neither the improvised elements nor the immediate distortions of pitch and flexibilities of rhythm which are the essence (not a decoration) of a music orally and aurally conceived" (Mellers 1973:15 quoted in Middleton 1990:112).

<sup>24</sup> Musical gestures in the performance of songs are not autonomous. They are part of and maintain a systematic integrity (Middleton 1993:178).

Musical gestures (with their affective, cognitive and kinetic implications) in the performance of metal music not only contribute to the overall enjoyment of the experience by an audience, but convey cues as to their meaning within a specific context. Scott Burnham summarises (à la Allan Keiler) that “music can act, viably, as a description of itself” (Burnham 1996). It follows that the self-described meaning of the whole (the songs) is greatly elucidated through the analysis of its constituent parts by means of investigative tools that are specifically designed to do so. The musical analysis of metal music is not simply legitimate and feasible; it is highly informative and necessary. The investigation of the musical aspects of metal should be included as part of a more contextual approach to metal studies. Philip Tagg highlighted the need for and value of a contextual approach to popular music studies as early as the 1980s (Tagg 1982a:44).

This contextual approach does not necessarily exclude the musical score (if it exists at all with regards to popular music); in fact, a contextual approach leaves room to utilise the score as another, contributing tool to aid in the exploration of the contextual meaning of songs and should not be excluded as part of an “either-or” strategy. In this regard, the existence of a score or “piano and voice”-transcriptions is greatly genre-dependent. The existence of a score depends greatly on *how* the songs were composed. It is widely known that many bands have a band member who acts as the main songwriter, while other bands compose their songs as a group in an almost improvisational fashion while “jamming” as it is colloquially known by musicians and fans alike. As such, the vast majority of metal songs are not notated.

In rare cases, typically where an orchestra is involved, the improvisation possibilities for the orchestra members – although not necessarily for the band – are reduced significantly, since there are many melody lines and harmonies to consider. This phenomenon is mostly subgenre bound and is the case with some symphonic metal songs where a full orchestra is employed instead of an electronic keyboard. In these instances, the music is notated for the orchestra members and thus a master score exists for these songs. In the case of Nightwish, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Metro Voices choir play an integral role in the songs of their second phase. Therefore, orchestral and choir scores exist for these songs, although these scores have never been published and are not accessible to the public. In this regard,

composer Tuomas Holopainen and arranger Pip Williams kindly agreed to full access to these scores for the purposes of my thesis. As explained previously, these scores will be utilised as a type of shorthand for the realisation of performance.

The next question that arises after the value and constructiveness of popular music analysis and heavy metal analysis specifically, has been established, is: who should undertake the task? Since the study of popular music has its roots in cultural studies, it is understandable that many researchers on the topic hail from the fields of anthropology, sociology or ethnomusicology. With the closing of the gap between “high” and “low” musics and the methodological approaches that govern their examination as a consequence of the reconfiguration of the discipline of musicology to include ethnomusicological studies (Born 2010:208, 242), as well as the self-examination process that redefined the discipline of Western art music theory (Neal 2005), the academic interest in the analysis of popular music gained momentum.

Many analytical popular music studies were/are undertaken by a group of academics that Middleton calls “scholar-fans” (Middleton 1993:180).<sup>25</sup> This group of researchers is professionally trained music scholars who find themselves attracted to and represented by popular music and thus their academic interest is firmly grounded in their love of the type of music: it “*is* their music” (Middleton 1999/2000:78). “Scholar-practitioners” such as Adam Krims are music scholars who also contribute to the music they study by acting as producers, participating musicians, et cetera (Walker 2001).

The development of investigative tools that are specifically designed to analyse the musical content of popular music also made this type of music more approachable and “interesting” to previously traditional mainstream musicologists. Middleton explains why he believes that it is essential for intellectuals to enter the field of popular music studies and consequently, its analysis. He provides the following reasons (1999/2000:79):

- It is a legitimate and essential field of study;
- It requires a position “on the far side” of vernacular knowledge; and

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<sup>25</sup> Numerous metal scholars are “scholar fans” and their encyclopaedic knowledge and insights of metal scenes and bands is a great advantage.

- The ramifications for musical studies as a whole are profound.

Understood in its historical context, Middleton's aim is not to re-establish power hierarchies between "high" or "low" musics within the field of musicology, neither does he underestimate the value and knowledge of the so-called "scholar-fan" who, in my opinion, could be regarded as a middle-ground between the two proposed "opposites" on either sides of "vernacular knowledge" since "[m]etal studies scholars are ideally placed to stimulate spaces within metal for some kind of scholarly reflection" (Kahn-Harris 2011:253). Furthermore, Middleton is defending the study of popular music as a legitimate intellectual endeavour, worthy of scholars' time and resources, with his argument and "reasons" meant as an encouragement for music scholars to become involved in the study and analysis of popular music.

When comparing the examples of music analysis in the existing contributions to metal music analysis – Walser's contributions aside – to what has been done in terms of musical analysis in the broader field of popular music studies (for example, the work of David Brackett, Philip Tagg or Allan F. Moore), it becomes clear that much less extensive analyses have been done in metal scholarship specifically, than in popular music studies in general. A possible explanation for this phenomenon may be rooted in the obvious: that metal scholarship is a relatively new field of study. The field as such had to be established first, all while keeping up with the then "contemporary" changes in musicology in general to include knowledge and approaches from other fields such as philosophy, sociology, linguistics, anthropology and psychology. Another explanation may be rooted in the shift in academic interest and focus from "local" cultures and activities to a more complex, differentiated view as a type of resistance to Western hegemony. In this way it ignores the study of metal in favour of "studies of the global-local impact of hip-hop, punk, and electronic dance music subcultures, scenes, and neo-tribes" (Brown et al. 2016:3).

Despite the neglected musicological investigation into metal, some research within metal scholarship does in fact include a closer examination of these aspects of metal music. Examples of musicological research and writings of scholars who examine the musical aspects of metal or whose work include musical analyses, are (among others)

the work of Robert Walser, Glenn Pillsbury, Esa Lilja (2004), Susan Fast and Andrew Cope.<sup>26</sup>

Walser is regarded as a pioneer in the field of (contextual) musicological research on metal. His (1993) methodology relies mostly on socially grounded conventional musical analysis and contextual references. Susan Fast describes Walser's *modus operandi* as follows:

First and foremost, it begins to demystify musical sound by linking the various ways in which it is structured in specific genres and/or songs to the social. Some traditional analytical techniques that are pitch-centred are used, but these are combined with new approaches that aim to deal with other elements of the music (Fast 2000:49-50).

In contrast to other analytical methods developed for popular music (for example, those of Tagg, Moore, Brackett and Middleton), Walser applies his method *specifically* to metal music.

The necessity of musicological research on the soundscapes of popular music holds especially true for metal scholarship today. Similar to the call in the 1990s for readdressing sounds in popular music studies in general, "we need to find ways of understanding the socially grounded rhetorical devices by means of which [metal] music creates its intersubjective effects; otherwise, the medium remains privatized and mystified, impervious to cultural criticism" (McClary 1994:32). After more than two decades of writing about metal music and almost a decade after metal studies' establishment as a discipline in its own right exemplified by an ever growing number of studies, articles and popular writings, metal scholarship should include a more detailed focus on the soundscapes of the songs examined. In other words, it should not simply "keep up" with music scholarship in general, but also to move forward in the

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<sup>26</sup> Walser's 1993 publication was the first musicological contribution to metal music scholarship and it remained the only musicological exploration of metal until 2001 with the publication of Susan Fast's *In the Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music* and 2006 when Glenn T. Pillsbury published his book *Damage Incorporated: Metallica and The Production of Musical Identity*. Erik Smialek (2008:12) provides both these dates since the inclusion or exclusion of Fast's study as part of metal scholarship depends on the genre definition of metal, meaning that some bands might be excluded by some authors/scholars on the grounds that they are, in their opinion, hard rock bands and not metal bands.



endeavour to better understand the particular music it aims to serve and to use tools that can aid to an improved description of what the receiver hears and experiences.

My study aims to contribute to this exploration of the possibilities that the inclusion of popular music soundscapes could create by investigating the music of selected Nightwish songs from two of Nightwish's most recent studio albums, namely *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011). To date, no study includes an in-depth, contextual musical analysis of Nightwish's songs. In this regard, I utilise the analytical method developed by Tagg ([2012] 2013) to explore the sonic features that construct the respective soundscapes of the selected songs. Tagg's method encompasses strategies to identify and analyse the poietic and aesthetic aspects of the soundscape that aid in communicating musical meaning from the emitter to the receiver.

As my thesis focuses on hypothetical performances in the form of recorded album tracks, I examine (among other things) the way in which studio-generated sound effects affect the aesthetics of the relevant sections and how the aural staging of voices and instruments inform the songs' or sections' meaning. I also use Allan F. Moore's visual representation of the *soundbox* in Chapter 5 and 7. Section 3.2.2 of this chapter comprises my discussion of Moore's conceptualisation of the *soundbox*.

### **3.2 An overview of the analytical models selected to aid in the musical analysis of Nightwish's songs**

The rationale behind the musical analysis of Nightwish's songs and the inclusion of the score is located in the need to better understand their music in a contextual sense, to explore what their music communicates, as well as how it is communicated. With this aim in mind, it will prove most fruitful to employ a variety of appropriate existing analytical methods and to create a hybrid method that is suitable for the music to be studied. This chapter shows how two complementary models serve as a means to investigate Nightwish's songs contextually. In this regard, I explain the employed models developed by Philip Tagg and Allan F. Moore in greater detail in section 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, while I briefly illustrate the application of Tagg's model by means of an example from Nightwish's oeuvre in section 3.2.3.

Keeping in mind that many of the selected Nightwish songs are reminiscent of certain kinds of film music (such as Danny Elfman's scores for some of Tim Burton's films and Ennio Morricone's scores for Sergio Leone's *Dollars*-trilogy), a valid observation concerning the choice of analytical methods would be that no methods specifically designed for the analysis of film music are included in the list for my study. The reason that I deliberately exclude these models is quite simply that although some Nightwish songs are reminiscent of film music, they were not composed to *be* film scores. As part of the band's studio album, they were not composed to be read together with visual material in the form of a film, although sections of some songs do appear in the *Imaginaerum* film's score. Of course, some songs from the *Imaginaerum* album were composed for specific moments in the band's full-length film with the same title, but these songs were also composed with the release of an album with a dual purpose in mind: an album that could function as a soundtrack to the film to be consumed together with visual cues and as an independent full-length audio album by (first and foremost) metal musicians to be consumed without specific visual cues. My study focuses on the album and not on the band's film or music videos.

Even though the album recordings of the Nightwish songs that I analyse do not have video footage of the different events of musicking, I argue (in the way of Middleton 1993:178), that a performance is the realisation of gestures and as such, an audio recording is also a type of performance. In this regard, Allan F. Moore refers to recordings as "virtual performances", since many recordings are performances that "never took place, or never could take place" (Moore 2005). I use the term "hypothetical performance" to describe the recorded performances of songs on a studio album.

For the purposes of my study, I view the songs on the relevant Nightwish albums as hypothetical performances, since the albums contain a compilation of musical performances or "events" (Small 1998:9) that are performed in a specific place, at a specific time and made up of a multitude of gestures, even though the element of time is not confined to a single "take" of a song as with a live performance.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>27</sup> Christopher Small refers to musical performance as "events" (1998:9) to underline the notion that music is an activity and not simply a "thing" (1998:2).

I do not approach the recordings of songs that I have selected as *the* performance of the songs that may be deemed more important than other performances, but as a performance of the songs.

In the remainder of this section 3.2, I investigate the analytical models proposed by Tagg and Moore. As I explained in the Introduction and have maintained in this chapter, certain aspects of musical performance (such as timbre, breaths taken by vocalists, pitch inflections, et cetera) are not notated or even indicated in the score. Regardless of the absence or presence of a score, however, if such aspects are to be subjected to analysis, they would need to be approached in a non-traditional fashion. Tagg's and Moore's models provide analytical tools that facilitate (among other things), the investigation of these non-notated elements that play a vital role in the construction of meaning and the reception of communicated musical cues during a performance, whether live or hypothetical, in the form of a studio album.

### **3.2.1 Philip Tagg's method**

Philip Tagg is a British musicologist who has published numerous books and articles on popular music, as well as music semiotics. He is a co-founder of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. Tagg views the study of popular music as an interdisciplinary practice (1982a:40) and he explains the importance of a contextual approach to music analysis as follows:

Indeed, it should be stated at the outset that no analysis of musical discourse can be considered complete without consideration of social, psychological, visual, gestural, ritual, technical, historical, economic and linguistic aspects relevant to the genre, function, style, (re-) performance situation and listening attitude connected with the sound event being studied (Tagg 1982a:40).

After making his argument in favour of a more inclusive and interdisciplinary study of music, Tagg, like some of his contemporaries, asserts that (traditional) musicological "content analysis" is mostly absent or underdeveloped in popular music studies. His analytical *modus operandi* is a hermeneutic-semiological method, designed specifically to bridge this gap; it is meant to be the "missing link" he refers to between musical analysis and a sociological imprint within a contextual framework.

Tagg provides a summary of musical parameters and factors that should be considered during analysis as a starting point to the discussion and explanation of his method (see Tagg 1979:68-70). He summarises this “checklist” with main points and examples as follows (1982a:47-48):

- Time: tempo, metre, rhythmic texture, duration of sections within the music being analysed (or the “AO”, the “analysis object”), et cetera;
- Melodic aspects: timbre, register, tonal vocabulary, contour, pitch range, et cetera;
- Orchestration: instruments, parts, phrasing, type and number of voices, et cetera;
- Tonality and texture: tonal centre, type of tonality, chord alterations, harmonic idiom and change, et cetera;
- Dynamics: sound strength levels, accents, et cetera;
- Acoustics: venue, reverberation, “extraneous” sound, et cetera; and
- Electromusical and mechanical aspects: distortion, delay, muting, mixing, filtering, mechanical aspects pertaining to the performance by the instrumentalist/vocalist, et cetera.

The shortened list of musical parameters above encompasses 43 features in total that can be identified in any musical example. Anahid Kassabian avers that it is exactly this list of parameters that demonstrates how Tagg’s work differs from the work of other semioticians, as it provides a means by which to analyse every aspect (including technological manipulation) of a “moment” or event in the music being examined (Kassabian [2001] 2002:24-25).<sup>28</sup> This diverse list makes Tagg’s method of analysis more inclusive and contextual than traditional analysis, as it examines all aspects that contribute to and affect musical meaning (Kassabian [2001] 2002:25).

Tagg identifies eight types of paramusical expression that include aspects such as sound effects, accent, dialect, timbre, voice type, programme notes, subtitles, font, layout, props, gestures, clothing and make-up, types of movement and specifications

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<sup>28</sup> Kassabian is a former student of Tagg and she regularly credits him as one of the scholars who has significantly influenced her research (see Nikoghosyan 2014).

surrounding the performance such as the audience, venue and the location of the performance ([2012] 2013:270). It is clear from this extensive list that many features mentioned here were included in the analysis of a live performance. Depending on the genre or style, performances can take place in venues that range from large stadiums, small restaurants, clubs, auditoriums, to street corners and even abandoned slaughterhouses.

In this context, performers' physical gestures such as swinging a fist in the air or kneeling on stage, clothing and images used in sometimes large-scale multimedia productions have an importance that is irrelevant to the analysis of a hypothetical performance in the form of an album recording. As the focus of my thesis is on two studio albums, the aspects linked to the analysis of live performances mentioned here will not play a role in my analyses of the selected Nightwish songs.

Returning to Tagg's "checklist" as the first step of his analytical model, the parameters he describes serve as a guideline in terms of the accurate description of *musemes* and ultimately *museme stacks*.<sup>29</sup> Tagg defines *musemes* as "minimal units of expression in any given musical style" (1982a:48) and a "structural item with semiotic properties in music" ([2012] 2013:231). His definition of *musemes* differs from that of musicologist Charles Seeger's (1886-1979), in the sense that Seeger's *musemes* are ternary music morphemes, a "set of basic patterns of musical design or moods of music logic" specific to "occidental music" (Seeger 1977:76). In contrast, Tagg's definition of the term encompasses other musics besides the "occidental".

Following the identification of the parameters and sound effects in the AO, is an investigation into the establishment of melody/accompaniment relationships. This step entails a closer examination of *museme stacks* and its characteristic hierarchical dualisms consisting of: (1) the relationship between the accompaniment and the melody; and (2) the relationship between the bass and other voices of the accompaniment (Tagg 1982a:53). Next, larger patterns within the musical process (or

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<sup>29</sup> It is a "vertical cross-section through an imaginary score" (Tagg 1982a:53) or the "syncritic" aspect of musical form" (Tagg [2012] 2013:385).

“PMP”) are analysed which, in terms of the *modus operandi*, has the largest overlap with traditional (formal) harmonic analysis (1982a:58).

Tagg notes that the analysis of intra-musical features such as thematic germination and developments in popular music are further compounded by the addition of extra-musical factors (lyrics or images), when the extra-musical elements are incongruent with the intra-musical (1982a:59). The establishment of the intra-musical processes and their relative incongruence with extra-musical factors as described in this paragraph is the fifth step.

It is noteworthy that Tagg employs his method to analyse songs that are on a much smaller scale than Nightwish’s in terms of form structure and instrumentation. The songs Tagg analyses (such as ABBA’s “Fernando”) have a relatively “standard” choice of instrumentation and vocals: lead guitar, bass guitar, rhythm guitar, drum kit, lead vocals, and sometimes a keyboard instrument, as well as backing vocals of usually one to three parts. The simultaneous musical parameters are more distinguishable than Nightwish’s use of a metal band setting with lead vocalist, backing vocals, 6-part choir, piano, keyboard and full symphony orchestra. In this regard, the scores as graciously provided by Tuomas Holopainen and Pip Williams, aid tremendously in identifying (and sometimes separating) sonic material. The availability of the score in the analysis of selected Nightwish songs facilitates the following:

- It saves a lot of valuable time spent on (sometimes inaccurate) transcriptions; and
- It provides clear and accurate information on musical parameters such as pitch, instrumentation, registration, tempo and structure, leaving little to “guesswork” that might lead to flawed or distorted readings.

It is not only the identification of *musemes* or *museme stacks* that is a key feature of Tagg’s method. These structures occur simultaneously with other rhythmic figures, pitches, et cetera, and thus musical meaning is dependent on both diachronic sequencing and synchronic layering, where diataxis refers to long-term or narrative ordering, and syncrisis to the extended present and the intentional arrangement of

elements within this shorter-term timeframe (Tagg [2012] 2013:232-233, 385).<sup>30</sup> Simply put, it is not merely the identification of a *museme/museme stack* that is important, but more specifically, *where* it occurs and with *what* the receiver hears in conjunction with the relevant *musemes*.

As a first step in the analytical process, Tagg's checklist of musical parameters helps to identify *musemes* and they are further established by a process he calls *interobjective comparison*. *Interobjective comparison* can be explained as "describing music by means of other music" (Tagg 1982a:49). This implies that the music/song/section in question (the *analysis object* or AO) is compared to music with a similar style and functions (1982a:49). Therefore, and as I mentioned in Chapter 1.4, *interobjective comparison* relies on intertextuality.

The aim of the said *interobjective comparison* is to identify "sonic relationships" between other musical objects or examples (*interobjective comparison material* or IOCM) and the *analysis object* that is poietically/structurally reminiscent of "something" accordingly in the IOCM (Tagg [2012] 2013:230).<sup>31</sup> This similarity points to a "shared subjectivity of response" between the AO and the IOCM which, in turn, serves as evidence that heard musical structures communicate cues and details that are non-musical in nature (Tagg [2012] 2013:229). These cues and details are linked to semantic fields in which they create *paramusical fields of connotation* (PMFCs).<sup>32</sup> Tagg makes a clear distinction between the terms "paramusical" and "extra-musical", specifically choosing to use the term "paramusical", as the fields of connotation are intrinsically "part of musical semiosis" as it exists "alongside or in connection with the music" (Tagg [2012] 2013:229).

Songs, compositions, sections or phrases with similar *musemes* or gestures as the AO are examined to compare the PMFCs. In this way, intertextuality becomes a

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<sup>30</sup> The extended present is the time-equivalent of an exhaled breath, a musical phrase or a short gestural pattern (Tagg [2012] 2013:588).

<sup>31</sup> In the case of sound effects, musical objects and the AO would be aurally similar rather than structurally similar.

<sup>32</sup> Particular sounds linked to specific semantic fields and ultimately to cultural contexts (Tagg [2012] 2013:229).

strategy for analysis that greatly supports and complements Tagg's method. In this regard, intertextuality will be utilised, in conjunction with Tagg's method of music analysis (and Moore's, where applicable), for the analyses of selected Nightwish songs in Chapters 4-7.

The "established connections" that resonate between PMFCs are culturally specific and here comparative examples (IOCMs) should originate from the same genre, style or musical tradition as the AO (Tagg [2012] 2013:243-244). It should be noted that "instrument stereotyping" (such as the use of ethnic instruments or vocal techniques to connote cultural or geographic "stereotypes") is highly dependent on the receiver's knowledge of the functions and nuances of sounds within the "foreign" culture, as this type of stereotyping is only effective if the receiver is unaware of these sound factors (Tagg [2012] 2013:306). This point will be especially valuable in the analysis of Nightwish songs with clear Celtic sound connotations such as "The Islander", "Turn Loose the Mermaids" (see Chapter 5) and "I Want My Tears Back".

"Instrument stereotyping" can be linked to a type of style flag known as a "genre synecdoche" (Tagg [2012] 2013:522). A musical synecdoche is best defined as:<sup>33</sup>

A set of musical structures imported into a musical "home" style that refer to another ("different", "foreign", "alien") musical style by citing one or more elements supposed to be typical of that "other" style when heard in the context of the "home" style. By including part of the "other" style, the imported sounds allude not only to that other style in its entirety but also to the complete genre of which that other musical style is but a part (Tagg [2012] 2013:524).

Genre synecdoches connote different times in history, geographical places, spaces and cultures (paramusical semantic fields), through musical structures that are "borrowed" from the "foreign" music tradition (Tagg [2012] 2013:525). The identification of genre synecdoches in Nightwish songs that are examined in my thesis may lead to valuable insights in terms of musical meaning in the selected songs that

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<sup>33</sup> A sign type used to identify particular music styles and connotatively detect cultural genres.



feature a gospel choir and children's choir, as well as horror, film music, Celtic, and musical cues, et cetera.

In order to “test” the accuracy of the insights or “results” of *interobjective comparison*, Tagg advocates an investigative tool where musical parameters are altered (or substituted) to determine how the changes affect the meaning of the chosen section as a means to re-establish the meaning of the original section; a process called *hypothetical substitution* (Tagg [2012] 2013:254). Because of the way Nightwish's music is composed, their songs can be analysed productively by means of a type of method which emphasises a very wide range of musical and expressive parameters, as well as the hypothetical “testing” of these parameters to determine their influence on musical meaning. Holopainen describes a central part of his composition process as follows:

It always starts with a burning desire to tell a story [...] For me, it always starts with the emotional surge and subject matter. I think I've never written a song by just “jamming”, just playing and then wondering what the song is about [...] You have a story, and you try to find the right melody lines and chords, the right lyrics and instrumentation [...] I also methodologically challenge everything I've written. Even if it all sounded perfect, like a perfect riff or chorus, I still wonder if I should maybe use a different instrument. Does this song sound more like a ballad after all? Could the time signature be 3/4 instead of 2/4? You need to challenge each part and play around with it. That's why it takes so much time (Holopainen in Nightwish 2014a).<sup>34</sup>

This quotation highlights the degree of intentionality with which Holopainen composes and it greatly emphasises the value of Tagg's method in terms of the analysis of the band's songs in my study.

All the selected songs I examine in my thesis contain vocals (as do the majority of Nightwish's songs) and this aspect of the songs should be included in their analyses. This means that it is not only the words of the lyrics and their meanings that are significant, but also the perceived vocal performances of Anette Olzon and Marco

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<sup>34</sup> This quote is a transcription of the documentary's subtitles.

Hietala (albeit hypothetical performances) themselves. The perceived vocal sounds are what Tagg calls the “nonverbal aspects of voice” and his analytical method encompasses a means by which to denote perceptions surrounding these aspects ([2012] 2013:343). Tagg claims that a “vocal persona” does not merely mean that the singer is acting or putting up a front. He defines the vocal persona as “any aspect of personality as shown to or perceived by others through the medium of either prosody or of the singing voice” ([2012] 2013:244; underlined by Tagg). Tagg refers to a singer’s vocal persona as his/her vocal costume.

Similar to the approach to instrumental sounds, vocal sounds are also analysed in terms of their poietic (breathing, posture, register, projection, etc.), acoustic (timbre, volume, etc.) and aesthetic properties. Besides these properties, four descriptors are central to the analysis of the singer’s vocal costume, namely (Tagg [2012] 2013:355-356):

- Persona descriptors: distinctive voices of known persons;
- Demographic descriptors: social, cultural, ethnicity, age, gender, et cetera;
- Psychological, psychosomatic and emotional descriptors: morality, attitude, emotions, et cetera; and
- Archetypal descriptors: personality tropes.<sup>35</sup>

The vocal costume allows the singer to carry out a particular activity, to assume a role, and to present/signal a specific identity to the audience (Tagg [2012] 2013:360).

Space, acoustics, the placement of instruments and vocals within the given recorded space, et cetera, are studio-created for an album recording. The amount of reverberation (or reverb) used in terms of particular sounds, instruments, studio effect or all the sound-contributing factors in general, have an influence on the receiver’s perception of space and place. Reverb aids in creating a space that can be concrete, mythic or imaginary (Doyle 2005:6). The receiver perceives the space between the emitter and the receiver and between different emitters in terms of how much reverb is added to the relevant sound. The less reverb is added to a sound (“dry” sound), the

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<sup>35</sup> The distinctive voice of, for example, Dolores O’Riordan (The Cranberries) is a persona descriptor.

less depth the receiver perceives (Doyle 2005). Contrastingly, when more reverb is added (“wet” sound), the receiver perceives a greater sense of depth in the textural space. Tagg’s idea of aural staging encompasses these factors that contribute to the reception of sounds, the perception of space, depth and distance, as well as parameters and features from his extensive “checklist” within the recorded space at any given moment in the music.

For Tagg, aural staging “covers the mise-en-scène of any combination of sounds, be they vocal, instrumental, musical, paramusical, recorded or live” ([2012] 2013:299). Tagg’s idea of aural staging has similarities with Serge Lacasse’s “phonographic staging” (2005:1), but he asserts that the term “phonographic” is too limiting, as it specifically entails sound recordings instead of a wider range of possibilities that includes sound recordings ([2012] 2013:299). The examination of the aural staging of a track, phrase or musical moment is valuable to the investigation of the selected Nightwish songs as a closer look at the textural space (wherein certain sonic “happenings” are combined with other parameters, sound effects and lyrics) may prove to be a valuable tool in an attempt to elucidate musical meaning in my readings of the selected Nightwish songs.

In terms of form analysis, Tagg distinguishes between a chorus and a refrain in the sense that choruses have a “sing-along” nature and are usually sung by a group of people (more than three people), while a refrain usually appears in conjunction with a verse or verses (Tagg [2012] 2013:395). Generally, the refrain’s words and melody stay the same, but they may differ slightly from refrain to refrain (Tagg [2012] 2013:395). All four of the songs I analyse in Chapters 4-7 have refrains, rather than choruses.

The final step in the methodological paradigm that Tagg outlines is what he calls *ideological critique*. After the analysis of *musemes* and larger sections, this final step pertains to discovering how the emitter (the performer) and the receiver (the audience) relate to and understand the “implicit ideologies” which the “channel” (the song) conveys within a cultural context. It is also during this stage that the role and effect of the “product”, industry, commerce and society is under the microscope (Tagg 1982a:62-63). The focus in the *ideological critique* step shifts away from the analysis

of the sounds and musical structure to their meaning in terms of the emitter, receiver, industry, commerce and society, as I mentioned previously in this paragraph.

In conclusion, Tagg's hermeneutic-semiological approach, together with *ideological critique* as the ultimate step within his posited methodological paradigm (1982a:61), can "provide some insight and act as a basis for understanding 'what is being communicated' and 'how'" (1982a:65). The "how" in the previous quotation refers specifically to the factors that he collectively calls the "parameters of musical expression" such as timbre, aural staging, volume and tempo, whereas the "what" speaks to the sonic cue with its associated connotation(s) that is communicated to the receiver. It follows then that Tagg's approach will serve as a valuable tool in my analysis of the selected Nightwish songs: to better understand *what* is being communicated in and through these songs, as well as *how* it is communicated.

Just as certain music-stylistic features are central to Nightwish's idiom, certain themes and tropes in Holopainen's lyrics are vital to the band's self-created mythology. It is specifically these themes and tropes that are used recurrently to create a narrative that serves as a mental anchor for the band's global community of fans, as pointed out by Karjalainen (2016:62, 66, 74), although he does not identify and discuss all these central themes and tropes.<sup>36</sup> In addition to my analysis of the soundscapes of selected Nightwish songs, I utilise Tagg's model to uncover the themes and tropes that appear in these selected songs.

Although Tagg's conceptualisation of aural staging encompasses the "place" where a particular sound or sounds are heard within the textural space at a given moment in the music, the visual representation of the material is not always clear to the reader. In this regard, Allan F. Moore's theorisation of the *soundbox* offers a three-dimensional diagram of the textural space and where the sound(s) in question is placed or heard within the "box". His diagrammatical model serves as a useful tool for the researcher to better demonstrate to the reader where the perceived sound(s) is placed.

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<sup>36</sup> Also see Chapter 2.3.2.

Tagg largely agrees with the details of Moore's conceptualisation of the *soundbox*, but he does not agree with Moore's name for the textural space, as the stereo acoustic horizon is not rectangular as the term "box" suggests, but semi-circular (Tagg [2012] 2013:299). Nevertheless, Moore's *soundbox* provides a clear visual representation (besides the shape of the box), of what is communicated to the receiver as "transcribed" by the analyst. I use Moore's *soundbox* in addition to Tagg's model at two particular points in my analyses of "Turn Loose the Mermaids" (Figure 5.1 in Chapter 5.2) and "Meadows of Heaven" (Figure 7.4 in Chapter 7.2) respectively. At these points, the two songs' textural spaces suggest a "high" and a "low" akin to a hypothetical ceiling and floor. In this regard, Moore's box-shaped *soundbox* is not visually or conceptually problematic at these two points.

### 3.2.2 Allan F. Moore's *soundbox*

Allan F. Moore is a British musicologist whose extensive list of publications centre on popular music, including numerous writings on the analysis of rock and other popular music. He is also the editor of the very influential *Analyzing Popular Music* (2003).

Moore asserts that popular music tends to present with four textural layers. These layers are (Moore 2012:20-21):

- The *explicit beat layer*. Concerns the articulation of "explicit beat patterns" as the main constituent of the "groove" (the rhythmic "feel" of a song);
- The *functional bass layer*. Concerns the profile of the instruments that also help to create the "groove" and their role in connecting – in various ways – root position harmonies;
- The *melodic layer*. Includes one or more melodies where the main melody is also the main articulator of a song's lyrics. Instruments other than the voice can be found in this layer, particularly the instruments that help to identify the style of a song. This layer also carries "a high proportion of the identity of the song"; and
- The *harmonic filler layer*. Fills the "registral" space between the outer voices.

Moore's model of textural layers provided above simplifies the task of identifying the textural layers in Nightwish's songs – songs that tend to be set for a vast number of

voices and instruments. The identification of the textural layers (and also the absence of some layers in certain sections of the songs), will open the door to a better understanding of the interaction between the layers and how their interaction contributes to the perceived meaning of a song in its entirety or smaller sections within a song.

Moore defines the *soundbox* as follows:

What is the soundbox? It is a heuristic model of the way sound-source location works in recordings, acting as a virtual spatial “enclosure” for the mapping of sources (Moore 2012:31).

He argues that the *soundbox* provides an effective way of examining what he calls “secondary domains” (2012:30); in other words, the *soundbox* enables a closer look at for example timbre, gesture, their combination (see Tagg 1992 and Middleton 2000:108, 110), and even the possible aesthetic changes that the manipulation of sound in a recording studio during the recording process can have (see Zak III 2001).<sup>37, 38, 39</sup> Another function of the *soundbox* is to provide a *modus operandi* by which to contrive the textural space that a sound recording occupies (Moore 2012:30). What Moore means by textural space is “literally hear[ing] recordings taking space” and this space can be both metaphoric and actual (2012:30).

Returning to Moore’s definition of the *soundbox* quoted earlier, he explains “location” as follows:

Within this model, location can be described in terms of four dimensions. The first, time, is obvious. The remaining three are the laterality of the stereo image, the perceived proximity of aspects of the image to (and by) a listener, and the perceived frequency characteristics of sound-sources (Moore 2012:31).

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<sup>37</sup> Tagg, P. (1992) ‘Towards a sign typology of music’, in Dalmonte, R. & Baroni, M. (eds.), *Secondo convegno Europeo di analisi musicale*, Trento: Università degli Studi di Trento, pp. 369–78.

<sup>38</sup> Middleton, R. (1993) ‘Popular music analysis and musicology: Bridging the gap.’ *Popular Music* 12(2), pp. 177-190. Reprinted in Middleton, R. (2000) (ed.) *Reading pop*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 104-21.

<sup>39</sup> Zak, A.J. (2001) *The poetics of rock: Cutting tracks, making records*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Although the mapping of “sound-source location” Moore speaks of does not exclude the viability of applying this method to pre-stereo recordings, his proposed method is best applied to full stereo recordings (2012:31). In this regard, he highlights three spatial dimensions of full stereo:

(1) *Laterality*: Since human hearing is binaural in both the experience of music and in everyday life beyond the realm of music and recorded songs, this dimension appears to be “natural” and therefore requires less interpretation to conceive than the other two dimensions (2012:31);

(2) *Prominence*: This pertains to degree of sound distortion (for example, the level of reverb), as well as the relative dynamic level. In this regard, the relative “distance” of sounds is inferred by an interpretation of their “dynamic level and degree of distortion” and as such, the *prominence* dimension requires more interpretation than *laterality* (2012:31); and

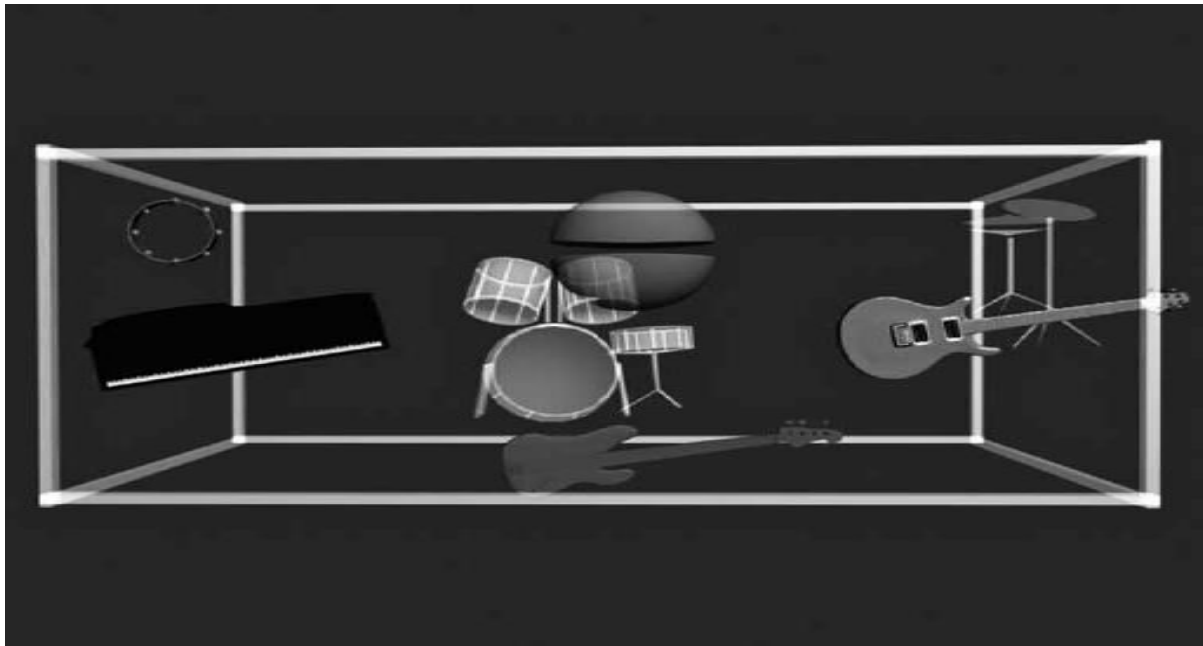
(3) *Register*: As the name suggests, *register* encompasses the “height” of a sound; in other words, its “position in pitch space” (2012:31). In terms of its depiction within the *soundbox*, high or bright sounds appear towards the top of the *soundbox* and low or dull sounds towards the bottom. The placement of a sound within the *soundbox* is not necessarily predicated upon its “actual” pitch, but rather its perceived pitch which is governed by its timbre (2012:31).

Besides Tagg’s notion that the shape of the *soundbox* does not correspond to stereo sound’s semi-circle shape (see section 3.1.2), another point of critique of Moore’s visual representation of the *soundbox* may be that the *prominence* dimension that rests on distance is not clear in his 3-D renderings, as they provide a view straight from the front. A slightly more “tilted” rendering of the *soundbox*, which I aim to show in Chapters 5 and 7), may make the items’ depth placement in the *soundbox* more visible.

Albin Zak III adds a fourth dimension, which he borrows from George Massenburg’s four-dimension approach to sound mixing, namely *narrative* (Zak 2001:144). *Narrative* indicates that the location of sounds within the *soundbox* does not necessarily stay the

same for the entire track. The locations of sounds are further influenced by modern recording technology which allows for sounds to “move” more (Moore 2012:38).

Moore supplies examples of *soundbox* transcriptions and to demonstrate what it looks like, I provide one of Moore’s examples: a *soundbox* transcription of Argent’s “Hold your head up”, below (Figure 2.3 in Moore 2012:35):



**Figure 3.1: An example of Moore’s soundbox**

Both Moore’s and Tagg’s methods proposed thus far in this chapter deal with the analysis of timbre and musical gestures and both these models also leave room for the analysis and interpretation of the effects that in-studio sound manipulation has on the perception and meaning of a song.<sup>40</sup> Both analytical models provided and discussed in this chapter are designed to be especially fruitful in a more thorough and detailed analyses of popular music and their application to metal music (and in this case, Nightwish’s songs), may open the door to a deeper and better understanding of musical gestures, textural space, aural staging, connotation and meaning in metal

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<sup>40</sup> Middleton (1990) also mentions the implications of recording techniques and that they should be taken into account in analysis. It can be argued that his model may be suited to address these implications, but Moore’s method is specifically developed to include variations and distortions brought on by recording techniques.



music – a genre that is still largely neglected in terms of in-depth and well-founded musical analysis.

As mentioned in sections 3.1 and 3.2.1, Tagg’s model investigates intertextual links between an *analysis object* (AO) and *interobjective comparison material* (IOCM). Tagg notes that genre is a guiding factor in choosing appropriate IOCM. I argue à la Umberto Eco ([1979] 1984; [1990] 1994) that genre is not just a deciding factor in selecting appropriate comparison material; it is also a type of “road map” that aids the analyst even further in uncovering established *paramusical fields of connotation* (PMFCs) within Tagg’s model.

The following four chapters see my respective analyses of four selected songs from Nightwish’s *Dark Passion Play* and *Imaginaerum* albums. In this regard, Tagg’s analytical method (and Moore’s visual representation of the *soundbox* in Chapters 5 and 7) will form the overarching music-analytical framework of these analyses. The music-analytical framework I propose in this chapter forms the basis of each of the subsequent chapters. I present this overarching framework in conjunction with a suitable theoretical-philosophical framework in each chapter.

## Chapter 4 – Circus of Death: Musical manifestations of horror and the uncanny in “Scaretale”

### 4.1 Background and theoretical framework

“Scaretale” is the sixth track on Nightwish’s seventh full-length studio album *Imaginaerum* (Nightwish 2011b). The music and lyrics are written by Tuomas Holopainen, while the arrangements for orchestra and two choirs are the work of Pip Williams. The song features two vocal soloists (as heard on the album), Anette Olzon and Marco Hietala, and it is scored for a 56-piece orchestra, adult mixed choir and children’s choir.<sup>41</sup> In this regard, the receiver hears the vocal contributions of 32 members of the London based Metro Voices under the baton of Jenny O’ Grady, as well as a children’s choir – the Young Musicians London under the leadership of Lynda Richardson – on the recording (Nightwish 2011a:21). The featured orchestra (with Thomas Bowes as concert master) consists of members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, titled the “Looking Glass Orchestra” in the album booklet (Nightwish 2011a:22). The recording dates of the orchestral and choral parts are indicated respectively as February 15, 2011 and February 18, 2011 in the scores. James Shearman is the conductor.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Background

For the purposes of my thesis, I focus specifically on the independent album (see Chapter 3.2) and I will not discuss the role that the song plays in the film in detail here.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The information on the number of instruments, type of instruments and number of choir members is supplied on the cover page of the orchestral and choir scores respectively.

<sup>42</sup> The recording dates and name of the conductor appears on the orchestral and choir scores.

<sup>43</sup> Future research that re-examines the songs selected from the *Imaginaerum* album in my study and their connection to and meaning within the context of the film and the film’s score may yield interesting and valuable new insights. The film’s score is composed by Petri Alanko as well as arrangements or adaptations of several of the songs on the *Imaginaerum* album.

The song's title alludes to the possible atmosphere that the receiver (the listener) can expect in the song as the neologism "Scaretale" is a possible antithesis of the term "fairy tale". Holopainen sheds further light on the atmosphere of the song:

It's a song called "Scaretale" – our version of Metallica's "Enter Sandman" when it comes to the lyrical concept. It's all about childhood nightmares and monsters in the closet and under the bed and all those reoccurring nightmares that I personally used to have as a kid (Holopainen interviewed in *Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011).<sup>44, 45</sup>

Holopainen's description and the song title create the expectation that the song's character will reflect darkness (the time associated with "childhood nightmares and monsters in the closet"), fear, horror, distortion, subversion and the uncanny. Upon hearing the song for the first time, the soundscape immediately pulls the receiver into an ominous, sinister sound world within the first three seconds of the song. The atmosphere in these three seconds is created by a double octave played in the bass register of the piano (with a high level of reverberation) followed by a metallic, "otherworldly" sound most likely produced by the combination of a symphonic bass drum and a reverse scraped and then struck cymbal, probably a Chinese cymbal.<sup>46</sup> The unsettling atmosphere of the first few bars and overall eerie, horror-inducing soundscape are perpetuated throughout the entire song.

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<sup>44</sup> Both the Nightwish and Metallica songs are about nightmares, but the Nightwish song's soundscape is decidedly influenced by Danny Elfman's scores for Tim Burton's style of Gothic horror fantasies. As Holopainen points out in the quote, the main similarity between "Scaretale" and "Enter Sandman" is in terms of the lyrical concept, in other words, the notion of nightmares. A deeper investigation into this claim, in the form of an in-depth comparison between the songs' lyrics, lies beyond the scope of my study.

<sup>45</sup> The Metallica song "Enter Sandman" connotes E.T.A Hoffman's short story *The Sandman* – a story about a child that is confronted with the tale of a vicious and malicious mythical figure, the Sandman, which comes to children at night who refuse to go to sleep to scratch out their eyes. Sigmund Freud argues that this story incites the uncanny by placing emphasis on the child's fear of losing his eyes (Freud 1919:7). Freud further likens the child's fear of losing his eyes to his (repressed) fear of castration or what he calls the child's "castration complex" (1919:8). The Nightwish song does not, however, feature the Sandman character that has ties to the fear of losing one's eyes.

<sup>46</sup> Reverberation (or commonly known as reverb) is a studio-created, environmental sound effect.

### 4.1.2 Theoretical-philosophical framework

The soundscape in “Scaretale” is created by combining studio effects with children’s singing voices, harsh dissonances, tremolo articulation, chromaticism, et cetera. These characteristics and techniques are strikingly akin to sounds and composition techniques intimately associated with horror film music, and this connection further establishes the song’s intended uncanny atmosphere.<sup>47</sup> As a setting for the nightmare-scene, songwriter Holopainen uses the idea of a subversive “circus of death” (the circus is called “Cirque de Morgue” in the lyrics) or “circus of horrors” where images of ghosts, ghouls with “limbs to lose”, skeletons, a terrifying and diabolical ringmaster, a witch-like sideshow character and other horrendous creatures are brought to life in the song’s sounds and lyrics.

#### 4.1.2.1 Metal and horror

Metal music has longstanding ties with horror images and their associated experiential realms. Robert Walser (1993) gives a historical account of the connection between metal music and horror. He ascribes metal’s use of horror as a means for musicians to relay social critique through their music in ways which fans can understand and even relate to (1993:158). The role of (American) horror films during the 1970s and 1980s was to “threaten” traditional American ideals and values surrounding politics, sexuality and the nuclear family (Walser 1993:161), as well as exhibiting aspects of (American) life that are incongruent with traditional “wholesome” values and ideals. These films show dysfunctions within nuclear families (Derry 1987:168); they highlight “paternal weakness” (Sobchack 1987:183) to challenge a patriarchal society; and they exhibit the increasing rejection of the traditional notion of sexual roles (Derry 1987:165). Metal music – during the same time period and beyond – also challenges culture and gender stereotypes, social systems, religion as an institution, taboos, et cetera. As Walser observes, the “dark side of heavy metal is intimately related to the dark side of the modern capitalist security state: war, greed, patriarchy, surveillance, and control” (Walser 1993:163).

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<sup>47</sup> Sigmund Freud defines the uncanny as “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (Freud 1919:1-2).

In more recent scholarship, Joseph Tompkins argues that metal's connection with horror is actively managed by media firms in order to exploit the overlap between "niche formats and consumer tastes", in this case mainly the "suburban teenage-adolescent male demographic" with horror and metal (Tompkins 2009:65, 69). It seems that the demographic for more explicit, obscene and extreme metal, as well as horror films has not significantly changed since the 1990s. Carol J. Clover and Karen B. Halnon do not directly investigate a correlation between metal and horror, but their respective research within two different decades of scholarship gives a glimpse of a demographic that reflects the one posited by Tompkins (2009). Clover identifies adolescent males as being the most represented gender in horror film theatres and formal surveys (Clover 1992:6). Halnon's primary research objectives in the early 2000s reflect an investigation of shock music and specifically shock music carnival. She states that "shock music carnival has a primary fan base of approximately 80 percent males ... [w]hile women remain an obvious numerical and representational minority in metal subcultures" in the time period she conducted her field research, namely 2000-2004 (Halnon 2004:749).

In terms of film music in general, Tompkins notes a visible increase in "thematically charged" compilation soundtracks that include pre-existing popular music, instead of an originally composed score (although some films have both), in an attempt to "inextricably link" the experience of a given song to the experience of a particular film or scene within a genre-specific style of cross promotion so that these songs can later serve as a "musical souvenirs" of the film (Tompkins 2009:71-72). The genre specificity of this type of cross-promotion further highlights the similarities in the reception of certain metal subgenres and horror, as well as their fan demographic.

Nightwish's music, although very far removed from extreme subgenres or the explicit content of nu metal, is no stranger to the horror film compilation soundtrack and metal cross-promotional strategy. Two of Nightwish's songs feature on the compilation soundtracks of two horror films, namely:

- "Nemo" – *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (2004); and

- “Wish I Had An Angel” – *Alone in the Dark* (2005).<sup>48</sup>

The song “Nemo” also features during the end credits of the film *The Cave* (2005, Bruce Hunt). Both *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* and *Alone in the Dark* are based on survival horror video games. By following Tompkins’s (2009:65, 69) reasoning of the connection between niche-marketing, metal, horror and gender, one may deduce that the combination of violent video games with horror and metal in these films and their soundtracks is aimed at a predominantly male audience. All three movies mentioned here are American made. “Wish I Had An Angel” and “Nemo” are both singles from the band’s 2004 album *Once*. It is interesting to note that the songs’ appearances on American horror film compilation soundtracks in 2004 and 2005 coincide with the band’s increasing visibility and popularity in the North American market. Following Tompkins’s reasoning, it can be argued that the songs were placed on the soundtracks (and in *The Cave*’s end credits) exactly, in order to enhance the band’s visibility in the US and to bring them – at that time a European symphonic power metal band – to the attention of the targeted local niche audience and ultimately to an international audience (“international” being beyond Europe and later beyond the US).

The use of metal music on horror film compilation soundtracks is a relatively new phenomenon. These albums contain “b-side” tracks from established metal artists to enable record companies and artists to release tracks that did not make it onto a full-length album, to establish intertextual links between the songs and the experience of the films, and to appeal to a targeted niche audience and market through a combination of the “right movie-music combination” (Tompkins 2009:69, 72). The successful marriage of horror film imagery and metal music may be exploited and further emphasised by record companies and film magnates alike, but it also speaks to a subcultural affinity:

In the case of horror metal, horror film images are strategically designed to correspond with and illustrate metal music's presumed cultural value. Matched

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<sup>48</sup> I heard “Nemo” for the first time in 2004 as I regularly watched music channels such as MTV and VH1 as a high school and university student. Living in the small South African city of Bloemfontein I was unable to locate the corresponding Nightwish album in local CD stores. The only alternative was to purchase the *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* compilation soundtrack which was available in the first store that I entered.

with images of violence, madness, obscenity, aggression, torture, and monstrosity, metalheads are given the chance to witness their favorite music come to life on screen. Similarly, horror fans are pushed to associate their favorite horror movies, characters, and concepts with the heavy metal sounds of chunky, distorted guitars and pounding double bass drums (Tompkins 2009:75-76).

Death metal contains depictions of horror, although connotations with horror (or for that matter, the sinister or “dark”) is not exclusive to extreme or transgressive metal, as both Robert Walser and Linda Badley point out by including examples of artists who draw on horror themes outside of extreme metal such as Michael Jackson. The connection with gore and horror is easily seen in the names of a myriad of death metal bands, for example: Abated Mass of Flesh, Exhumed, Cannibal Corpse, Ribspreader and Necrophagia, to name a few. Countless album titles, song titles and lyrics within death metal also contain obvious references to horror in the form of death, torture, necrophilia, et cetera.

The subject material for the majority of Nightwish’s output is linked to fantasy, escapism, unrequited love, the beauty of nature and a quest to regain innocence (among other things), and accordingly their music – and overall image – is far removed from being synonymous with the “blood and guts” imagery in metal circles and the public mind alike. However, this does not mean that the band’s musical sounds or song lyrics have never alluded to or overtly signified “dark” meanings or even violence and this chapter aims to explore the darker shades within Nightwish’s kaleidoscopic soundscape through the closer examination of their song “Scaretale”.

The connection between specifically death metal and horror-visuals was made popular by the American band Mortician as early as 1996, when the cover artwork of their *Hacked up for Barbeque* (1996) and *Chainsaw Dismemberment* (1999) albums were inspired by the horror film *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Purcell 2003:43). The band also “constantly” uses sound samples from horror films in their songs (Purcell 2003:21). Recent literature suggests a horror meta-theme in metal which serves as inspiration for many metal and rock music videos (Badley 1995:2, 8; Walser 1993:10); for example, videos by Black Sabbath, Alice Cooper’s 1976 concert film *Welcome to My Nightmare*; other videos such as Lääz Rockit’s “Leatherface”, W.A.S.P.’s “Scream

Until You Like It”, the Ramones’ “Pet Sematary” and Fastway’s “Trick or Treat”. Interestingly, all the music videos listed (including Lääz Rockit’s “Leatherface”) accompany songs that are performed by the respective bands on the soundtracks of horror films (McPadden 2015).

#### 4.1.2.2 Metal and Mikhail Bakhtin’s carnival

Natalie J. Purcell draws a parallel between death metal lyrics and horror films in the sense that both media “explore the repressed and forbidden” (Purcell 2003:171). The engagement and involvement of the fans in both cases, also makes room for fruitful comparisons. Within the framework of horror films, the watching of horrific scenes may be regarded as a “form of play” (Purcell 2003:174) and death metal fans openly embrace and participate in the ultimate taboo, namely finding gory, horrific and disturbing content “comedic” (Purcell 2003:173). Finding comedy in the blatant subversion and distortion of social mores alludes to Mikhail Bakhtin’s theorisation of the carnivalesque as described in his seminal publication *Rabelais and His World* (1965). Here, Bakhtin highlights the mediaeval carnival as a communal activity in which every member participates as its “very idea embraces all people” and subsequently, there is no distinctive group of actors or spectators (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:7). During the time of carnival, the carnival *is* life as a means of escaping everyday, “official” life (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:7-8). Historically, feasts are linked to crises and in these uncertain times of strife, the carnival represents a utopia: change and renewal after death (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:9).

The human body also plays a central role in the experience and expression of the carnival spirit. Bakhtin notices a shift in the area of the body that is concentrated on, from the upper part (the face and head signifying rational thought, morals, et cetera), to the lower part (the buttocks, genitals and belly) where “upwards” suggests the heavenly and “downwards” suggests earth, the grave and also the womb (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:21). In grotesque realism, the lower part of the body is over-emphasised and its parts are exaggerated, drawing attention to that which is usually kept hidden or unseen:



The grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. Its outward and inward features are often emerged into one (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:317-318).

The bodily element is seen as very positive in grotesque realism as the body symbolises both a cosmic character and being representative of an all-people's body. The "degradation" of the body through grotesque realism obliterates the individual body and links it to the "collective ancestral body of all the people" (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:19).

Natalie Purcell links body-based horror (relating to bodily wastes such as excrement and vomit) to what she calls a "more primitive time" in history (in a time when bodily wastes were not a source of shame) and the embracing of that which is shameful or embarrassing in horror films, as well as death metal lyrics which permit a celebration of that which is repressed and bestial (Purcell 2003:175). Emphasising the functions and activities of the lower bodily stratum not only celebrates the "beast" as pointed out by Purcell, but can also be reinterpreted in terms of grotesque realism and degradation in Bakhtin's theorisations of the carnival, where that which is low is associated with earth and death and ultimately with renewal and rebirth. Purcell touches on horror's (and by extension death metal lyrics') ability to renew and rejuvenate by making man acutely aware of his mortality:

In horror, man is made to feel his physicality and mortality (Waller 1987:6 in Purcell 2003:175).

And

When life is boring, vitality slips away; when boredom is ameliorated with thrills, man is reinvigorated (Dickstein 1984:77-78 in Purcell 2003:176).

#### 4.1.2.3 Karen Halnon's "heavy metal carnival"

Sociologist Karen Halnon focuses her research during 2000-2004 on "the most transgressive, shocking and otherwise carnivalesque contemporary Caucasian bands

increasingly making it into the mainstream” (Halnon 2006:35).<sup>49</sup> She draws many parallels between Bakhtin’s ideas on the carnival and grotesque realism and what she calls “heavy metal carnival”. Halnon argues that heavy metal carnival provides a liminal space wherein individuals can experience a feeling of community, as the experience of the music is not so much a spectacle as a shared activity lived by all, as is the case in Bakhtin’s interpretation of the mediaeval carnival (Halnon 2006: 36, 40).<sup>50</sup>

Within this liminal space, shock music musicians and fans alike transgress, distort, subvert and mock societal norms and traditions. Halnon’s work on the dis-alienating properties and pro-communal nature of some of the most transgressive bands and subgenres emphasises a more “positive” outlook on metal music, as well as its subcultures and scenes. Her work stands in stark contrast to the canon of work detailing metal’s associations with, for example, adolescent alienation (Arnett 1996), suicide and substance abuse (Snell & Hodgetts 2007:430).

Communal comedy and the carnival-grotesque feature strongly in Nightwish’s “Scaretale”, especially in the three Verses and three Ghost Dances. “Scaretale” includes overt horror-images in both the lyrics and music text, where there are sections such as the Riffs that rely greatly on heavily distorted electric guitar sounds. Marco Hietala uses a sound ideal very similar to the death growl in the Bridges and Ghost Dances, but the song’s sound palette is not reminiscent of death or nu metal but rather of a Danny Elfman-esque type of film music. The choice of this type of film music sound interjected with “heavier” (see section 2.3.1) sections where the band is at the forefront secures two links between the song and horror:

- (1) The established link between metal and horror is called on and connoted in the heavier sections and the verses’ lyrics; and

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<sup>49</sup> Halnon’s 2006 article features mostly nu metal bands and their music as examples of shock music in general and heavy metal carnival in particular. As mentioned previously, the bands mostly featured on horror compilation soundtracks are also associated with nu metal (Tompkins 2009).

<sup>50</sup> In my opinion, black metal corpse paint is both grotesque and theatrical, in this way adding a degree of the carnivalesque to performances.

- (2) The use of a film music sound palette creates a link between “Scaretale” and original/traditional horror film music scoring techniques and practices such as the use of the semitone clash and shuttle, typical horror-music tropes, articulation, et cetera.

The orchestra and choir also make it possible to capture the essence of circus/carnival music with its chromatic string, brass or woodwind runs that is hinted at in earlier sections of the song (chromatic lines) and later in the song an entire section of circus music is included, called the Bridges (timecode 3’42”-4’17”) and the three Ghost Dances (timecode 4’17”-5’37”). As mentioned previously in this chapter, the settings for the song are a “dark”, “twisted” circus and sideshow and the Bridges and Ghost Dances describe the sights and sounds of the circus’s main attraction: the spectacle orchestrated and organised by the diabolical ringmaster (as portrayed by Hietala).<sup>51</sup>

“Scaretale” contains references to the circus and circus themes, but it exhibits a sound palette more reminiscent of film music than circus metal as Holopainen draws inspiration mainly from film scores. Other bands outside the circus metal subgenre that have songs with circus-inspired themes are Kiss, Cold, Insane Clown Posse (ICP), Dracovallis, Amberian Dawn and Bizar Bazar’s *Circus Metal Maniac* album to name a few.<sup>52</sup>

As mentioned previously, the main circus scene in “Scaretale” occurs in the song’s Bridges and three Ghost Dances (the latter exhibiting an A-B-A form structure). These sections wrought with tonicisations, are the most similar to circus or carnival music than the rest of the song, and include an unusual instrument choice of the harpsichord instead of the fairground organ and exhibit a particular aural staging that highlights the

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<sup>51</sup> The concept of the “twisted circus” in metal is not unique to Nightwish. In fact, there is an entire metal subgenre inspired by circus music and circus-related themes called circus metal. There is no academic research on circus metal as of yet, and reliable information on the subject is hard to come by. Some websites do provide a definition of the subgenre. Key characteristics are: the incorporation of Hammond-organ circus melodies; instruments such as the kazoo, accordion and/or keyboard; brass instruments; and the tendency to suddenly shift from carnival music to a sound-ideal akin to that of death metal. The subgenre borrows elements from jazz, 50’s rock ‘n roll, surf music, noise art, bossa nova, techno and even exhibits Egyptian and Turkish influences (See Saad 2012; Hansen 2003).

<sup>52</sup> These examples do not include examples of bands whose shows may be regarded as carnivalesque as pointed out by e.g. Halnon (2006). These examples include bands that use circus themes or the concept of the circus in their music, presentation or imagery.

role of the ringmaster within the comedic circus of horrors. This paradox combined with the sections' musical parameters, aural staging and Hietala's vocal costume, speak to the communal laughter, death and rebirth, subversions and grotesque realism in Bakhtin's theorisation of the carnival. His critical observations and ideas serve as the theoretical framework for my interpretation of the Bridges and the Ghost Dances.

Furthermore, the interpretation of these sections will draw on Karen Halnon's work on heavy metal carnival and its theorisation within Bakhtin's carnivalesque and grotesque realism as framework. Within the context of Halnon's work, "Scaretale" is especially interesting since the song is a depiction of a sideshow and circus in front of an audience where they participate in heavy metal carnival, thus making it a carnival within a carnival, but where the carnivals are inextricably connected and interdependent to essentially form one carnival.

The analysis that I present in this chapter is intertextual in nature as per Tagg's model and intertextuality is an aspect that I explore intensively in later chapters.

#### **4.1.3 Key questions that govern the analysis of "Scaretale"**

In this chapter I investigate the musical "horror-cues" communicated to the receiver, their corresponding connotations, and how they function to construct meaning within the context of "Scaretale". Several key questions underpin my analysis of "Scaretale". These questions are:

- What cues do the emitters (the band, orchestra and/or vocalist) communicate to the receiver in order for the latter to perceive the song as eerie, unsettling, disturbing, dark or scary?
- What is the source(s) responsible for the production of these cues (which instruments, mechanical or kinetic aspects of sound production, et cetera) and how are they communicated to the receiver?
- Which *musemes* can be identified in "Scaretale" and which PMFCs can be associated with the different *musemes*?

- What uncanny or sinister qualities of the vocal melody can Tagg’s idea of analysing vocal or instrumental aspects that are not notated (such as timbre), highlight (Tagg [2012] 2013:122, 134)?
- To what extent can Tagg’s idea of aural staging aid to demonstrate how acoustic space is created within the recording (especially in sections that feature the vocalists), and how this created space informs aesthetics and reception (Tagg [2012] 2013:299-303)?
- In what way do the vocalists’ vocal costumes inform the reception of the song and how do they contribute to the overall meaning of the song?
- In what way do the lyrics contribute to the meaning of the song?

#### 4.1.4 The form structure of “Scaretale”

The table below provides information on the basic structure of the song, key, tempo and time signature:

**Table 4.1: The form structure of “Scaretale”**

	Section	Sub-section <sup>53</sup>	Phrases	Time	Key	Tempo
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction (0’00”)	13 bars	6/8	D min	Largo 1/8=166
		Lullaby (1) (0’28.5”-1’02.9”)	2x8 bars	6/8	D min	Largo 1/8=166
A	Themes <sup>54</sup>	Theme (1) (1’03”-1’14.5”)	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Theme (2) (1’14.06”-1’26.2”)	1x8 bars	4/4	D min (F min) (C min)	¼=166
		Theme (3) (1’26.3”-1’37.7”)	1x8 bars	4/4	D min (A min) (C min)	¼=166
		Theme (4) (1’37.8”-1’49.2”)	1x8 bars	4/4	D min (F min)	¼=166

<sup>53</sup> These are the sub-sections as indicated and titled in the score.

<sup>54</sup> Henceforth, “Theme” written with a capital “T” will refer to a section whereas “theme” will refer to a melodic theme.

					(C min)	
		Theme (5) (1'49.3"-2'02.5")	1x9 bars	4/4	D min (A min) (C min)	¼=166
B	Verses	Link theme (1) (2'02.7"-2'08")	1x4 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Riff (1) (2'08.1"-2'13.85")	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Riff (2) (2'13.9"-2'31")	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Link theme (2) (2'31.4"-2'36.9")	1x4 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Verse (1) (2'37"-2'59.7")	2x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Riff (3) (3'00.1"-3'11.6")	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Verse (2) (3'12"-3'42.6")	2x8 bars 1x4 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
C	Bridges & Ghost dances	Bridge (1) (3'42.8"-3'58.3")	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=122
		Bridge (2) (3'58.4"-4'17.9")	1x8 bars 1x2 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	¼=122
		Ghost dance (1) (4'18.1"-4'49.3")	2x8 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	Double 2/4 feel
		Ghost dance (2) (4'49.6"-5'05")	1x8 bars	4/4	G min	Double 2/4 feel
		Ghost dance (3) (5'05.4"-5'38.8")	1x9 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	Double 2/4 feel
"Recapitulation"	Themes	Theme (6) (5'38.9"-5'44.5")	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Theme (7) (5'44.6"-5'50.3")	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
		Theme (8) (5'50.4"-6'13.3")	1x8 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
	Verses	Verse (3) (6'13.5")	1x8 bars 1x14 bars	4/4	D min	¼=166
Epilogue	Epilogue	Lullaby (2) (6'46.3")	2x8 bars	4/4	D min	1/8=166

"Scaretale's" form structure is not the typical verse-refrain or verse-chorus structure that is associated with many rock and metal songs.<sup>55</sup> The song does not have a refrain

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<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that some "epic" metal songs tend to exhibit a more strophic form design rather than the common verse-refrain or verse-chorus structures, for example "Deathaura" by Sonata Arctica;

or chorus as shown in Table 4.1. By using Table 4.1 as guide, “Scaretale’s” form structure can best be described as Introduction, A, B, C, a condensed “recapitulation” of A and B and lastly, an Epilogue. As I mentioned in section 4.1.1, there is an ominous, sinister atmosphere present throughout the entire song. The absence of a recurring refrain with repeated lyrics to serve as stable and “familiar territory” or a “safe haven” contributes to the receiver’s experience of underlying unrest and disorientation. This is further exacerbated by the “stringing together” of episodes that exhibit differences in phrase length, tempo, harmonic rhythm, surface rate, attack, articulation, et cetera. However, the episodes and sub-sections form coherent sections which, in turn, form a coherent narrative and meaningful whole.

“Scaretale” may be regarded as a sequence of nightmare scenes, each with a unique set of musical parameters, sound effects, connotations and atmosphere. The first scene in the Introduction is created and governed by four musical structures with semiotic properties (*musemes*), studio effects and a well-known horror trope that add to the Introduction’s overall eerie, unsettling sound and atmosphere. The musical horror cues in the first thirteen bars of the song (timecode 0’00”-0’28”) are repeated and/or sustained semitone clashes and semitone shuttles, tritones, chromatic passages, a pedal point and the voices of the children’s choir. These *musemes* occur simultaneously to form *museme stacks* which – together with studio effects and the children’s voices – inform and shape the perception of the Introduction and the section directly following it, namely Lullaby (1, bars 14-29, timecode 0’28”-1’02.90”).

## 4.2 The Introduction

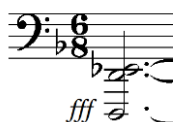
It has already been stated that the opening bars of “Scaretale” contain numerous musical structures (and sound effects) that exhibit semiotic properties, communicating atmospheric and connotative information to the receiver.

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Opeth’s “Blackwater Park”; Dream Theater’s “Octavarium”; Tool’s “Parabol/Parabola”; and Iron Maiden’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”.

#### 4.2.1 The semitone clash and shuttle<sup>56</sup>

“Scaretale”, initially with a 6/8 time signature, starts ominously with a D (the tonic of home key D minor), which the low register instruments and the piano play. The percussive *fff* octave on D (in the low register), with the piano’s added E-flat is the most audible and distinguishable sound and timbre within the given textural space at this point of the recording:



**Figure 4.1: Museme 1a (“Two notes and you’ve got a villain”)<sup>57</sup>**

The semitone clash appears in a wide variety of musical styles and genres, but its reception and connotations are culture-specific (Tagg [2012] 2013:244). In other words, individuals versed in different music (cultural) traditions perceive musemes differently, as these musemes may evoke varying connotations in individuals. Historically, in the Western art music tradition, the stark dissonance produced by the semitone clash has long-standing connotations of pain, anguish, danger, sadness, discomfort, horror, something frightening and tension. Other genres such as film music also employ and exploit the connotative properties of the semitone clash, relying greatly on the “vertical” interval’s established and ingrained connotations with pain and discomfort in its target audience’s minds.<sup>58</sup>

In Nightwish’s “Scaretale”, vertical and horizontal semitones play an important role in the song’s semiotic communication. The main types of “vertical” and “horizontal” semitones in the song are the semitone clash and semitone shuttle. A canonised musical example that contains both types is John Williams’s famous *Jaws*-theme from

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<sup>56</sup> A semitone shuttle is an oscillation between two pitches a semitone apart.

<sup>57</sup> “Two notes and you’ve got a villain” is a line borrowed from the 2006 film *The Holiday*.

<sup>58</sup> Susan Fast (2001) demonstrates how “horizontal” semitone movements have connotative significance and are oftentimes connected to gender in metal music.



the 1975 film with the same title. The iconic shark Leitmotif in the *Jaws*-theme consists of a semitone shuttle initially between the notes E and F:



**Figure 4.2: Museme 1b – *Jaws*-theme: semitone shuttle shark motif**

This semitone shuttle appears throughout the film’s soundtrack. The shuttle is used to signify the approaching (or present) shark. The shuttle is oftentimes heard in conjunction with dissonant, chromatic passages which the clarinet, strings and harp play, the latter playing ominous-sounding dominant seventh arpeggio figures when the shark’s first victim is attacked, as well as distinctive brass instrument timbres. The sound of the semitone shuttle becomes inextricably linked to the shark.<sup>59</sup> An excerpt of the sharply bowed, “attacked” bassline and the arpeggio-figures highlight a semitone clash that further intensifies the ominousness and terror:



**Figure 4.3: Excerpt from *Jaws* (“Main Titles”): semitone shuttle and clash<sup>60</sup>**

The excerpt above exemplifies the effect of the combined use of the semitone shuttle and semitone clash. Besides the tone clashes between F (bass) and E-flat, two diatonic semitone clashes between E (bass) and D-flat, as well as a clash between E (bass) and E-flat occur in the excerpt. The soundscape that Figure 4.3 helps create is the build-up to the horrific attack where the semitone clash is used to further intensify

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<sup>59</sup> The fear and horror it inspires and its violent attacks, so much so that the serenity of the seemingly “safe” settings in the film evaporate instantly each time the receiver hears the first two notes of the semitone shuttle. The ominous, sinister soundscape and atmosphere is created by the almost erratic, “clenched”, distressed sounding dominant seventh harp arpeggios, the semitone shuttle between E and F in the bassline as well as the distance in register between the harp and bass.

<sup>60</sup> Copyright: Duchess Music Corporation, 1975.

the experience of unease, discomfort and anxiety. Moreover, the semitone's instability and inherent "conflict" is pushed to the limits with the combination of these devices.<sup>61</sup>

The conflict in "Scaretale's" Introduction (bars 1-13) is between D and E-flat. This semitone clash is played and sustained for a number of unequally divided groups of bars during the course of the first thirteen bars and is technically only fully released in the next section, resulting in a feeling of restlessness, unease and instability throughout the entire Introduction – the receiver's first connotative impressions of the song. The acoustic placement of the semitone clash further deepens the receiver's experience of said semitone clash. The aural staging (i.e. placement within the acoustic space of the recording) of the semitone clash at the "front and centre position" (i.e. "centre stage"), places emphasis on this interval and gives it priority and a type of authority as the "main feature" in the opening bars and "tone setter" for the rest of the Introduction. The contrabassoon also plays a shuttle between D and E-flat (long notes) in the first half of the Introduction around timecode 0'00"-0'15.6 and the celli in the second half, around timecode 0'16.3"-0'28".

The piano's semitone clash is further compounded by the semitone clashes occurring in the adult choir parts in the Introduction.<sup>62</sup> The choir sings quietly on the open vowel "ee". The random breaths taken by the 32 choir members, the "sharp" vowel sound, increasing volume and the ascending melody contour create a "spooky" sound where the choir is not heard too clearly at first, although their sound is a looming presence, a ghost choir, staged almost in the background for their first few bars. The choir's *crescendo* coupled with the string section's chromatic line creates the feeling that something portentous is approaching or slowly rising to the surface.

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<sup>61</sup> Another example of a semitone clash which can provide intertextual context for "Scaretale" occurs at the beginning of the theme song of the 1950s/early 1960s television series *The Twilight Zone*. It can be argued that the semitone's harsh, ominous, unsettling sound in the theme song depicts the supernatural, uncertainty, horror and ominousness as found in the series' premise and content. The score of the 2004 film *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* also contains examples of semitone clashes and shuttles, most notably in "The Bad Beginning" at timecode 0'13"-0'44" and "An Unpleasant Incident Involving a Train" at timecode 0'40"-1'00".

<sup>62</sup> Forthwith, the adult choir will be referred to as "choir" and the children's choir will be referred to as "children's choir".

### 4.2.2 The tritone

Another structure with semiotic properties in the Introduction of “Scaretale” is the tritone (*Museme 2*):



**Figure 4.4: Museme 2a – Violin 2's raised fourth in bar 8 (“Diabolus in Musica”)**

And



**Figure 4.5: Museme 2b – The violas' diminished fifth in bar 4**

The articulation of these tritones adds to the ominousness and sinister character of the section as the violas play tremolos and Violin 2 plays trills. The tritone's connection to the sinister, dark and “underworldly” has its roots in the mediaeval perception of the interval's dissonant, “unstable sound”:<sup>63</sup>

It seems to have been designated a “dangerous” interval when Guido of Arezzo developed his system of hexachords, and with the introduction of B $\flat$  as a diatonic note [...] at much the same time acquiring its nickname of “Diabolus in musica” (“the devil in music”). However [...] the tritone was considered dangerous only in a vertical sense [...] (Whittall 2002:1292).

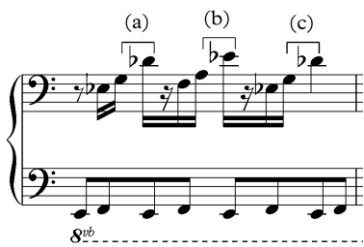
The (historic) connection between the devil and the tritone in Western art music has been so ingrained over centuries that it is almost safe to assume that most people versed in the Western art music tradition – which, of course, includes a myriad of metal songwriters – are aware of this connection. The tritone's “pre-set” connotation with the

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<sup>63</sup> The musical representation of evil or the devil is not limited to the tritone as harmonic or melodic interval alone. A good example of where a tritone between key-areas is used to depict the devil is Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1859) where Faust's main key-area is F major and Mephistopheles's key-area is B major – which makes Mephistopheles “the devil in music”.

devil is especially valuable for film music and metal composers alike, as both these groups of composers rely on the audience’s experience of the dissonant, unstable interval, while audience members that are aware of the imbued connection may perceive a deeper layer of meaning in a song. The tritone’s connection with the devil is central to the interval’s regular occurrence, specifically in death metal and doom metal songs.

Horizontal tritones are not necessarily perceived as less threatening, unsettling or disturbing. A good example is the *Jaws*-excerpt (Figure 4.3). The unsettling, horrific soundscape of the shark-attack scenes is not only created by timbre, attack, articulation, semitone clashes or a semitone shuttle; the figure contains a series of tritones (which I indicate with the letters “a” to “c” below), which are found or implied in countless instances throughout the film’s score:



**Figure 4.6: Tritones in *Jaws*-score (“Main Titles”)**

Other examples of unsettling, disturbing or threatening horizontal tritones exemplify the following:

- 1) Obscenity and the banal as captured in the theme song of the television series *South Park* by the American band Primus: The juxtaposition of children as the main characters and the obvious adult-themed topics they (crudely) discuss and comment on is captured in the almost off-key, “hillbilly” theme song littered with restless, destabilising, oscillating “horizontal” tritones, featured in especially the electric guitar line.
- 2) The science fiction connection in the theme song of the television series *The Twilight Zone*: The tritone in the theme song alludes to the otherworldly, supernatural, horror-inspired content of the series (Murphy 2006).

3) The devil in metal music: The tritone is prevalent in death metal, underlining and exploiting the tritone's associations with tension and the devil. The interval also features in other metal subgenres. The band Black Sabbath influences other bands such as Venom, Metallica and Arch Enemy in terms of combining dark lyrical material and "dark sounds" such as, for example, the tritone, while also privileging these sounds (Cope 2010:33, 40-41). Other Nightwish songs that have unresolved tritones are "The Pharaoh Sails to Orion" (*Oceanborn*), "Bless the Child" (*Century Child*) and "Slaying the Dreamer" (*Century Child*, Cope 2010:124).<sup>64</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Chromatic lines

Semitone clashes produce a highly dissonant sound (see section 4.2.1). Descending chromatic lines (*Museme 3*) add to the dissonance of the Introduction throughout the section. These lines are played in different registers, by different instruments and are aurally staged to sound as if they are "everywhere". The piccolo, bass clarinet and contrabassoon play chromatic runs at opposite ends of the register spectrum. These runs are based on the chromatic figure which the piccolo plays:



**Figure 4.7: Museme 3a (“The Phantom of the Opera”)**

This chromatic figure sounds remarkably akin to the famous chromatic motif from the song “The Phantom of the Opera” by Andrew Lloyd Webber:

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<sup>64</sup> Cope (2010) focuses on how other bands are influenced by the techniques and practices as employed and made famous by Black Sabbath. Cope only focuses his research on examples from Nightwish’s first phase, when their music exhibited a sound palette and conventions associated with power metal. Also, Cope names the examples of Nightwish songs and songs by other bands in his most informative book, but he does not supply detailed musical analyses (or the timecodes where the phenomena he refers to, occur) to support his arguments.



**Figure 4.8: The chromatically descending motif from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “The Phantom of the Opera”<sup>65</sup>**

Both the chromatic lines in Figure 4.7 and 4.8 are in the same key, starting from D and ending on B-flat. In “The Phantom of the Opera”, the chromatic nature of the song and the repeated ascending and descending (parallel) chromatic figures which the organ plays, capture the horror as a mesmerised Christine willingly follows the Phantom to his lair under the opera house in a trance-like state. In “Scaretale’s” Introduction the descending line is not repeated and inverted on the same pitches. It is heard only in descending form and is transformed to start and end on different pitches other than D and also in different registers. Although a connection between the line’s use in “Scaretale” and the horror connotations it is associated with in “The Phantom of the Opera” is very plausible, it is also possible that, that line’s reference to “The Phantom of the Opera” may not be deliberate. In this case, the descending lines may allude to the circus scene that is sketched in the Bridges and Ghost Dances later in the song.

The chromatic motif is developed in the Violin 1 line where the violins play chromatically descending three-note figures:



**Figure 4.9: Museme 3b**

What is particularly interesting about the Violin 1 line is that the three-note figures are chromatically descending, but the line itself is chromatically ascending:

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<sup>65</sup> Copyright: The Really Useful Group, plc, 1986.



**Figure 4.10: The violins' chromatic line in bars 1-13<sup>66</sup>**

The chromatically ascending line is constantly undermined by a counteracting chromatically descending movement. The inherent friction and turmoil of the line is exacerbated by the articulation of the ascending lines with interrupted linear chromaticism on the part of Violin 2 and the violas. The tremolo and trilled strings notes coupled with the harp's rolled diminished chords and Violin 1's chromatic line musically depict increasing tension and "frenzy" as the pitches become higher with the gradual change in dynamics from *mezzo piano* to *fortissimo*. Furthermore, the phrasing of the triplets in bars 3-7 is indicated in the score as one slur per bar, i.e. two dotted crotchet beats under one slur. The phrasing in bars 8-13 differs in the sense that every repetition (or sequence) of the three-note motif is slurred in bars 8-10 and no groups are slurred in bars 11-13 (see Figure 4.10). This placing of the slurs creates the illusion of the patterns occurring faster each time towards the end, which in turn, suggests a spiralling effect (as heard on the recording), thus underlining the feeling of being trapped.

Another example where chromaticism is used to create tension, unease, discomfort and the idea that something is brewing beneath the surface is the song "Selina Transforms" by Danny Elfman which features in the 1992 film *Batman Returns*. This song shows many similarities with "Scaretale" as the largest part of the beginning of the song (timecode 0'00"-2'32") is built on a pedal point with very high-pitched chromatic passages which the violins play. The very high pitch, articulation and attack result in a squeaky, nervous and erratic sound. The "background" sounds such as the "banging noise" and clicking, wooden sound add to the dynamic build-up of the song to the second part of the song that starts at around timecode 1'11". The chromatic and

<sup>66</sup> As indicated in the score.

erratic nature of the first section coupled with the thickening of the texture, as well as the *crescendo*, suggests that something sinister is approaching or brewing beneath the surface. Akin to “Scaretale”, the moving yet erratic chromatic figures undermine the static pedal point and vice versa, creating friction and tension.

The pedal point on C is perpetuated in the second section of the song (“Selina Transforms”) while the violins play very high-pitched sixth-shifts that are responsible for the chromatic, “searching”, “unstable”, and “trying-to-break-out-of-its-skin” sound of the section. It should be noted that the sustained tritone in the last two bars of the excerpt adds to the tension and sinister sound:



**Figure 4.11: Transcription of the second section of Elfman’s “Selina Transforms” from Batman Returns (1992)**

This track underscores the scene where Selina transforms into Catwoman and the high-pitched violins may be the musical equivalent of a cat(s). In this regard, the descending semitone slides mimic the sound of a meowing cat.

Another example of the effect of the confluence of a pedal point, high-pitched sounds and this time, with added voice-effects is the score of the 1995 film *Village of the Damned* composed by John Carpenter (Brownrigg 2003:126). The opening scene of the film is underscored by the synthesiser’s pedal point on E-flat. Chromatic string passages, “hollow” synthesised sounds and “clicking” sound effects, similar to those of an old movie projector, dictate the distorted, supernatural soundscape and atmosphere of the underscore, while whispering children make the soundscape even more sinister and otherworldly. Friction between the “moving” chromatic lines, sound



effects and the pedal point create tension, similar to the way a pedal point and chromatic lines create tension in “Scaretale”.

The unsettling, ominous and destabilising nature of chromatic passages makes them very popular in especially horror film scores. The following film scores contain highly chromatic sections (Brownrigg 2003:122-123):

- *Psycho* (1960), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, music by Bernard Herrmann;
- *Piranha* (1978), directed by Joe Dante, music by Pino Donaggio; and
- *Halloween* (1978), directed by John Carpenter, music by John Carpenter.

The track “Chez Olaf” from the film *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events* is also very chromatic but, in this case, chromaticism is used to underline “quirkiness” rather than an ominous brewing or rising to the surface. The use of chromaticism in popular music is, of course, not limited to film music. Death metal, in particular, exploits the dissonance and tension created by highly chromatic passages. An isolated example is Incantation’s 1992 *Onward to Golgotha* album (Maarat 2016). The chromaticism in “Scaretale’s” Introduction not only signifies horror and tension, but also the circus. An iconic example of chromatic lines in circus music is found in “Entry of the Gladiators” by Julius Fučík:<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 4.12: Introductory bars of “Entry of the Gladiators”**

And



**Figure 4.13: Melody of “Entry of the Gladiators”**

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<sup>67</sup> The examples are excerpts from the solo cornet (in B) part. Copyright: Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0.

The chromatically descending line in “Scaretale” (Figure 4.14 below) transforms in Verses (1) to (3) in terms of pitch and rhythm to serve as a constant reminder of where the nightmare is set, namely in a dark circus. The transformed chromatic line is a motif that lies at the core of the Verses:



**Figure 4.14: Museme 3c – The Verses’ repeating chromatically descending motif**

A variety of instruments play this motif, which is based on the “Phantom of the Opera-esque” chromatically descending piccolo line (see Figures 4.7 and 4.8). Similar to the chromatic figures in the Introduction, the chromatic motif in the Verses, as well as the timbre of the relevant instruments (the oboe, clarinet, Glockenspiel and certain strings), create a link with a carnival or circus, although the rest of the musical backdrop does not signify a circus, leading to the conclusion that the receiver/audience is not at the actual circus or carnival yet.

#### 4.2.4 The pedal point

“Scaretale” is in D minor and the double basses, cello and piano play a pedal point (*Museme 4*, “No escape”) on the tonic (D) in the Introduction:



**Figure 4.15: Museme 4 – The tonic pedal point on D**

The piano switches from D to A(1) and plays a dominant pedal point on this A (starting from around timecode 0’15.5”), while the first double basses start playing a bell tone on E-flat(3) at around timecode 0’15.5”. The second double basses play the only constant D(1) in the Introduction.

In Western music, the pedal point creates tension. The harmonic pedal point and the bell tone are very popular devices in the creation of mounting tension in the music of especially thriller or horror related films and television series, or war films as is the

case with many of William Alwyn's scores. It is also used to add to dramatic on-screen moments.

However, a pedal point is not always a static anchor that creates tension (see Hatten 2012). Robert Hatten argues that in some cases, the seemingly "stationary" pedal point is an active agent of friction that counteracts and impedes the motion of other voices, causing them to "struggle to emerge" (Hatten 2012). Hatten's argument adds a new dimension to the uncanny experience of the pedal point, in the sense that it is not merely creating tension by remaining static, but rather that it is deliberately counteracting any "attempt" to escape made by other voices such as the largely chromatically rising violin figures and Violin 2's nervous, chromatically rising trills. The pedal points cause friction as they, together with Violin 1's descending three-note figures, undermine the ascending lines in the Introduction, resulting in a feeling of entrapment with no hope of escaping what is to come.

#### **4.2.5 The "creepy children singing" trope**

The fifth *museme* that connotatively contributes to the Introduction's perceived eerie, sinister sound, as well as that of Lullaby (1) and Lullaby (2, part of the Epilogue) is not a musical structure, but a "sound trope" that features in many films, on television, in literature and in music; namely, the so-called "creepy children singing" trope (*Creepy children singing* n.d.). This trope usually involves a child or children singing a nursery rhyme or a simple melody resembling a nursery rhyme or lullaby eeriness is typically created when the receiver hears the child's seemingly sweet, "innocent" voice. This functions concurrently with a sinister backdrop that is either visually created (as in films, theatre and television programmes) or described in words, as is the case with literature involving this trope (*Creepy children singing* n.d. and *Creepy children's lullabies that will give you nightmares* n.d.).

The experience of this trope as uncanny may be seated in the notion that these songs are, in many cases, familiar (see Freud 1919:1-2) to the receiver; familiar in terms of childhood, childhood fears and childhood dreams. The songs (or even simply the sound of a child or children singing an uncomplicated tune) may be familiar to the receiver, but the way in which these songs or tunes are presented in specifically a horror film context, leads the receiver to experience the sound as uncanny. The

experience of this trope is further compounded by the other *musemes* in the *museme stacks* where this trope is heard. These *musemes*, such as the tritone, semitone clash, semitone shuttle, et cetera, is familiar to the receiver as horror and fear cues as they connote horror films and scores where these type of cues are regularly used and exploited to incite fear and horror.

#### 4.2.5.1 “Creepy children singing” trope in horror films

This trope appears in *Jaws*’s soundscape in a scene where a small boy sings the children’s song “The Muffin Man” while other children play exuberantly in the background, signifying a “safe”, “wholesome” environment until the receiver hears the shark’s semitone shuttle. The child’s singing is “a distraction, misdirection even, from anxiety” and it is exactly this deliberate misdirection that imbues the seemingly “safe” and “calm” scene with an underlying anxiety of “knowing” what is to follow as we (the audience) “sense what is about to happen by pretending *not* to know” (Link 2010:44).

Children’s voices, whether physical or implied at pivotal moments, is popular not only in film, but also in literature, music (popular and Western art music) and television programmes. The instances of children’s voices in Nightwish’s “Scaretale” may point to an additional layer of meaning in the song. The children’s choir in the Introduction, Lullaby (1) and Lullaby (2) is, of course, not the only signifier or *museme* in the sections where it occurs. Rather, it shares a concurrent textural space with other connotatively significant musical structures and cues which differ from the Introduction to Lullaby (1) to Lullaby (2). In all three these sections, although in different ways, the atmosphere and soundscape are decidedly ominous and sinister.

One of the first films to feature a children’s song within a sinister context, thus adding a new dimension of darkness and eeriness to the already disturbing visual material, is Alfred Hitchcock’s 1963 horror film *The Birds* where children sing “Risselty Rosselty” off-screen, while a flock of crows gather on a playground.<sup>68</sup> The scene’s “creepiness”

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<sup>68</sup> The song’s lyrics are based on the Scottish folk song “The Wee Cooper O’ Fife”.

is implied by the birds' impending and inevitable attack on innocent children who will play there soon.

Alternatively, in *Children of the Corn* (1984), children sing at key moments in the film to signify that danger is nearby or that something horrible is about to happen, therefore not unlike the shark's Leitmotif in *Jaws*. In *Children of the Corn*, the children commit murder through the pictures they draw; another subversion, I would suggest, of a typically harmless and innocent children's activity. Stan Link argues that the score actually points to an absence of childhood in the sense that the "musical imprint of children is confined to wordless voices of children in a quasi-choral chant, sounding more cultish than childish" (Link 2010:52). The two examples above show how children can either feature as targets (*The Birds*) of evil or predators (*Children of the Corn*).

In *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) children sing an adapted version of the popular nursery rhyme "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe". Here, children's singing voices form part of a nightmare scene as the film's antagonist, Freddy Kruger, kills his victims in their dreams. Furthermore, it links night time not only to physical darkness, but also to darkness on other levels. Other examples of film music where children's singing voices are used to create a sinister or otherworldly setting are readily available on the internet. These include:

- *Poltergeist* (1982, "Carol Anne's Theme");
- *Dark Water* (2005, "Itsy Bitsy Spider");
- "Hoist the Colours" in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007); and
- *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012, US National Anthem which boy soprano C.J. Coyne sings).

The "creepy children singing" trope is very popular in especially horror-inspired films as its inherently subversive nature adds a new level to the depth of eeriness and darkness to the disturbing storylines in horror films. Children's singing voices are not limited to the horror-genre but are also used in some film scores by composer Danny Elfman, most notably those of *Scrooged* (1988); *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015); the *Sleepy Hollow* theme (1999); the theme of the animated situational comedy *The Simpsons*; and the theme of the film *Nightbreed* (1990). The latter sees a difficult passage which the children's choir sings, unlike the simplistic unison melody heard

later in the main titles. The children's choir in the opening scene of the horror film *Pet Sematary* (1989) sings a polyphonic passage with semitone clashes that is more challenging than people generally associate with children's songs.

#### 4.2.5.2 Children's voices in Nightwish's songs

As mentioned previously, the singing children in Nightwish's "Scaretale" (together with dissonance, chromaticism and a pedal point), form part of a nightmare scene located in the first two introductory sections of the song and one in the Epilogue. Nightwish have other songs where a children's choir or solo boys' voices can be heard. These songs include:

- The poem read by Sam Hardwick in "Dead Boy's Poem" (*Wishmaster*, 2000);
- Opening lines of "Dark Chest of Wonders" (*Once*, 2004);
- Sung and spoken parts by Guy Elliott and Tom Williams (see Chapter 6 in "The Poet and the Pendulum" (*Dark Passion Play*, 2007); and
- The children's choir in "Storytime", "Ghost River" and "Rest Calm" – all from the *Imaginaerum* album (2011).

The digitally altered (modulated) voice of Sam Hardwick appears in the spoken parts of "Bless the Child" (*Century Child*) and in the "Christabel" section of "Beauty of the Beast" (*Century Child*). In both these songs, Hardwick's voice is altered to sound much older, creating an interesting sound, timbre wise. The lyrical content of Hardwick's spoken parts includes references to themes that are decidedly "adult". Hardwick's altered voice (but retained childlike timbre), may portray an adult with the imagination and expectations of a child, thus alluding to the way Holopainen sometimes sees or describes himself or inversely, a child "forced" to grow up where the child speaks from experience as if he were an adult. By altering the sound of a young boy to that of an adult, the "the child's" sonic identity is shifted from innocence to obscenity: "[s]ound is not merely symptomatic, but becomes the very site of the transformation from innocence to obscenity" and in this way the children in these songs "tell about a world outside their world" (Link 2010:38, 53).

Furthermore, the children's choir and boy sopranos in some of the songs add an initial "innocent" quality to the songs which, within their respective contexts, later become

more mysterious and ominous, rather than purely “innocent”. In “Scaretale” the children’s choir gives the song a decidedly “creepy” undertone. Thematically, the inclusion of children’s voices in some of Nightwish’s songs also speaks to the image of a child. Childhood, innocence and the loss thereof are the central themes of Holopainen’s lyrics which lie at the heart of Nightwish’s self-created and propagated mythology.

Holopainen’s descriptions of lost innocence and childhood take the form of a trope that features greatly in his lyrics. The Dead Boy makes his first appearance in “Dead Boy’s Poem” on the band’s 2000 album *Wishmaster*. The Dead Boy is a metaphor for Holopainen himself (see Chapter 6.5.2) and may represent the loss of innocence and the “death” of childhood. Musically and lyrically, the Dead Boy is portrayed by a boy or boy soprano of around 12 years of age (for example, in “The Poet and the Pendulum”) or a boy of the same age reading poems as part of the songs (for example, in “Dead Boy’s Poem” and “The Poet and the Pendulum”).

This trope can be found in numerous songs, including “Dead Boy’s Poem” (*Wishmaster*); “Dead to the World” (*Century Child*); “Beauty of the Beast” (*Century Child*); “Romanticide” (*Once*); “The Poet and the Pendulum” (*Dark Passion Play*); “The Heart I Once Had” (*Dark Passion Play*); and “Escapist” (bonus track on *Dark Passion Play*). The Dead Boy is also an integral part of the chorus of “Song of Myself”, a very personal song inspired by the poem of the same title by Walt Whitman.

In “Scaretale”, the children’s choir sings in two adjacent sections, namely the Introduction (bars 1-13, timecode 0’00”-0’28”) and Lullaby (1) in bars 14-29 (timecode 0’28”-1’02.90”) to add the “creepy singing child” trope to the nightmare scene as heard in the first two sections of the song. In the Introduction, the children’s choir delivers the well-known nursery rhyme “Ring a Ring o’ Roses” in speech-song, initially feigning a touch of innocence and purity. Initially, the voices of the small children create a stark contrast to the semitone clash, an agent of friction in the form of a pedal point and “trapped” chromatic violin figures, as if the children found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. At first, the inclusion of their voices may be argued to be a “softening” or “weakening” of the concurrent sinister, ominous musical cues.

The singing children may serve as a warning, signalling to the receiver that something otherworldly and/or evil is approaching, similar to their role in *The Birds*, *Children of the Corn* or *Jaws*. In “Scaretale”, the children’s voices are not staged at the forefront as “main” figures or to the side where they are within the scene or hypothetical “shot” but temporarily out of harm’s way. Their placement suggests that they are meant to sound “in the mix” with other sounds within the acoustic space as a part of the sphere of unsettling and disturbing sounds, where they actively take part in *creating* the eeriness. This eeriness is twofold as the children are either part of that which is evil (like in *Children of the Corn*) or ambiguous by otherworldly knowledge of something “that innocence cannot know”, keeping it a “secret” from the receiver, and thus putting the receiver in danger.

“Ring a Ring o’ Roses” may also connote the popular idea that this rhyme speaks of the Black Plague and its victims. Although the theory of a link between the rhyme and the Black Death is now debunked (see Wilde 2016; Roud 2010), the connection between the rhyme and the plague may very well still exist in popular consciousness, possibly including receivers listening to “Scaretale”. The children’s choir’s actual delivery of this nursery rhyme in “Scaretale” is also significant as they sing the rhyme in such a way that it sounds controlled and measured and stripped of childlike freedom and playfulness. The high level of reverb creates an echo effect and this, coupled with the mechanical delivery of the rhyme gives it a spooky, supernatural sound.

### **4.3 Lullaby (1)**

Lullaby (1), is also set in 6/8 time (see Table 4.1), this time clearly connoting and mimicking a lullaby. A homophonic texture where the children’s choir sing the melody replaces the intense dissonance and rich, thick, polyphonic texture of the Introduction. The two key features of Lullaby (1) are the children’s choir and the more central role of the harp.

#### **4.3.1 The “creepy children singing” trope**

A wordless lullaby which the Glockenspiel doubles, replaces the nursery rhyme of the Introduction:





**Figure 4.16: Transcribed first eight bars of the children’s choir melody (bars 14-21, timecode 0’28”-0’45”) as heard on the album**

The melody in Figure 4.16 is simple: the children sing it in unison and it does not have challenging or large interval jumps. Outside the context of “Scaretale”, the lullaby melody could very easily have been a soothing, relaxing bedtime-song. In “Scaretale”, this melody is doubled by the Glockenspiel (simultaneously signifying an industrial sound and mimicking a music box) and is interjected with harp arpeggios. Similar to the appearance of “The Muffin Man” in the film *Jaws* (see section 4.2.5.1), it is as if the music of Lullaby (1) – harp arpeggios, music box, children singing – “deliberately looks away as tragedy approaches” (see Link 2010:46). However, the context in which it appears complicates and undermines the seeming innocence of the wordless lullaby.

The seeming innocence of these sounds are a smokescreen as added reverb creates depth/distance from the sound source (children) within the textural space of the recording, giving it a far away, “hollowish”, ghostlike sound – a sound which vanishes immediately at the conclusion of the section. In Lullaby (1), the Glockenspiel’s doubling of the vocal melody is not merely a sonic amplification of the melody. The mechanical, automatic connotations surrounding the delivery of the Glockenspiel melody (or “music box) again adds a measured, mechanical air to the choir’s lullaby. The wordlessness of the lullaby further alienates it from children’s songs and games, resembling a chant rather than a children’s song and similar to the effect in *Children of the Corn*. The sound manipulation, wordlessness of the “chant”, the mechanical aspects of performance associated with the connoted music box and its influence on and connection with the children’s almost automatic “zombie-like” lullaby conflate to create an otherworldly, supernatural sound and feel in the section. This ultimately leads to a feeling of unsettling discomfort and unease.

### 4.3.2 Harp

The harp plays arpeggio-like fragments in Lullaby (1). This instrument has connotations with the heavenly, angels and healing (see Chapter 7.4.1). In “Scaretale” these “beautiful” connotations are subverted by pairing the harp with a “zombie-choir” and “ghost-like” effects. Danny Elfman uses the harp in the introductory bars of the track “The Book!/Obituaries” on the *Beetlejuice* (a comedy horror) soundtrack. The harp arpeggios in this song sound especially uncanny since they are based on two tritone intervals indicated with brackets:



**Figure 4.17: Two tritones in the harp arpeggio in the opening bars of Elfman’s “The Book!/Obituaries”**

Besides the sound effects and mechanical aspects of the section, another striking feature of Lullaby (1) is its harmonic structure. Contrary to the harmonic structure of the Introduction, it is not based on pedal points. The chord progression in bars 21-25 or timecode 0’43.6”-0’53.8” (i-III-♯VII-i) is reminiscent of i-VI-III-♯VII, a common progression that signifies “high drama and emotion” or “epic” passages (Ran 2012). It is popular with film music composers such as Howard Shore and Hans Zimmer. Zimmer is one of Holopainen’s favourite film score composers (Rizk 2011) and it is plausible that the i-III-♯VII-i chord progression in the Lullaby was inspired by the work of Zimmer.

Although the harmonic structure of Lullaby (1) is based on a supposedly “epic” chord progression, it should be clearly noted that instrumentation, orchestration and articulation play a deciding role in the perception or experience of chord progressions by the receiver (listener). In this regard, the role of articulation and instrumentation in Lullaby (1) in the construction of meaning in the section, can be examined by means of Tagg’s *hypothetical substitution*. The orchestration of Lullaby (1) ensures that the section is almost devoid of “drama” as one would expect of a lullaby. Very few instruments play in this section and articulation plays a major role in the overall sound effect and texture. If the *staccato* and *pizzicato* articulation were changed to include

exclusively long bowed notes or notes played for their full value, the texture would become denser. As seen from the table above, the selected instruments are primarily low-pitched instruments, except for the Glockenspiel and harp. If these instruments were substituted with high-pitched instruments that play in top registers, the soothing nature and night-time associations of the Lullaby (echoed in the choice of “darker” sounding low-pitched instruments) might change to a more “alert” version of the original.

The sound and atmosphere of the Introduction and Lullaby (1) are created by a combination of musical “horror cues” such as the semitone clash and shuttle, chromatic lines and children singing, a pedal point and bell tones, as well as eerie sound effects. Certain instruments’ articulation (especially Violin 2’s trills and the timpani and violas’ tremolos) combine with the eerie sounds and “horror-cues” to connote the anguish, terror and horror brought on by the nightmare sequence. When these sections of the song are considered in terms of an audio recording “playing for” a hypothetical audience, the soundscape pulls the audience or receiver(s) into the dark, sinister world of the nightmare, with the music suggesting that both it and the receiver are trapped. The “creepy children singing” in the Introduction and Lullaby (1) serve a dual purpose as a prophetic forewarning of what is expected after the “horror-cues” were heard already in the introductory bars of the song and in contrast “distracting” the audience, causing the receiver “pretend not to know” what is to follow. Here, the receiver is helpless; however, in a live performance setting, the role and experience of the receiver may be completely different.

In this setting, the “horror-cues” and connotations are still perceived and made by the receiver(s), but this time around it is a shared experience in a safety-in-numbers setting. As seen in video recordings of the of the song, some audience members capture the spectacle on their mobile phones, while others move their arms and bodies, dancing to the sounds of the horror-circus. Here, the receiver can either document the spectacle through a camera lens (limiting movement and creating distance between the transmitter, receiver and other receivers) or participate in the communal subversive “celebration” in the face of horror and terror.

## 4.4 The Themes

The typical swinging or rocking motion created by the Lullaby's 6/8 time signature is abruptly interrupted by the faster paced Theme (1) in 4/4 time. The harmonic structure of the first four bars of Theme (1) is loosely based on the "epic" i-III- $\sharp$ VII-i chord structure mentioned previously, and this time the instrumentation, orchestration and articulation play a central role in making the Themes sound "epic". In the first four bars of Theme (1) the III chord is excluded and the VI chord is altered to VI<sup>6</sup> in order to create a motion between D-D-C-D (i-VI<sup>6</sup>- $\sharp$ VII-i) in the bassline. The main theme repeats five times in five respective sub-sections, namely Theme (1)-(5):



**Figure 4.18: Main theme of Themes (1)-(5)**

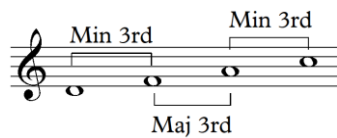
Although the tempo, home key and time signature stays the same, each new entry of the theme has unique characteristics with regard to orchestration, voicing, harmony, texture and articulation. The adult choir replaces the children's choir and the band plays a central role in creating different "levels" in texture. The drum kit and distorted electric guitar join in, in Theme (2).<sup>69</sup> The drum kit plays hard-hitting, clashing crash cymbals in Theme (3) while the downtuned electric bass guitar plays a very low A. From Theme (4) all the band instruments are heard. The already dense texture is further thickened by double bass/kick drumming (basic pattern consisting of two groups of four semiquavers each), which also palpably increases the surface rate to signify heightened tension, increased urgency and also lends an added "violence" to the syncopated main melodic theme.

The double bass drumming and entrance of the distorted electric guitar create a dense texture, making the relevant Themes sound bass laden, "heavy" and dark. The Themes section as a whole has a more "epic" soundscape than those of the Introduction and Lullaby (1). Themes (2)-(5) contain tonicisations of F minor, C minor

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<sup>69</sup> Distortion/overdrive is an example of a special sound effect.

and A minor (see Table 4.1). In terms of the home key D minor, these tonicised key areas are related in the sense that their tonics are thirds apart:



**Figure 4.19: Third relations between home key and tonicised key areas**

The third relations between the tonicised key areas are significant.<sup>70</sup> In neo-Riemannian theory, the relation between D minor and F minor is a RP-transformation; between F minor and A minor is a PL-transformation, and between A minor and C minor is a RP-transformation. The different types of third relations within the system have different connotations as certain relations are more remote than others. In this regard, the third relations here (RP-transformations and one PL-transformation) are more remote transformations and therefore possibly connote the uncanny.

The pitches D-F-A-C also spell a D minor seventh chord, further underlining the instability and dissonance of the section at a structural level. The tonicised F, A and C minor chords can be connected to the “epic” chord progression (i-III-♯VII-i) in the sense that the F minor chord is iii (with a lowered third on A-flat), C minor is VII with a lowered third and A minor is a natural dominant chord (without leading tone). In these instances, the lowered third gives the “epic” progression a “dark” character. The Themes section concludes just as abruptly as it started.

## 4.5 The Verses

Link Theme (1) announces the start of the Verses-section. The choir is completely absent now and only a few orchestral instruments (low-pitched percussion and low-pitched instruments such as the bass clarinet, bassoon, violas, celli and double basses) play. The keyboard, voiced to sound like a harpsichord, plays the melody. The reception of the B-section of the song (or Verses, timecode 2’02.7”-3’42.6”), depends

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<sup>70</sup> Neo-Riemannian theory is a collection of ideas based on Hugo Riemann’s theoretical model (Cohn 1998:167, 170-172). It plays a central role in the work of, for example, David Lewin and Richard Cohn. An example of a popular music scholar that employs the neo-Riemannian system is Guy Capuzzo.

on the lyrics, Olzon's vocal costume, sound effects and four music structures with semiotic properties that connote horror and the uncanny synchronically and diachronically.

#### 4.5.1 The lyrics and Anette Olzon's vocal costume

The lyrics of Verses (1) and (2) further underline the circus connection, together with the fact that the audience is not at the "main event" quite yet:<sup>71</sup>

Once upon a time in a daymare  
Dying to meet you, little child, enter enter this sideshow  
Time for bed the cradle still rocks  
13 chimes on a dead man`s clock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock

The bride will lure you, cook you, eat you  
Your dear innocence boiled to feed the evil in need of fear  
Burning farms and squealing pigs  
A pool of snakes to swim with, oh sweet poison bite me bite me

In this scene, the soundscape transports the receiver to a "daymare" where a cackling witch-like individual (as portrayed by Anette Olzon) sings about a subversive sideshow where an innocent child will be boiled to death and consumed by "the bride". The idea of a circus or carnival was already alluded to in the initial bars of the Introduction by means of chromatic figures and passages. The word "daymare" suggests that frightful, ghostly manifestations are not deterred by daylight and thus, daytime's associated safety is challenged and nullified: the terrifying nightmare cannot be escaped even when the sun rises, as it is very comfortable haunting the poor victim in broad daylight. The subversive use of daytime, something that should be safe and comforting, is reminiscent of the nursery rhyme in the Introduction and the decidedly eerie air lent to the melody of Lullaby (1).

The lyrics contain overt horror images, terror and superstition (the number 13 being linked to bad luck). The sideshow is also associated with a bearded woman and a

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<sup>71</sup> All lyrics quoted in this analysis were retrieved from Nightwish's official website (see *Lyrics* 2015).

snake eater (as seen in footage from the *Imaginaerum* film), as these characters add shock-value and grotesque entertainment to the carnival or circus. It is unlikely that it is a source of inspiration for this section of the song or the inclusion of the “Phantom of the Opera” motif in the Introduction and Verses (see Figures 4.7 and 4.8). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Erik, also known as the “Phantom of the Opera”, in Gaston Leroux’s novel of the same title, was put on display (possibly also in sideshows) as the “living corpse” in fairs because of his severely deformed face (Leroux [1911] 1987:345).<sup>72</sup>

Verse (3) occurs later in the “Recapitulation” section after the Ghost Dances and the recapitulation of the Themes in the shape of Themes (6)-(8). Verse (3) has the same chromatically descending theme as Verse (1)-(2, see Figure 4.14) and Olzon sings it in the same character singing, musical theatre-esque style as she did in in Verses (1)-(2). The lyrics are:

Horde of spiders, closet tentacles  
Laughing harpies with their talons ripping, sher-chrisss, per-vizzz  
The pendulum still sways for you  
Such are the darks here to show you, child in a corner, fallen mirrors, all  
kingdom in cinders

Verse (3)’s lyrics describe a terror-inducing encounter with spiders and another version (also mythological in origin) of the femme fatale image, namely laughing harpies with sharp, scratching talons; their ripping sound is mimicked by Olzon as she sings the words “sher-chrisss, per-vizzz” while sliding from her middle register at the beginning of both words into her higher vocal register at the end of both words.<sup>73</sup>

The line “The pendulum still sways for you” presages a scene from and the song title of Nightwish’s 2007 song “The Poet and the Pendulum” (see Chapter 6). The words “show you, child in a corner, fallen mirrors, all kingdom [sic] in cinders” are rhythmically supported by the orchestra’s strings and the adult choir, further emphasising the strong accents on these words and their associated fantastical and horror connotations.

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<sup>72</sup> The novel was originally published in 1911 by Grosset & Dunlap, New York.

<sup>73</sup> Harpies are mythological bird-like women or “centaur-like beasts with wings” (Coleman 2011:457).

“[C]hild in a corner” has obvious connections with fear, being trapped and of horror. The “fallen mirrors” have both fantasy and superstitious connotations as it refers to the mirror in the fairy tale “Snow White” and according to superstition, a broken mirror brings about seven years of bad luck. Both these connotations have negative associations: one with a wicked and vain stepmother and the other, with misfortune.

The Verses’ lyrics have clear ties with fantasy as it reads as a dark, subversive, horrific fairy tale – even more horrific than many of the original versions of some famous fairy tales. Furthermore, the connotations associated with the word “bride” are usually happiness, future possibilities, hope and even purity. In “Scaretale” the bride is cast as a blood-thirsty femme fatale. The stereotypical relationship between a woman and a child is also challenged and subversively presented. Stereotypically, a woman is seen as a caregiver and nurturer of small children, but conversely a woman is the hypothetical child’s greatest threat in this scene of the song, ultimately causing a heightened feeling of tension and helplessness in the receiver/audience. Although references to both a bride and a femme fatale are made in some Nightwish lyrics, these two themes are not directly linked in other Nightwish songs.<sup>74</sup>

Another instance where a chromatic line has a definitive purpose is where Olzon sings the word “daymare” in Verse (1). At this point, the oboe and clarinet’s chromatically descending motif serves as a highly ironic counter-melody to the vocal line which Olzon sings and it is indicated in the score that this chromatic motif (see Figure 4.14) should be played “comedically sweet”. At this point, Olzon’s vocal melody also mainly descends with chromatic inflections. The seemingly sweet and joking descending line is in direct contrast to the dark picture painted by the lyrics where the “comedic” delivery of the countermelody actively intensifies the horror, instead of undermining it. Olzon’s delivery of the vocal melody and lyrics is particularly conducive to the experience and reception of the Verses.

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<sup>74</sup> This is not the only instance in Nightwish’s (Holopainen’s) lyrics where a woman is painted as a femme fatal. In fact, the trope of “the siren” features heavily in the lyrics of many of Nightwish’s first phase songs such as “Elvenpath” (*Angels Fall First*); “The Siren” (*Once*); “Wishmaster” (*Wishmaster*); “Deep Silent Complete” (*Wishmaster*); and “Ghost Love Score” (*Once*). Songs with references to either a bride or a “bridal bed” are “Nightwish” (1996 demonstration recording); “Astral Romance” (*Angels Fall First*); “She is My Sin” (*Wishmaster*); and “Whoever Brings the Night” (*Dark Passion Play*).



When Olzon's vocal approach in "Scaretale" is compared to her sensitive, "clean" delivery of the fantasy ballad "Turn Loose the Mermaids", her more "breathy" approach coupled with comfortable and style-sensitive slides between pitches in the jazz inspired song "Slow Love Slow" or even in hard-hitting sections of songs such as "Song of Myself", "Last Ride of the Day" or "Storytime", it is very clear that Olzon takes a unique approach to "Scaretale". Here, she creates large, emphasised, almost over-exaggerated "scoops" between certain melody notes so that dramatic and chromatic slides occur between main pitches. These chromatic slides also underline the perceived cruelty of her persona in this song and her harshness is demonstrated through screeching and cackling in other lines. The sometimes uncomfortable "shifts" in pitch brought about by chromatic slides also inspire unease and discomfort in the receiver.

Her "scooping" technique to suggest chromatic lines echoes the chromatically descending lines that occur throughout "Scaretale", perpetuating the circus theme of the song. She incorporates a very "throaty" approach to some words (underlined in the following examples) that creates a scary and ominous sound, for example:

- "Time to meet you later"; and
- "Squealing pigs"

She uses "scooping" to paint certain words such as the ascending and then descending intervals on the word "squealing", while simultaneously using a pinched and slightly nasal timbre to imitate the squealing sound made by a pig. Another factor that adds to the sound of Verses (1) to (3) is the manipulation of her vocal lines by means of echo/delay effects. Reverb is added to the percussion instruments in the eight-bar Riff (3) between Verses (1) and (2) to create depth/distance. Olzon's vocals in the Verses are aurally staged to be "front-and-centre", but the added echo/delay to her voice also creates the idea of distance as "wetter" sounds (sounds with a higher level of reverb) tend to create the idea of being further away than "drier" sounds (sounds with a lower level of reverb). This "near-yet-far" placement of her vocals also supports the idea that this is not the main event; it is an entr'acte to the even greater horror scene that is to come.

At the end of Verse (2, around timecode 3'35.1"-3'42.6"), Olzon repeats the words "bite me, bite me" and these bars serve as a short link between Verse (2) and Bridge (1). It is clearly audible on the recording that her voice is digitally altered by means of a repeat echo delay. The sound and atmosphere of the short link is achieved through the sound modulation (flanger/phaser) of the accompanying instruments (approximately 1000 Herz) and a midrange frequency boost to Olzon's repetitions of the words "bite me" (excluding the first time it is uttered). Studio-created sound effects have, according to both Philip Tagg and Allan F. Moore, a direct effect on the aesthetics of a song or section. The digital alterations to Olzon's contribution and the accompaniment in these bars create an eerie, ominous, post-human and otherworldly sound and atmosphere. The repeated "echoey" vocals and "wavy" accompaniment highlight the feeling of being trapped in the nightmare – a feeling/image that is created throughout "Scaretale". The conclusion of Verse 3 (around timecode 6'39.5"-6'45.3"), has a short four-bar link with clearly audible sound manipulations and effects, similar to the effects found in the link at the end of Verse (2).

Olzon's vocals in the Verses are delivered in a singing style that strongly resembles character singing which, in turn, is associated with musical theatre where special attention is given to diction, timbre and timbre changes. The addition of musical theatre style singing further strengthens the band's efforts to produce music that can be described as theatrical. Furthermore, it supports the fantasy themes that dominate *Imaginaerum's* lyrical content and it speaks to the theatre theme that can be traced back to Holopainen's earlier lyrics.<sup>75</sup> These musical theatre elements, as well as the circus music elements found in other parts of the song, shift Nightwish's soundscape and genre boundaries beyond film score, exotic (Celtic and Arabian), power metal elements and sound palette, which ultimately contribute to symphonic metal in its entirety.

#### **4.5.2 Pedal point**

Link Theme (1), Riff (1), Riff (2), Link Theme (2) and Riff (3, timecode 2'02.7"-2.36.9" and 3'00.1"-3'11.6") are based on a tonic pedal point in D minor, even though an actual

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<sup>75</sup> Examples of such songs are "Sleeping Sun" (*Angels Fall First*); "Stargazers" (*Oceanborn*); "Dead Gardens" (*Once*); and "Higher than Hope" (*Once*)



semiquavers are “evenly spaced” from the start. The Link Themes are perceived as much less “scary” than the *Jaws* theme, but this does not imply that it does not communicate its own brand of uneasiness. With the absence of the other musical factors that gave rise to the unsettling feeling and sinister soundscape of the Introduction, the semitone shuttles in the Link Themes sound less ominous, but their oscillating, unstable nature hints at an inherent uneasiness and restlessness in the Links. The most striking feature of the semitone shuttle in the Link Themes is the instrument on which the shuttle melody is played, namely the harpsichord – another factor that suggests that the Link Themes are anything but ordinary.

#### 4.5.4 Harpsichord

The harpsichord features in numerous metal songs; for example “Where Do I Then Belong” by Peccatum, Dark Moor’s “Eternity” and “La Dix Croix” by Moi dix Mois. In these three songs, the harpsichord connotes “darkness” and Gothic images. The harpsichord features in many uploads on YouTube as the main instrument in “dark” songs about hauntings or vampires, very similar to the type of songs that feature the organ.<sup>76, 77, 78</sup> These kinds of songs oftentimes mimic characteristics of Baroque music and its use in the examples could connote “an earlier” or “another” time (such as “Old Times” from the film *The Others*), along with the “mystery” (sometimes bordering on conspiracy theories) that many people ascribe to moments in history.

The harpsichord also features in film music. An example of a film score track where its sound is used to connote “darkness” and the “spooky” to fit the sardonic plot is “Enter the Family/Sand Worm Planet” from the 1988 film *Beetlejuice*. The original score is also composed by Danny Elfman, a composer whose work may have influenced “Scaretale” (see sections 4.2.3, 4.2.5, 4.3.2 and 4.6.2). The theme from the 1991 film *The Addams Family* (music by Marc Shaiman) features the harpsichord to support the “dark”, horror-driven (though comedic) plot of the film. In the score of the dark comedy *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004), composer

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<sup>76</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOPxmqKl7Yc>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbeOJU2Scag>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCK1KVsfopk>

Thomas Newman uses the harpsichord sound to add a “quirkiness” and mystery to the track while the instrument provides a “clangy” metallic sound and connotes vampires or a vampire in the waltz-like accompaniment in the romantic track “Lucy’s Party” from *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992; music by Wojciech Kilar).

When the instrumentation of “Scaretale” is compared to that of traditional circus music, the harpsichord instead of the almost expected Hammond or fairground organ, adds an interesting sound quality to the circus-themed song.<sup>79</sup> The harpsichord sound features significantly in the Link Themes and later in the Ghost Dances. The harpsichord sound is produced by a digital keyboard that could easily have produced the organ sound, thus leading to the conclusion that the harpsichord may have been chosen for its unique sound’s connotative properties.

The harpsichord typically signifies another time, another place, through its ties with Baroque music. It sometimes transports the receiver to earlier times in history as its sound is intimately associated with the Baroque era. The harpsichord’s connotations with horror, darkness and vampires may establish an aural link between “Scaretale” and horror, since the harpsichord is used as a replacement of the organ in some “dark” or vampire-themed songs. In this way, the subversive Circus of Death is further linked with horror and the otherworldly (or rather, underworldly). Furthermore, the instrument’s almost “metallic” tone may be another reference to the industrial and metallic sounds throughout “Scaretale”. These metallic sounds themselves may signify a type of bell-sound which, in turn, could connote “time”, “church”, “funeral” or “graveyard”.

#### **4.5.5 Tritone**

Besides the distorted sound of the electric guitar, another very prominent feature of Riff (2, timecode 2’13.9”-2’31”) is the strings’ (echoed by the bass clarinet) *staccato* and *pizzicato* patterns. These patterns highlight the tension between the semitone A-

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<sup>79</sup> A barrel organ plays unaccompanied at the end of the Epilogue.

flat and A-natural, respectively representative of the diminished and perfect fifth intervals above D:



**Figure 4.21: Diminished fifth and perfect fifth pattern**

The diminished fifth interval between D and A-flat (indicated with a bracket in Figure 4.26) is an enharmonic translation of D to G-sharp and possesses the characteristic tritone sound, making the sound of Riff (2) alternate between unstable/”sinister” and a temporary but fleeting stable/”perfect” state. In isolation, the notes A-flat–A-natural–A-flat (A $\flat$ –A $\natural$ –A $\flat$ ) may also reflect the alteration in key between D minor and F minor that occurs at pivotal moments in the song. The RP-transformation between D minor and F minor signifies the uncanny and the otherworldly, magical (see Webster 2009:239-240) or fantastical as it connotes, among other things, “Harry’s Wondrous World” and “Hedwig’s Theme” in the 2001 film *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*.<sup>80</sup>

A tritone appears in the melody of the three Verses which I demonstrate below with the lyrics at the beginning of Verse (1):



**Figure 4.22: Tritone in the melody of the Verses**


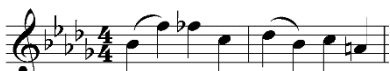
This melody has a similar turn on  $\#4 - \hat{2} - \hat{3}$  (G-sharp-E-F) to the melody of “Hedwig’s Theme” (B-G-B-G-C-B-A-sharp-F-sharp-G) where the  $\#4 - \hat{2} - \hat{3}$  turn is on A-sharp-F-sharp-G (A $\sharp$ -F $\sharp$ -G).

<sup>80</sup> Jamie Lynn Webster cites the inclusion of a celeste and harp in the instrumentation of “Hedwig’s Theme” as key connotative features to respectively connote the otherworldly and magic in the song (2009:507).

## 4.6 The Bridges and Ghost Dances

The Bridges can be heard at timecode 3'42.8"-4'17.9" and the three Ghost Dances at timecode 4'18.1"-5'38.8". The Bridges and Ghost Dances can be identified by the following melodic themes and motifs as found in "Scaretale's" score:

**Table 4.2: The themes and motifs in the Bridges and Ghost Dances**

Section	Melodic theme or motif
Bridge (1)	
Bridge (2)	
Ghost Dance (1) <sup>81</sup>	
Ghost Dance (2)	
Ghost Dance (3)	

As shown in Table 4.3, the two Bridges are in D minor and B-flat minor respectively, while the Ghost Dances have a ternary form structure with Ghost Dances (1) and (3) in B-flat minor and Ghost Dance (2) in G minor.

<sup>81</sup> Ghost Dance (1) and (3) has the same melody (theme) as the Verse (1) to (3).

#### 4.6.1 The lyrics and Marco Hietala's vocal costume

Marco Hietala (the ringmaster), who enters in Bridge (2; at timecode 3'58.4"), welcomes the audience to the "Cirque de Morgue" and introduces some of the acts that the audience can expect to see. Here, the lyrics and Marco Hietala's vocal delivery play key roles in the establishment of the ominous, sinister, restless and unstable sound and atmosphere in the Bridges.

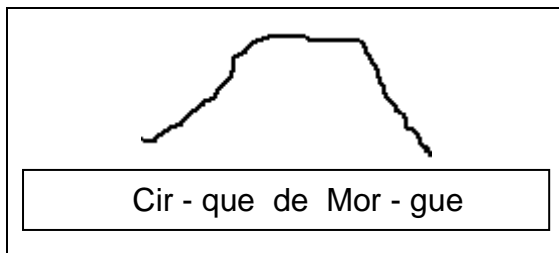
The lyrics of Bridge (2) are as follows:

Ladies and gentlemen  
Be heartlessly welcome  
To Cirque de Morgue  
And what a show we have for you tonight!

Hietala does not sing in a particularly low register, but he darkens his timbre which gives the impression that the section sounds lower than it actually is. He adds a growling quality to the tone, adding a harsh, sinister, scary and abrasive quality to Bridge (2), which echoes and supports the lyrical content that refers to the Circus of Death and "heartlessly" welcomes guests. His timbre in this section is more characteristic of metal, although his performance shows his vocal agility that is not always heard in songs with heavy growling. His large range and seamless "gliding" through different vocal registers further highlights his vocal agility and brings the theatrical quality of the section to the forefront. In this regard, Hietala's approach to the vocals (even though it is in a style associated with metal music) in Bridge (2) and the Ghost Dances can also be regarded as a type of character singing to accentuate the dark musical undertone of the section and the lyrical content.

Hietala's use of vibrato on the word "heartlessly" creates a "spooky" effect while the great differences in register on the words "Cirque de Morgue" highlight the chasm between the "light" circus and the "darkness" of death:





**Figure 4.23: Hietala's great register slides on the words "Cirque de Morgue"**

He emphasises the "darkness" of death with a growl on the last syllable. The juxtaposition between the idea of fun and the Circus of Death, already in the introductory Bridges section, communicates to the receiver that the next chapter in the nightmare sequence is about to start. This dark undertone is also evident in the lyrics of the first Ghost Dance (timecode 4'18.1"):

Restless souls will put on their dancing shoes  
 Mindless ghouls with lot of limbs to lose  
 Illusionists, contortionist,  
 Tightrope-walkers tightening the noose

These lyrics contain obvious references to circus acts and performers, but they are presented with an additional twist: the performers also include "restless souls" who dance (which is contrary to the traditional image of ghosts), ghouls and tightrope-walkers who not only entertain but also kill. These lyrics correspond with the title of the circus, namely "Cirque De Morgue" as introduced by the ringmaster in Bridge (2) and also underline the subversive nature of the circus and its performers.

Hietala does not feature in Ghost Dance (2), but he sings on the syllable "la" in Ghost Dance (3, timecode 5'05.4"). Although he still adds a dark growling-like tone, the diabolical ringmaster's enjoyment of the scene can clearly be heard in his jubilant, yet wordless rendition of the vocal melody, melodically similar to the one heard in Ghost Dance (1). The spooky ghost choir (adult choir) adds chilling effects to the Ghost Dances where they joyously, mockingly and spookily double the circus theme (see Figure 4.26) at certain points in the Dances.

#### 4.6.2 Musemes and sound effects



The setting and source of inspiration for the nightmare-scenario in the Bridges and the three Ghost Dances (see Table 4.1) at timecode 3'42.8"-5'38.8", develop the idea of a "twisted circus" or carnival even further. This scene is the main circus event with Hietala as the sadistic, diabolical ringmaster and a sound palette akin to circus music (especially in the three Ghost Dances). The Bridges are an introduction to the "main circus event" (found in the three Ghost Dances); also see the first appearance of the ringmaster in the song. Bridge (1) sees the introduction of a new *staccato* theme which the piccolo, Glockenspiel, violin and keyboard play:



**Figure 4.24: The piccolo, Glockenspiel, violin and keyboard's staccato theme**

Five musical structures and gestures with connotative significance in the Bridges that produce the section's sound and atmosphere are:

**Table 4.3: Musemes and gestures in the Bridges and Ghost Dances**

No.	Musical structures and gestures	Description
1)		The chromatically descending line the cor anglais and clarinet play
2)		The oscillatory piccolo, Glockenspiel, violin and keyboard <i>staccato</i> figure
3)	Slower tempo	Q = 122
4)	The minor key	D minor

5)	<p>The prominent horn melody highlighting the D minor tonic pentachord between D and A</p>
----	--

Although a jolly circus theme also exhibits some of these characteristics such as chromatic or scale-like runs, brass instruments or high-pitched woodwinds, the way these *musemes* in the Bridges are layered makes for a very different listening experience than say, the well-known “Entry of the Gladiators” or “The Circus Bee”.<sup>82</sup> The prominent horn-theme and the tonic pentachord are reminiscent of the so-called Batman-theme heard in the introductory bars of the song “Batman Versus the Circus” from the 1992 film *Batman Returns* (music by Danny Elfman):<sup>83</sup>



**Figure 4.25: Batman-theme in “Batman Versus the Circus”**

Akin to Nightwish’s “Scaretale”, “Batman Versus the Circus” is also set in a minor key, has a high-pitched oscillatory figure, tonic pentachord and a distinctive horn melody. All these factors contribute to both songs’ ominous, restless atmosphere and soundscape. Both the “Scaretale” (LP-, PR-, and RP-transformations between key areas) and “Batman Versus the Circus” (L-transformation between chords) excerpts feature third relations which contribute to the uncanny soundscape and atmosphere of both songs. The “shifts” between keys in “Scaretale” are more remote than the L-transformation in “Batman Versus the Circus”, making it sound even more uncanny.<sup>84</sup> In this regard, the L-transformation and concurrent “wave swell” effect in the Batman-

<sup>82</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_B0CyOAO8y0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_B0CyOAO8y0) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bxo-BvEHa8>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4CjzMlyglw>

<sup>84</sup> The harmonic progression in the “Batman”-example is from tonic to submediant major to dominant, while in “Scaretale” the progression is from tonic to submediant minor to tonic.

theme may rather connote “fantasy”, “epic” or “hero” as Batman is not a villain or “supernatural hero”, but rather a mortal man in an iconic superhero-suit, with an astounding array of gadgets at his disposal.

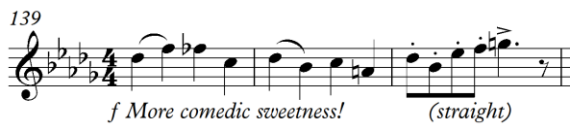
Other examples of songs or tracks with the oscillatory keyboard and Glockenspiel are the song “Birth of a Penguin” on the same 1992 *Batman Returns* soundtrack (Danny Elfman), “The Joker’s Poem” from the 1989 film *Batman* (Danny Elfman), as well as “Jack’s Lament” and the “Finale/Reprise” from *A Nightmare Before Christmas* (Danny Elfman).<sup>85</sup>

The restlessness of the Bridges is maintained in the Ghost Dances in the form of key changes from B-flat minor, temporarily to B minor, temporarily to C minor, to G minor in Ghost Dance (2) and back to B-flat minor in Ghost Dance (3). All the key changes in the Bridges and Ghost Dances (see Table 4.1) are third relations as D minor to B-flat minor (Verses to Bridges) is a LP-transformation, B-flat minor to G minor a PR-transformation, G minor to B-flat minor a RP-transformation, and B-flat minor to D minor (Ghost Dance (3) to “Recapitulation”) a PL-transformation. The character of Gollum’s theme, as well as the track “Gollum’s Song” in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (score by Howard Shore) has PL-transformation similar to this shift from B-flat minor to D minor in “Scaretale”, as well as Wagner’s “Tarnhelm” motif (Bribitzer-Stull 2015:150, see Chapter 6.2.2). The PL-transformation’s weird connotations echo Gollum’s monstrous appearance and shady character.

The key change from G minor to B-flat minor (RP-transformation) completes the return to the temporary home-key for the Ghost Dances and highlights the ternary form structure of the three Dances, but the key change a minor third higher, may also represent heightened tension while mirroring the ringmaster’s increasing level of ecstasy. The beginning of the Ghost Dances is marked by a faster tempo, a “double 2/4 feel” and the appearance of the circus theme (as found in “Scaretale’s” score):

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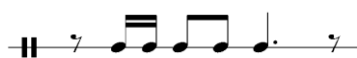
<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, the songs “Circus Black” by Amberian Dawn (timecode 2’29”-2’33”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHbJiOe6hwM>) and the track “Creepy Circus Music” by Circus of Dread (timecode 0’22”-0’27”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKFixiZtKVU>) link the idea of a circus with the Batman-theme as both contain high-pitched oscillatory figures that a digital keyboard plays (as also heard in Nightwish’s “Scaretale” and the *Batman* examples) and a melodic figure that may be considered as a reference to the Batman-theme.



**Figure 4.26: Circus theme**

The cor anglais, clarinet, violins and violas and the strings – which are most audible in Ghost Dance (1) – play this theme. The xylophone replaces the Glockenspiel at the beginning of Ghost Dance (1) and this instrument’s sound has connotations with death and the macabre. In Saint-Saens’s *Danse Macabre* and the “Fossils”-section of his *Carnival of the Animals*, the xylophone sound is used to musically depict bones or skeletons. Danny Elfman also employs the xylophone to connote bones/skeletons in the “Overture” track of the film *A Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993).

The connection between the xylophone and bones or skeletons is also fitting for “Scaretale”. The Glockenspiel has connections with horror (see section 4.3.1), but the music box automatism it typically represents in horror, is not connotatively fitting for the jubilant, ecstatic Ghost Dances. The xylophone doubles a distinctive two semiquavers, two quavers and dotted crotchet rhythmic motif (see Figure 4.27) that the receiver hears again in Ghost Dance (3). Although it is not staged to have a prominent position within the acoustic space of the recording, the presence of the xylophone playing chords may connote skeletons dancing restlessly and zombie-like to the now unceasing, intensifying and almost cruel repetitions of the circus music rhythm:



**Figure 4.27: Rhythmic motif in Ghost Dances (1) and (3)**

This rhythmic pattern signifies the circus. An isolated example of a similar pattern is found in the song “Entry of the Gladiators” (at timecodes 0’48”-1’01”, 1’43”-1’59” and 2’13”-2’22”). The drum kit plays a central role in the Ghost Dances as the rhythmic driving force, playing on the off-beats, similar to the percussion pattern found in, for instance, “The Circus Bee” (timecode 1’31”-1’57”), and also in an excerpt from the

soundtrack of *The Circus* (timecode 2'07"-2'41"), a 1928 silent film starring Charlie Chaplin.<sup>86</sup>

Besides the instrumentation of the Ghost Dances, key changes, the repeated rhythmic motif, the lyrics and Hietala's vocal costume, the in-score performance instructions on how to interpret the circus theme (see Figure 4.26) and ultimately how it is executed by the relevant woodwinds and strings, is a determining factor in the construction of meaning in the Ghost Dances. The apparent "sweetness" of the theme is a stark contrast to the macabre backdrop of the evil ringmaster and the characters in the Circus of Death: dancing mindless ghouls and the spooky, mocking ghost choir.

The ringmaster's role in the Ghost Dances exceeds that of a traditional circus ringmaster whose main tasks include announcing/introducing the different acts and serving as a kind of "master of ceremonies" during the circus proceedings. Hietala's character is much more prominent and his central role is also supported by studio-created sound effects. The lower level of reverb to his vocal lines result in "drier" vocals that sound closer to the audience than Olzon's, signifying to the receiver that he is even more threatening. His "in-your-face" vocals within the textural space of the recording further underlines his authority as the central figure and dominant leader who takes great pleasure in the "comedy" that is celebrated by the participating actors in the subversive Circus of Death.

#### **4.6.3 "Heavy metal carnival"**

Comedy is a central theme in especially the three Ghost Dances. It is reflected in the "comedically sweet" execution of the countermelody in Verses (1)-(3) as suggestive of a circus (see Figures 4.14); the "comedic" delivery of the circus theme heard in Ghost Dances (1) and (3, see Figure 4.34) and the short chromatically descending passage which the clarinet and low brass play at the end of Ghost Dance (1, around timecode 4'45") that should sound "[a]s if laughing!". Within this framework, the light-hearted, perky piccolo, flute and cor anglais parts in Ghost Dance (2) offer deliberate, ironic comedy which stands in stark contrast to the macabre musical backdrop, further intensifying the horrific and mysterious qualities of the entire scene. Other instances

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnN0Qh6uXGE>

of comedy or laughter can be heard in Ghost Dance (3), where Hietala (again aurally staged to sound closer and more imposing to the audience), sings his melody gaily on the syllable “la”. The Ghost Dances conclude with the ringmaster laughing cruelly and sadistically, while the members of the ghost choir laugh hysterically at random. Their laughs and random high-pitched notes (most probably violin sounds), are dubbed to sound even sharper, almost like shards of glass, resulting in a frightening, unsettling listening experience. The characters within the subversive Circus of Death share in communal laughter and celebrate by dancing (the restless souls and skeletons) and singing (the ringmaster and the almost mocking ghost choir).

In Mikhail Bakhtin’s theorisations of the practices of the mediaeval carnival, one of the central features is the communal carnival laughter as the universal “laughter of all the people”:

[T]his laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:11-12).

Communal laughter, the subversion of “official” roles and the abandoning of everyday etiquette in carnival times create a time characterised by an “all-human character ... festivity, utopian meaning, and philosophical depth” (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:16). The individual is temporarily free from the burdens of everyday life and social hierarchy as part of a utopian world and community where all take part equally, where all laugh together.

As with most metal songs written, “Scaretale” is intended to be performed live in front of an audience. In live shows (as on YouTube), the audience members (receivers) hold their hands in the air, wave their arms, dance, move about, sing and rejoice in the performance – a performance describing horrific scenes with laughing participants. The audience become participants in the scene and join in, in the ecstasy and communal laughter of the experience (Karen Halnon’s so-called “heavy metal carnival”).

The lyrics of the two Bridges and the first Ghost Dance describe a “heartlessly welcome” audience, the paradoxical title of the Circus of Death, ghouls with “limbs to

lose”, contortionists and “tightrope walkers tightening the noose”. The description of the characters and events is not only horrific, gory and gruesome, it grabs the receiver’s attention by placing emphasis on the physical body, more specifically, on the physical body enduring unnatural, degrading experiences and being contorted into unnatural positions and poses. The participating audience mosh, move, pull their faces and contort their bodies while singing along.

The focus on the body in this part of the song is similar to the emphasis on the physical body in Bakhtin’s carnival where internal organs, blood and that which is ordinarily hidden inside the body have the same importance and visibility as that which is normally externally seen. In grotesque realism, emphasis is placed on that which is usually concealed, with an integral and essential feature of grotesque realism being degradation; “all that is high” is degraded to the level of earth and body (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:19). The degradation of “all that is high” through grotesque realism again puts the lower stratum of the body in the spotlight, which is not only associated with excretion, but also with the womb – birth and life. Through degradation, that which is high (and ultimately, everyday life itself) is brought down to earth, to the level of the grave and the lower bodily stratum where it dies to be reborn:

The existing world suddenly becomes alien ... precisely because there is the potentiality of a friendly world, of the golden age, of carnival truth. Man returns unto himself. The world is destroyed so that it may be regenerated and renewed. While dying it gives birth (Bakhtin [1965] 1984:48).

Heavy metal carnival’s overt links to grotesque realism and the carnivalesque create possibilities for degradation, rebellion, community, collectivity and rebirth.<sup>87</sup> Halnon supports George Ritzer’s (2004) argument that we increasingly live in an impersonal, controlled, mass-produced, superficial world of nothingness (Halnon 2004:745). Through degradation, subversion and

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<sup>87</sup> Dave Snell & Darrin Hodgetts highlight that dancing, headbanging, material objects such as band T-shirts and other metal music paraphernalia as well as the sharing of metal knowledge help fans to establish friendships and to experience a sense of community by belonging to a group that juxtaposes itself to mainstream styles and tastes (Snell & Hodgetts 2007:434-438). Toni-Matti Karjalainen argues that metal subcultures are “symbolic tribes” glued together through rituals to form a community (Karjalainen 2016:60). Metal communities can be local or transnational through, for example, social media (Karjalainen 2016:59).



transgression, heavy metal carnival is community-building and dis-alienating to metal insiders and serves as a “proto-utopian politics of resistance against an alienating society of spectacle and nothingness, practiced in liminal spaces that give pause to everyday life” (Halnon 2006:36).

The characters in the subversive Circus of Death and the audience (receivers), share in the carnivalesque experience. The degradation of the body together with communal comedy and laughter, temporarily set the participants free of their burdens within a utopian setting, where the individual body is degraded and “destroyed” to form part of the communal, all-people’s body. They are rejuvenated and reborn in a ritual that strengthens ties, a feeling of belonging and builds friendships.

In Toni-Matti Karjalainen’s chapter on how Nightwish’s *Imaginaerum* serves as a mental anchor for the band’s fans, he highlights the audience’s engagement with and “performance” of the narrative (Karjalainen 2016:75-76). Firstly, receivers are “transported to the world of the narrative” by means of references that they (communally) understand and secondly, they “perform” the narrative in the here-and-now of the location or venue in which they find themselves (Karjalainen 2016:76). He argues that the performance of the narrative in a social context such as at a show or even on social media, allows for the “enactment of these experiences and strengthens the tribal identity of the Nightwish community (Karjalainen 2016:76), thereby supporting Halnon’s argument in favour of the dis-alienating properties of metal music and heavy metal carnival.

#### **4.7 The “Recapitulation”**

The A-section of the “recapitulation” features the theme seen in Figure 4.19. Similar to Themes (1)-(5) the time signature in Themes (6)-(8) is 4/4 and the home key is D minor. Three obvious differences between the condensed version of the Themes here and Themes (1)-(5) is that: (a) Violin 1 plays a descant in Theme (7) and subsequently does not play the melody; (b) the receiver most prominently hears the brass section playing a counter melody in Theme (8), instead of the main theme; and (c) the harmonic structure of the last three Themes are almost identical and do not see tonicisations of F minor, A minor and C minor. The “recapitulation’s” B-section sees

only one Verse, namely Verse (3). This Verse is also characterised by the chromatically descending motif shown in Figure 4.14, but the variation which the oboe plays, contains an arpeggio on D-F-A-C, the pitches being identical to those of the D minor seventh chord (also see Figure 4.19) which, in turn, correlates with the tonic pitches of the tonicised key areas (see Table 4.1) in Themes (2)-(5):



**Figure 4.28: Arpeggio on the notes D-F-A-C**

## 4.8 The Epilogue

“Scaretale” concludes with a version of Lullaby (1) and serves as an Epilogue (marked Lullaby (2) in the score). Lullaby (1) and (2) are harmonically identical and both consist of 16 bars. Interestingly, both choirs feature in this Lullaby and it is the only section of the entire song in which this occurs. When listening to the album recording of “Scaretale”, it becomes apparent that both choirs were not combined to create a powerful sound. The children’s choir repeats the haunting melody sung in Lullaby (1; see Figure 4.17), while the adult choir enters in order from the lowest voices to the highest (sopranos enter just before the conclusion of the song). The Epilogue has many similarities with the Introduction and Lullaby (1) in the sense that the *musemes* and sound effects with horror and uncanny connotations in the Epilogue, closely resemble those in the Introduction and Lullaby (1).

### 4.8.1 Semitone clashes

Similar to the Introduction, the choir sings clashing semitones between A and A-flat, but this time also between G and A-flat. The tension, discomfort and terror of the Introduction is referenced and mimicked here; the brass section of the orchestra features heavily in Lullaby (2). The aural staging of these instruments within the textural space of the Epilogue is more in the forefront, since the woodwinds are almost absent and the violins feature only in a few bars. The trumpeting, harsh, sustained brass notes are a key factor in the sound quality of the Epilogue while the sharp, stark semitone clashes between G, A-flat and A-natural destabilise the harmony at crucial

points, specifically on the tonic and dominant harmonies of D minor. The destabilisation and distortion of the tonic or home key result in the sound and feeling that “home” is not really reached (even the final tonic chord is distorted by an added A-flat) or that “home” is far from safe and stable – a theme often associated with horror films and stories. The sustained clashing brass harmonies also help create the lingering eeriness of the section as the clash between A-natural and A-flat ensures that the tension between dominant and tonic is never resolved.

#### 4.8.2 Chromatic lines

As in the Introduction, the violins play an unsettling, restless chromatic passage in unison. Unlike the Introduction that basically starts with a chromatic passage, the receiver hears the Epilogue’s chromatic passage very near the conclusion of the song. When examined more closely, it becomes clear that this passage which the violins play consists of two chromatically descending lines, one from A-flat and the other from B:



**Figure 4.29: The violins’ chromatically descending line**

These chromatically descending lines add to the mystery, dissonance and discord of the closing section. They serve as an aural flashback to the chromatic violin line in the Introduction (see Figure 4.10) and in this way, chromaticism and dissonance is used as a tool to create unity in the song.

#### 4.8.3 The “creepy children singing” trope

The Epilogue sees the return of the so-called “creepy children singing” trope as the children’s choir enters with the same melody they sung in Lullaby (1, see Figure 4.17). The wordless Lullaby (2) is sung in the same fashion as in Lullaby (1) and the featured Glockenspiel that doubles the melody adds the automaton sound and atmosphere created in Lullaby (1). The automaton sound of Lullaby (2) is again a reference to the otherworldliness of the song and emphasises the musical experience of horror (see section 4.3.1 of this chapter).

#### **4.8.4 The (pipe) organ**

The receiver hears a pipe organ in the Epilogue of “Scaretale” which does not feature anywhere else in the song. The sound is probably produced by a digital keyboard and the receiver hears it at timecodes 6’54”-6’56.7”, 7’02”-7’04” and 7’11”-7’14.6”. The organ plays highly dissonant chords at these three timecodes, thus adding to the overall dissonance, tension, discomfort and unease of the section. The pipe organ’s sound typically connotes “church”, “Christianity”, “bride”, “funeral”, “graveyard”, “vampire”, “darkness” and “Gothicness”. The instrument has connotations of horror as it features readily in many horror scenes, films and television programmes such as *Addams Family Values* (1993, music by Marc Shaiman and Ralph Sall) and the half-man-half-octopus pirate Davy Jones playing the organ in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (2006, music by Hans Zimmer). The pipe organ is the instrument typically associated with vampires in horror.

Numerous metal songs feature the organ, specifically Gothic metal (Kegan 2015:162-164) and doom metal songs, although it is definitely not limited to these subgenres. Some examples are “The Hidden Grave” by Attic (connotes death and “funeral”); “We Drink Your Blood” by Powerwolf (connotes darkness and “vampire”); and “In Your Dark Pavilion” by My Dying Bride (connotes darkness and “Gothicness”).

#### **4.8.5 The barrel organ**

The barrel organ plays a short, unaccompanied section at the end of the Epilogue. This short section is devoid of the stark dissonance, the return of the “creepy children singing” trope, horror connotations with the (pipe) organ that that the receiver hears for the first time, as well as the return of a highly chromatic violin passage that dominates the rest of the Epilogue as the instrument plays a solo passage. The barrel organ is not typically associated with circus or carnival music, but the passage which the barrel organ plays at the end of “Scaretale” contains characteristics and features of carnival music such as the waltz-like rhythm.

The passage is heard like an afterthought which evokes the lingering sounds and images of the circus. It is almost as if the Circus of Death has left “town” while the circus music still plays hauntingly on, in the deserted carnival grounds. This image

itself has horror connotations to a haunted instrument that “plays by itself”, very like the “automatic” nature of the Glockenspiel sounds and the children’s wordless lullaby.

## 4.9 Conclusion

“Scaretale’s” form structure is not based on a (typical) verse-chorus pattern and the song’s structure, together with the constant tempo, rhythmic, key and atmosphere changes help to create tension and the feeling of unrest. References to and connotations of horror are central to the song’s eerie, sinister, uncanny soundscape and atmosphere. The song contains countless musical horror-cues (*musemes*, gestures and sound effects) such as semitone clashes and shuttles, tritones, chromatic lines, sound effects such as echo and dubbing, the harpsichord, pipe organ, and the “creepy children singing” trope, as well as the automatism suggested by the “music box”-sounding Glockenspiel and the “haunted” barrel organ heard at the end of the song. The horror-cues in the song not only connote horror, but also the film scores and other metal songs which feature these types of horror-cues.

Olzon and Hietala’s vocal styles contribute to the overall atmosphere and painted images of the song. They also underline Nightwish’s theatrical approach and the band’s flair for incorporating other musical styles and soundscapes. The vocals’ aural staging gives significant clues as to the role of the two characters: Olzon’s vocals have a higher degree of reverberation (“wetter” vocals), to sound further away as part of the sideshow where Hietala’s vocals do not have a lot of reverb (“drier” vocals), which make him seem closer, dominant and dangerous as the main figure in the Circus of Death.

The lyrics contain references to horror and fantasy. They describe the heinous acts committed by Olzon’s character and paint a clear picture of the horrific, subversive Circus of Death. The lyrics also make references to themes that are central to Nightwish’s self-created mythology. “Scaretale’s” lyrics paint the picture of a terror-inducing, horrifying, subversive Circus of Death. The circus is also connoted in song through musical cues in the form of ascending and descending chromatic lines (creating an everlasting circle which, in turn, signifies that the horror or Circus of Death cannot be escaped), a rhythmic pattern, instrumentation and orchestration (especially

in the Ghost Dances which include the main circus event), which is reminiscent of circus and carnival music.

“Scaretale” is a subversive circus where the artists and audience come together to collectively enjoy the comedy and degradation of the Circus of Death. The shared “performance” of the song by the audience and artists creates a liminal space where all participants are ultimately rejuvenated and reborn through degradation and communal comedy within a “heavy metal circus”.

## Chapter 5 – “Here, weary traveller, rest your wand”: Fantasy and escapism in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”

### 5.1 Background and theoretical framework

“Turn Loose the Mermaids” is the eighth track on Nightwish’s seventh full-length studio album *Imaginaerum* (Nightwish 2011b). Tuomas Holopainen is both the composer and lyricist and the song is arranged for orchestra by Pip Williams. Anette Olzon is the only vocalist featured in the song and it does not include a choir. The song is scored for a small orchestra of about 42 players (as indicated in the score). The orchestra (with Thomas Bowes as concert master), consists of members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra or the “Looking Glass Orchestra” – the same as for “Scaretale” (Nightwish 2011a:22). James Shearman is credited as the conductor (as indicated in the score). The song also features Dermot Crehan on solo Hardanger fiddle, as well as Troy Donockley on low whistle and bodhrán (Nightwish 2011a:21).

#### 5.1.1 Background

Composer and lyricist Tuomas Holopainen describes “Turn Loose the Mermaids” as follows:

The next one is “Turn Loose the Mermaids” – this Celtic ballad, sad, melancholic [song] with a very Spaghetti Westernish C-part. I don’t know where that came from, but it’s actually the only ballad, only real ballad, on the whole album (Holopainen interviewed in *Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011).

“Turn Loose the Mermaids” is not the only slow song on the album. In fact, it is one of four songs that have a slower tempo, a “softer feel” and do not contain a “heavy” section.<sup>88</sup> Holopainen alludes to the song’s melancholic soundscape and atmosphere

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<sup>88</sup> The other three songs in this category are “Taikatalvi”, “The Crow, the Owl and the Dove” and “Slow, Love, Slow”, but Holopainen’s indication that “Turn Loose the Mermaids” is the only “real ballad” may be particularly telling about these four songs’ intended atmospheres, meanings and purpose. “Taikatalvi” – with its Finnish lyrics – may be read as an introduction to the album (Holopainen interviewed in *Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011) and, in my opinion, a type of lullaby. “The Crow, the Owl and the Dove” (composed by Marco Hietala) is described by Holopainen as the “most

in the quoted interview above, while its title indicates a strong link with fantasy, a central theme in Holopainen's lyrics and subsequently also in Nightwish's overall output.<sup>89</sup> The song's instrumentation also gives an indication of what the composer may have had in mind in terms of its atmosphere.

The band instruments' roles in this song are very different from that in a "heavy" song or even in "Scaretale". A steel string acoustic guitar plays throughout the song, except in the C-section where the band does not play and the orchestra is at the forefront. The orchestra that plays in this song is smaller, with a woodwind section that features only a flute/piccolo and second flute, as well as a brass section that includes only horns and trumpets (as indicated in the score). The song features traditional Irish instruments such as the bodhrán and low whistle in many sections of the song, except in the Spaghetti Western C-section.

The acoustic approach to the greater part of the song is reminiscent of the soundscape of Nightwish's demonstration recording, as well as some of the songs on their first full-length album (*Angels Fall First*); for example, "The Carpenter" (around timecode 0'40"-1'19"), "Angels Fall First", "Once Upon a Troubadour", and the "Erämaajärvi" and "Etiäinen" sections of the song "Lappi". It also corresponds to Holopainen's original idea for the band to make acoustic "mood music" (see Chapter 1.1.1), even though the band's earlier songs do not include Celtic instruments or a soundscape reminiscent of Celtic music, as is the case in "Turn Loose the Mermaids".

"Turn Loose the Mermaids" is characterised by contrasting sections with different soundscapes, instrumentation, atmospheres and connotations. Troy Donockley's – at that time a session musician – ability to play the low whistle and bodhrán creates new sound possibilities for the band as these instruments are closely associated with traditional Irish Celtic music. The bodhrán plays a central role in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" as it is the main rhythmic driving force at key points in the song. The instrument replaces the drum kit in the song, but doesn't feature in the C-section where

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poppy song" – i.e. the song that sounds most akin to pop music – on the album (*Nightwish – Imaginaerum track by track* 2011) while "Slow, Love, Slow" exhibits influences of jazz.

<sup>89</sup> Songs with fantasy themes or titles are – to name a few – "Elvenpath" (*Angels Fall First*); "Nightquest" (*Oceanborn*); almost the entire *Wishmaster* album; "Sahara" (*Dark Passion Play*); "7 Days to the Wolves" (*Dark Passion Play*); and the songs of the *Imaginaerum* album.



the snare drum is the rhythmic driving force, providing connotative cues and also contributing to the section's overall soundscape.

## **5.1.2 Theoretical-philosophical framework**

### 5.1.2.1 "Celticity" and the song's neotraditional Irish Celtic soundscape

"Celtic music" is a term that is used very commonly in the music industry and journalism and is frequently used without describing what it means, or what music is grouped within this category and why (McDonald 2008). In this way, certain music is labelled as "Celtic" even though it bears very little musical resemblance to traditional Celtic music:

The word *Celtic* is thrown about quite a lot nowadays. Indeed, one could even say that, in light of present-day trends, most everything seems to be classified as Celtic in a not-always-too-subtle attempt to join the Celtic bandwagon. Some, especially traditional musicians, cringe at the sound of the very word ... [a]nd it's true that a substantial part of the current Celtic "scene" has little to do with authentic Celtic tradition (Skinner Sawyers [2000] 2001:2).

Because the term "Celtic music" is used indiscriminately, its application is, according to James Porter, problematic in the sense that it is (1) an ambiguous term that may signify instrumental music; and (2) it has ideological, cultural and linguistic implications; for example, the difference in meaning and connotation between "Celtic music" and "Celtic song" where the former is linked to instrumental music as opposed to "song" in popular consciousness (Porter 1998:205). These points hold true for traditional, revivalist and Celtic-influenced songs. The term, according to Allan F. Moore, may be used to describe a practice, as a genre and/or style label or be exploited "simply as a deft marketing ploy" (Moore [2004] 2009:1).

Porter further argues that the term "Celtic musics" is a useful term to describe repertoires, genres and styles that come from areas where Celtic languages were and are still spoken (Porter 1998:215). Even though "Celtic music" is often used to describe music or songs with Irish elements or instruments (such as the bodhrán or uilleann pipes), the terms "Celtic" and "Irish" are not synonymous (Herman 1994:421-422). This is also suggested by F. Harrison's (1986) definition of the term "Celtic musics" (a more

inclusive term that encompasses the music of Ireland, Scotland and other countries with ties to a Celtic language such as Brittany, Cornwall and the Isle of Man). In my opinion, however, the notion that “Celtic equals Irish” and vice versa seems to persist as a stereotype in non-“Celtic” popular consciousness.

With the more recent revival of folk music (which includes Celtic music), the added number of commercial folk performers do not necessarily produce music that is stylistically consistent within the framework of a music tradition that is culturally informed or community-based (Cohen 1987:214). This trend is further visible with the rise and increasing popularity of “world music”, where the broader global public has access to a greater variety of “traditional and tradition-influenced music than ever before” (Herman 1994:419). This phenomenon is perhaps more prevalent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where musicians and music enthusiasts have access to a myriad of music styles and genres online. In this way, cultural and musical identities overlap and Celtic music identity becomes increasingly more complex as these styles incorporate or are incorporated into a variety of musical idioms within “world music” (Porter 1998:218), wherein new hybrid musical identities begin to proliferate. Philip Bohlman defines “world music” as music that:

can be folk music, art music, or popular music; its practitioners may be amateur or professional. World music may be secular, sacred, or commercial; its performers may emphasize authenticity, while at the same time relying heavily on mediation to disseminate it to as many markets as possible. World music’s consumers may use it as they please; they may celebrate it as their own or revel in its strangeness. The old definitions and distinctions don’t hold anymore; world music can be Western or non-Western, acoustic or electronically mixed (Bohlman 2002:xi).

World music is inextricably linked to globalisation (Bohlman 2002:xi) and its growing popularity is closely associated with niche marketing or what Noel McLaughlin and Martin McLoone call “the marketing of ‘difference’” (McLaughlin & McLoone 2000:183). These authors argue that global capitalism and niche marketing create a (complex and contradictory) space wherein peripheral cultures “feed into and out of” a global music market in what initially seems to be a symbiotic relationship, but which in reality, is a power relationship where the global market has the upper hand (McLaughlin &

McLoone 2000:183). With regard to the (modern) production of traditional music within these peripheral cultures, which is then globally marketed as “world music”, the relationship between the “local” and the “global” creates room for “local” cultures to resist and challenge the “definitions of identity imposed by the global” (McLaughlin & McLoone 2000:183). Although McLaughlin and McLoone (2000:183) speak of “Celtic” music in the more traditional sense of traditionally-influenced music by “Celtic” musicians, their idea of niche marketing also holds true for “outsider” musicians and/or bands whose music show Celtic influences. Consequently, Celtic influences are heard in popular songs and film scores, most notably *The Boondock Saints* (“The Blood of Cu Chulainn” and “Gaelic Morn”); *The Departed* (“I’m Shipping Up To Boston” by The Dropkick Murphys); *Rob Roy*; *Willow*; *Braveheart*; and *Titanic*. The scores of *Willow* (1988), *Braveheart* (1995) and *Titanic* (1997) were all composed by the late James Horner.

Even though the search for “pure music Celticity” (purely Irish, purely Scottish, et cetera), in terms of traditional Celtic music, it is not a very attainable goal (Harrison 1986:263 and Porter 1998:210). James Porter points specifically to the scores of *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart* as more recent examples of what he calls “[p]resent-day, ‘pan-Celtic’ confluations” (1998:210). Both these films deal with Scottish subject matter, yet the instrument chosen to play on the soundtrack, in both cases, is not the Scottish Highland pipes, but the Irish uilleann pipes (Porter 1998:210). In this way, although I doubt that the majority of “outsider” movie-goers would pick up the difference, the idea that anything remotely Celtic equates to a traditional Irish sound is further established (see Harrison 1986).

Celtic influences feature not only in film scores, pop or rock music, but also in metal. In fact, an entire subgenre, called Celtic metal, is dedicated to metal music with Celtic elements or influences. Celtic metal, together with Celtic punk, is a development of Celtic rock (Ekizoglou 2012): a fusion of Celtic music and metal which originated in Ireland in the 1990s with bands such as Primordial, Waylander and Cruachan (Kegan 2015:82). The bands associated with Celtic metal feature within a variety of other metal subgenres; for example, German band Suidakra that is associated with extreme metal, while the Argentinian band Skiltron plays mainly power or folk metal (Kegan 2015:83). Celtic metal bands play in a variety of metal styles, but their music has a

shared characteristic in the form of the incorporation of traditional Celtic instruments (Kegan 2015:83). Some bands such as Cruachan (Ireland), Eluveitie (Switzerland), and Samain (Australia), draw on Celtic mythology in their lyrics. Even though not a Celtic metal band, Led Zeppelin also incorporates Celtic legend in their music (Walser 1993:10). Robert Plant, lyricist and lead vocalist of the band, studied Celtic lore and history (Fast 2001:10), which may explain this phenomenon.

Some of Nightwish's songs exhibit influences of traditional Celtic music, predominantly in the form of instruments associated with traditional Irish music such as the bodhrán, uilleann pipes, and the low whistle, as well as the modal chord progressions in "Turn Loose the Mermaids". Nightwish songs (other than "Turn Loose the Mermaids") that include traditional Irish instruments are: "The Islander", "Last of the Wilds", "Meadows of Heaven", "Taikatalvi", "I Want My Tears Back", "The Crow, the Owl and the Dove" (tin whistle) and the instrumental track "Imaginaerum". The appearance of Celtic influences in Nightwish's songs coincide with the joining of Troy Donockley – a multi-instrumentalist who specialises in playing traditional Irish instruments – in the band's second phase (see Chapter 1.1 and 1.1.2), firstly as a session musician before becoming a permanent band member in 2012 (see Chapter 1.1.2).

Donockley, an informed musician on Irish music and its traditions, views his contributions to Holopainen's compositions as quite challenging:

[Holopainen] writes with challenging parts, you know, especially for the pipes, because the pipes are very much a part of a style and a tradition, so it's always nice for me to really push the boundaries of the instrument (Donockley in Nightwish 2014b).

Donockley's quotation points out that Holopainen most probably does not have vernacular knowledge of traditional Celtic (specifically Irish) music, with its conventions and nuances and possibly, does not compose idiomatically for the uilleann pipes. In this way, Holopainen's incorporation of Celtic elements and soundscape into "Turn Loose the Mermaids" do not convey the same (original) meaning that they would have in the context of a "home style" (Tagg [2012] 2013:268) consumed by a knowledgeable audience in terms of the style's conventions, meanings and connotations. Holopainen's inclusion of Celtic elements and instruments serve to connote a "foreign"

style; in other words, a style “foreign to” or “outside of” the conventions of a ballad by a metal band.

In this way, the Irish Celtic instruments connote or create what Ralph P. Locke calls “images of Elsewhere”, where these images are, in fact more often than not, distorted “reflections” as seen from a Eurocentric point of view (Locke 2009:3). By borrowing from an exotic music tradition (and culture) as an “image of Elsewhere”, the intended “reflection” becomes imbued with extramusical fantasy (Locke 2009:22), leaning on and drawing from – sometimes as they are perceived from the “outside” – mythologies and traditions. Globalisation (specifically, a global music market) and even the mere act of collecting and archiving world music, sheds light on the chasm between collecting musics for academic study, in order to gain a deeper understanding of these musics, as well as the people who make them, with the intent of generating a profit from these collections. These collections represent a “strangeness” or “absence of familiarity” in a world music market place; in this way crossing the fine line between fascination, interest and research on the one hand, and cashing in on mere exotic fantasy on the other (Bohlman 2002:27).

The argument above does not, however, detract from the idea that music that resembles an “Elsewhere” does indeed evoke certain connotations, even though they are often based on an imagined reality or fantasy. James Porter traces inventions such as the eisteddfod and pan-Celtic festivals to ideas about whom the Celts were and how they lived. This said, these inventions tend to lean more towards ritual, rhetoric and fantasy (1998:207), thus blurring the boundaries between historical facts and idealised fiction of “faery lands forlorn” (1998:219), by tapping into the “primitive timelessness of Celtic mythology” (McLaughlin & McLoone 2000:189). This type of Romantic description of Celtic music is readily found in a great deal of writings on Celtic music which frequently neglects to explore what the Celtic sound is, in favour of what it means, its perceived “emotional tone” and aesthetics (McDonald 2008).

Romantic and poetic descriptions of Celtic music influence the way in which scholars talk or write about Celtic music (McDonald 2008), as well as the influence of popular ideas and the global market place. Another example of a Romantic description of Celtic music or its soundscape(s) besides “faery lands forlorn”, includes June Skinner

Sawyers's description of the so-called "Celtic sound" (McDonald 2008) as timeless and universal, despite the differences in language, instrumentation, et cetera and the transcendental (Skinner Sawyers 2000:6)

It is crucial to keep in mind that Holopainen's rationale for a "Celtic" ballad is not to create or represent traditional Irish Celtic music. A possible reason for including Celtic elements in the song (or other Nightwish songs), may be rooted in personal musical taste on Holopainen's part or the new possibilities that an Irish Celtic-influenced soundscape holds. The Irish Celtic elements in some of the band's songs may ultimately broaden the band's fan base and market, reaching potential new fans beyond the power metal influences in the band's first phase output, as well as the beginning of a film music palette in their songs on first phase albums such as *Century Child* and *Once*.

Many Nightwish albums from both phases include songs with exotic elements such as the hinted "Egyptianness" in "Tutankhamen" (*Angels Fall First*); the Native American flute in "Creek Mary's Blood" (*Once*); Irish Celtic influences in "The Islander" (*Dark Passion Play*); "Last of the Wilds" (*Dark Passion Play*); "Meadows of Heaven" (*Dark Passion Play*); "Taikatalvi" (*Imaginaerum*); "I Want My Tears Back" (*Imaginaerum*); "The Crow, the Owl and the Dove" (*Imaginaerum*); and "Imaginaerum" (*Imaginaerum*), as well as the Arabic soundscape of "Arabesque" (*Imaginaerum*). "Last of the Wilds" appears on this list for two reasons, namely (1) the song features a fiddle and uilleann pipes which is representative of Irish Celtic influences; and (2) also features an electric kantele.

The kantele is a traditional Finnish instrument and may not necessarily hold any exotic significance for the mainly Finnish band, but does indeed for the band's global fan base. Even though exotic elements are found in both phases of the band's output, the Irish Celtic influences are unique to the band's second phase, thus setting the second phase apart from the first, not only in terms of vocalist, orchestra size, composition and arranging style, but also in terms of the band's broadening of their "film music metal" soundscape by including traditional Irish Celtic instruments.

### 5.1.2.2 The song's Spaghetti Western soundscape

As I discuss later in the analysis, “Turn Loose the Mermaids” has a C-section that exhibits Spaghetti Western influences and this song is the only one in Nightwish’s output that features a Spaghetti Western-inspired section. “Spaghetti Western” is a term used to denote films that imitate American Westerns and were usually produced and directed by Italians (Ledbetter 1992:ix), most notably *For a Few Dollars More* (1965); *Django* (1966); *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966); and *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968).

Bert Fridlund identifies Sergio Leone, Sergio Sollima and Sergio Corbucci as highly influential directors in this genre and names Leone as the most influential (Fridlund 2006:9). Ennio Morricone became the “foremost composer of the genre” through his partnership with director Sergio Leone and the following that Leone’s films had/has, (Hughes 2010:32), especially for the scores of films such as “Once Upon a Time in the West” and “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”. For Howard Hughes, the scores of Spaghetti Westerns, especially those by Morricone, follow the following “loose formula”:<sup>90</sup>

Spaghetti title themes are usually up-tempo, catchy and anarchic, and are often accompanied by cartoonish, pop-art title sequences featuring action and stills from the film. Moments of tension tend to be scored with unsettling, atonal sound effects, mingled with the clever use of actual sounds (horses’ hooves, spurs, the wind, a creaking gun) [...] while triumphal trumpets, church organs and guitars whip up a macabre bolero before the moment of death. Pathos is added to other scenes with elegiac, delicate melodies – themes that seem a million miles away from the violent world conveyed on screen (Hughes 2010:32).

The (musical) themes of Westerns can signify both the mood and identification by means of the “wide-open spaces” connotations evoked by them (Kassabian [2001] 2002:59). These connotations may connect the perceived “open spaces” with freedom

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<sup>90</sup> Ennio Morricone’s way of writing scores for Spaghetti Westerns is parodied by film music composers such as Marcello Giombini and Franco Micalizzi (Hughes 2010:30) and later in his career Morricone himself parodied his earlier works (Hughes 2010:31).

and/or the “old west frontier” (Kassabian [2001] 2002:59). The Spaghetti Western that director Sergio Leone shaped, introduced a type of Western different from that of the classic (American) Western. This “new” type of Western as introduced in *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) shows desert landscapes, features a nameless anti-hero as the protagonist and includes more violence than its American counterpart (Kausalik 2008:iii). These barren or desert landscapes in *A Fistful of Dollars*; *For a Few Dollars More*; and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, create a striking contrast to the classic Western’s lush landscapes (Kausalik 2008:iii, 4, 57) and “big sky” scenes. Similarly, Morricone’s scores steer away from the traditional symphonic sound associated with classic Westerns (Kausalik 2008:2-3).

Morricone’s iconic soundscape for Spaghetti Westerns, the connoted barren, desert landscapes and the lone travelling anti-hero provide fertile soil for the investigation of the Spaghetti Western section in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”. In this analysis, I aim to show how the use of Irish Celtic instruments, the Spaghetti Western soundscape in the C-section, and different landscape connotations in different sections complement and contrast each other to create the journey into the fantasy world that forms the lyrical and musical basis of Nightwish’s “Turn Loose the Mermaids”.

Akin “Scaretale” in Chapter 4, “Turn Loose the Mermaids” is highly intertextual and my chosen mode of analysis (Tagg’s model) is a means by which to explore intertextual links and connotations in the song.

### **5.1.3 Key questions that govern the analysis of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”**

The following questions underpin the contextual analysis of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”:

- How does the choice of instruments influence or inform the song’s soundscape and, ultimately, the construction of meaning?
- What insights can be gained from applying Tagg’s *hypothetical substitution* (Tagg [2012] 2013:254) to the choice of instrument at key points in the song?
- In what ways can Tagg’s idea of aural staging (Tagg [2012] 2013:299-303) and Moore’s theorisation of the *soundbox* (Moore 2012:31, 35) aid in demonstrating



differences in the placement of instruments, Olzon’s vocals and the small orchestra, within the textural space?

- How do these differences contribute to the reception and meaning of the song?
- What cues do the emitter (the band, orchestra and/or vocalist) communicate to the receiver, in order for the latter to perceive changes in the song’s setting?
- What is the source responsible for the production of these cues (which instruments, mechanical or kinetic aspects of sound production, et cetera) and how are they communicated to the receiver?
- In what way does Anette Olzon’s vocal costume inform the reception of the song and how does it contribute to the overall meaning of the song?
- In what way do the lyrics contribute to meaning in the song?
- How do the lyrics and musical narrative interact to connote landscapes, fantasy, et cetera?
- Which musical cues or musical gestures with semiotic properties connote fantasy and escapism?
- How do these gestures combine to contribute to meaning in the contrasting sections and ultimately, in the song as a whole?
- What connotations do the Irish Celtic and Spaghetti Western sections share?

#### 5.1.4 The form structure of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”

When comparing the form structure of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” to that of “Scaretale” as shown in Chapter 4, it is abundantly clear that the former’s form structure is much less complex than that of the latter, as “Turn Loose the Mermaids” is more closely related to a verse-refrain structure. The song’s form structure is as follows:

**Table 5.1: The form structure of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”**

Section	Sub-section <sup>91</sup>	Phrases	Time	Key	Tempo
A	Verse (1) (0’00”-0’18.4”)	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	¼ = 110
	Instrumental (1) (0’18.6-0’35.6”)	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	¼ = 110
	Verse (2) (0’36.1”-0’53.2”)	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	¼ = 110
B	Refrain (1) (0’53.6”-1’08.6”)	1x7 bars	4/4	C min	¼ = 110

<sup>91</sup> The sub-sections are indicated in the score, but I named them.

A	Instrumental (2) (1'09"-1'25.9")	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
	Verse (3) (1'26.4"-1'43.4")	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
	Verse (4) (1'43.8"-2'01")	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
B	Refrain (2) (2'01.3"-2'16.2")	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
	Refrain (3) (2'16.5"-2'33.7")	1x7 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
C	Western (2'34"-3'06.4")	2x8 bars	4/4 + 2 bars 2/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
B	Refrain (4) (3'06.8"-3'21.7")	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
	Refrain (5) (3'22"-3'38.9")	1x7 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
A	Instrumental (3) (3'39.4"-3'56.3")	1x8 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$
	Instrumental (4) (3'56.9"-4'20")	1x9 bars	4/4	C min	$\frac{1}{4} = 110$

The table shows that even though “Turn Loose the Mermaids” is loosely based on a verse-refrain structure, some deviations do occur in the song in the form of instrumental sections between some verses or after certain refrains. The biggest deviation is after the second occurrence of the B-section (i.e. after Refrain (3)). Instead of hearing a bridge or similar transitional section, the receiver hears an elaborate section with completely new thematic and melodic material not heard in the Verses (1)-(4), Refrains (1)-(5) or Instrumentals (1)-(4) – namely the C-section.

The Verses, Refrains and Instrumentals respectively have similar harmonic structures, whereas the harmonic progressions found in the C-section differ from those found in the rest of the song. It is not only the differences in harmonic structure between the different sections that contribute to the audible differences between the sections, but (as I mentioned previously), also differences in atmosphere, soundscape and connotations. In this regard, different musical cues in the form of *musemes*, gestures and sound effects communicate connotative information to the receiver that guide and inform the reception and meaning of the song. As with “Scaretale”, it is not only the *musemes*, sound effects, et cetera, that communicate such information, but also the way in which they are stacked and/or perceived in conjunction with other sonic material. In this way, the composer and then the emitter(s) can also communicate changes in atmosphere and meaning in the respective sections to the receiver.

The aural staging of these musical cues, the lyrics and the vocal delivery of the lyrics and melody (i.e. Olzon’s vocal costume), are also central in the construction and

communication of meaning in the song. As such, I examine the lyrics and Olzon's vocal costume as the starting point of my analysis of the song.

## 5.2 The lyrics and Anette Olzon's vocal costume

The song starts on an anacrusis and is subdued in atmosphere with only one vocal line (the melody) that Olzon sings, while the steel string guitar doubles the melody and plays the bass note on every chord change to give momentum and direction to the phrases.<sup>92</sup> The harmonic rhythm is relatively slow, with only five chords in the first eight-bar phrase (see Table 5.4). The texture of the opening eight-bar phrase can best be described as transparent and is at its most transparent at this point in the song. The transparent, "stripped" arrangement of the instruments (guitar and vocals) in the upbeat and first six bars closely resemble the lyrics that initially paint a gloomy picture of desolation and desertedness:<sup>93</sup>

A kite above a graveyard grey  
At the end of the line far far away  
A child holding on to the magic of birth and awe

With her vocals aurally staged at the front and centre in the opening bars, Olzon's melody line sounds as if she is standing in front of the accompaniment, apart from the accompanying instruments. The song is in C minor and although the overall transparent texture of the first phrase acts in making the minor tonality sound less tragic or dramatic, the minor key does add a nostalgic, melancholic tone to the soundscape. Olzon delivers the melody and lyrics in these bars with very little vibrato and is largely unembellished, with no "scoops" or slides except for a slight inflection on the word "child" and emphasis on the word "awe", thus contributing to the transparent texture and deserted barrenness of the soundscape of the first phrase, as well as the picture painted by the lyrics.

The lyrics describe a child placed within a setting that is not typically associated with childhood; a connotative tool employed by Holopainen in his lyrics of both the first-

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<sup>92</sup> Forthwith, where reference is made to a "guitar" in this chapter, it is meant to mean "acoustic guitar".

<sup>93</sup> I retrieved all lyrics featured in this analysis from Nightwish's official website (*Lyrics* 2015).

and second phase songs. For example, twelve-year-old Sam Hardwick reads the poem in “Dead Boy’s Poem” (*Wishmaster*); his altered voice in “Bless the Child” (*Century Child*); and the “Christabel” section of “Beauty of the Beast” (*Century Child*), as well as the boy soprano and spoken part respectively in two sections of the five-section, large-scale song “The Poet and the Pendulum” (*Dark Passion Play*), namely “The White lands of Empathica” and “The Pacific”. The poem read by Hardwick in “Dead Boy’s Poem” is written by Holopainen but it is, I believe, partly inspired by William Shakespeare’s sonnets 71 and 72 as two paraphrased lines from the Shakespeare sonnets appear in Holopainen’s poem which has a similar general tone as the sonnets:

**Table 5.2: Comparison between lines from two of Shakespeare’s sonnets and “Dead Boy’s Poem”**

Shakespeare line	Holopainen line
“Nay, if you read this line, remember not the hand that writ it” (Sonnet 71)	“If you read this line, remember not the hand that wrote it”
“And live no more to shame nor me nor you” (Sonnet 72)	“I live no more to shame nor me nor you”

The content of the poem in “Dead Boy’s Poem” (*Lyrics* 2015) centres on a child who “live[s] no more to shame nor me, nor you”. The idea of a child speaking about suicide also features in the spoken section of “The Pacific” in “The Poet and the Pendulum”. In “Scaretale”, the children’s choir evokes the so-called “creepy children singing trope” at crucial points in the song, adding to the horrifying soundscape of the song (see Chapter 4.2.5; Chapter 4.3.1).

Although there is no singing or speaking child audible in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, a child is placed in a graveyard playing with a kite. The child’s fantasy world, innocence and play are captured in the last line “A child holding on to the magic of birth and awe”. In this Verse, the child is placed in an unorthodox and “dark” setting to serve as an antithesis of and contrast to death, darkness and gloom as the chord changes (E<sup>b</sup>/G or III<sup>6</sup> of C minor, timecode 0’10”) on the word “child” temporarily shifting the sonority from minor to major.

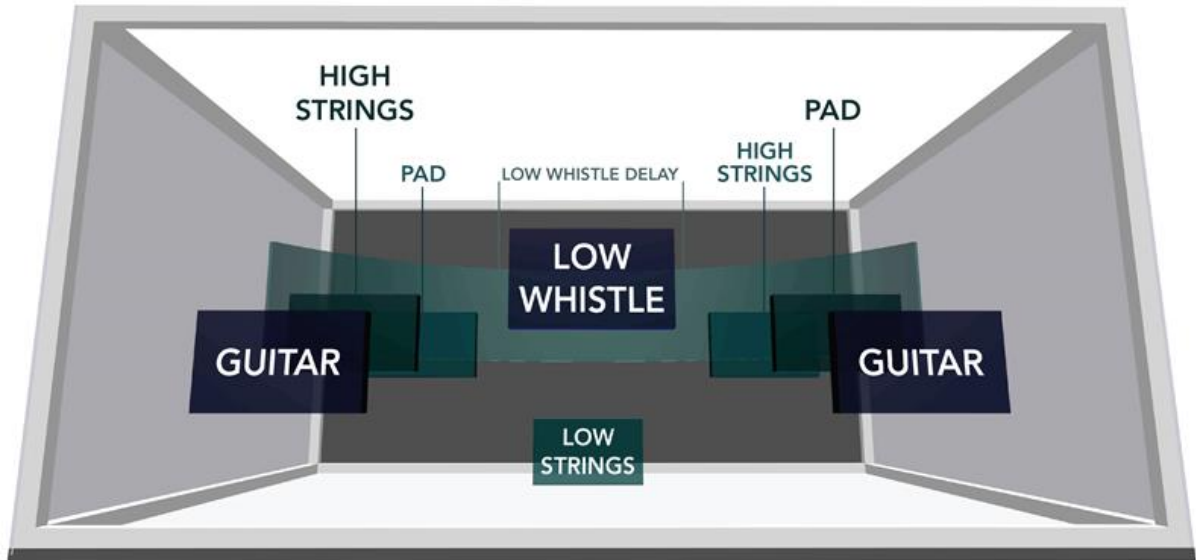
What is particularly interesting about the sound effects in the opening bars is the in-studio addition of an environmental sound effect that creates two spaces within the

textural space around timecode 0'02.1". These two spaces differ in "size" and suggest a smaller space within a larger space. I show in my analysis how these two spaces are significant in terms of the song's narrative and atmosphere as the smaller space (with less echo and reverb) suggests intimacy, while the larger space may allude to the idea of open spaces, a landscape, fantasy or dreams. In this way, the "visual" picture painted by the lyrics is aligned with the sonic information that the song communicates to the receiver.

The atmosphere and soundscape of the song change significantly when the word "awe" (timecode 0'14.4") is sung: the guitarist picks (as the opposite of strums) arpeggiated patterns and the receiver hears an increased number of individual pitches. These individually perceived pitches increase the surface rate which in turn creates the illusion of a "fuller" sound. These changes create a contrast with the previous bars and they serve as the musical materialisation of the concept and experience of "awe". Verses (1) and (2) are interjected by an instrumental section (Instrumental (1)), and Verse (2) sees the accompaniment of Olzon's vocal melody by the picking guitar that continues at the same pace and plays in the same style as heard in Instrumental (1). The lyrics of Verse (2) are:

Oh, how beautiful it used to be  
Just you and me far beyond the sea  
The waters, scarce in motion  
Quivering still

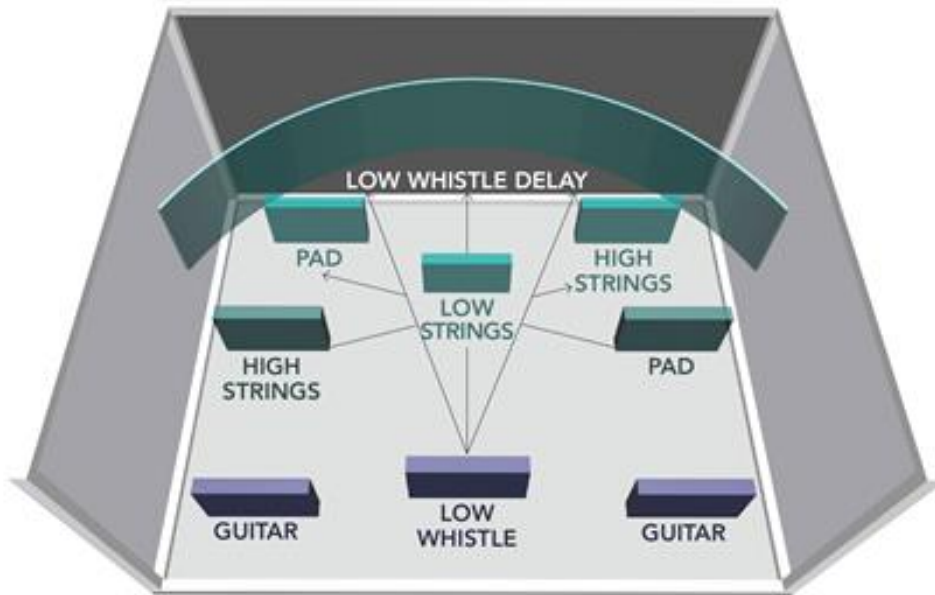
Olzon's vocal delivery and descending contour of the melody on the words "used to be, just you and me far beyond the sea" accentuates a feeling of longing, nostalgia and melancholy as it can be viewed as a musical expression of a prolonged sigh. Akin to her delivery of Verse (1), Olzon sings Verse (2) unembellished, mirroring the intimate setting and storytelling nature of these Verses. This Verse has references to the sea and water in the quoted lyrics. Moore's *soundbox* diagram of the appearance of the acoustic effect in the textural space of Instrumental (1) looks as follows:



**Figure 5.1: Soundbox diagram of Instrumental (1): Front view**

The guitar is aurally staged to sound as if there are two guitars playing on opposite sides of the low whistle. The low whistle sounds higher than the guitars on its opposite sides and it does not replace Olzon’s vocals in the *soundbox*. Instead, it is as if Olzon “steps out” of the fantasy to tell the story as she is staged to be in front of all the accompanying instruments in the Verses. In this way, there are three layers in the song’s soundscape, namely Olzon (the narrator or storyteller), the guitars and low whistle, as well as the high strings, pad, bass and low sounds.

In Instrumental (1), similar to the other instrumentals, the accompanying backdrop with Olzon now out of the “sound picture”, creates the idea of an illusion, a fantasy. Behind the guitars and low whistle, there is a cross delay on the high strings and pad to create the illusion that limitations are removed, thus signifying “imagination” and “freedom”:



**Figure 5.2: Soundbox diagram of Instrumental (1): View from above**

Besides the cross delay on the high strings and pad, there is a delay on the low whistle that “hovers” at the back of the soundscape.<sup>94</sup> This studio effect helps to draw the receiver into the soundscape and also into the fantasy.

Olzon “steps forward” to narrate Verse (2). Similar to the highlighting of the word “child” in Verse (1), a chord change (to III<sup>6</sup> of C minor) underlines the word “waters” (at timecode 0’45”). In this way, the word is connected to a “lift” in mood, creating a link between “water” and joy. The ocean is a crucial theme in Holopainen’s lyrics from both Nightwish’s first- and second phase output and is linked to the Ocean Soul trope.

This trope has connections to the nature theme and more specifically, to the importance of the ocean in Holopainen’s lyrics. It also alludes to Holopainen’s love of the sea; his childhood dream was to become a marine biologist (*Nightwish - Keyboardist/founder's Nightmail answers online* 2006). Furthermore, it serves as a symbol of loneliness, timelessness and consistency. The first reference to the Ocean Soul was made in the very personal song “Dead Boy’s Poem” and relates the Ocean

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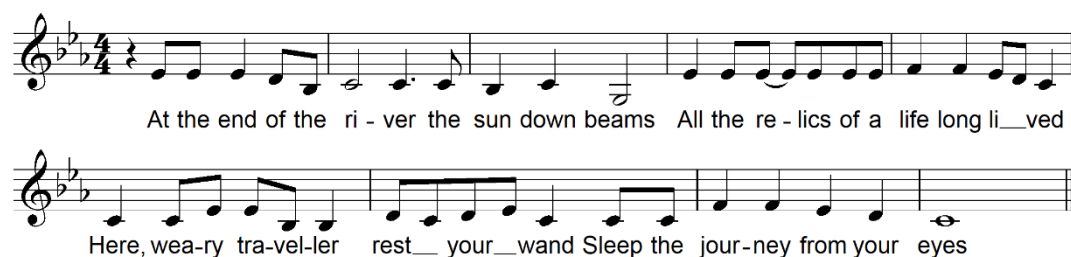
<sup>94</sup> Ben Vesco defines a cross delay as “when you take any non-mono input run through a stereo delay but you cross the echoes over to the opposite side of the input that generated them” (Vesco 2008). This type of effect makes the stereo image sound more lush (Vesco 2008). Mike Senior refers to this category of delay as opposition-panned delays (Senior 2011:259, 285).

Soul with the Dead Boy trope. It features predominantly on the *Century Child* album, specifically in songs such as “Ocean Soul”, “Lagoon” and “Bless the Child”, but it is also found in other songs such as “Dead Boy’s Poem” (*Wishmaster*).

Refrain (1) directly follows Verse (2) and features Olzon’s vocals, the picking guitar and the entry of the Hardanger fiddle (see section 5.3.3) at timecode 0’52”. There is an immediate change in soundscape and atmosphere in Refrain (1), as the change from minor to major brings about a “lift” in mood. Even though there is no modulation to E-flat major, there is a great difference in harmonic choices and progressions between the Verses and Refrains (see Table 5.4). The lyrics are as follows:

At the end of the river the sundown beams  
 All the relics of a life long lived  
 Here, weary traveller rest your wand  
 Sleep the journey from your eyes

The lyrics again talk of a body of water – this time, a river – with the sun setting on the horizon. The river in the first line represents calmness and the sundown may represent the end of a day, journey or even a chapter of life. The place described here is a safe and peaceful destination (musically depicted by the major sonority), for the weary traveller to rest after a journey. Water is musically and lyrically linked to peace and tranquillity, while Olzon’s delivery of the vocal melody further underlines the calm, yet more joyous, Refrain. Olzon’s tone is “light”, but the texture of Refrain (1) is denser than that of the Verses, with the Hardanger fiddle doubling the vocal melody in the same register as Olzon, but with a few deviations in pitch and articulation. A transcription of the vocal melody looks as follows:



**Figure 5.3: Vocal melody of Refrain (1)**



The pentatonic inflection from C to E-flat on the word “wea-ry” as I show in Figure 5.3 appears in all the Refrains. In Refrain (1), Olzon sings the in the same register as the first two Verses, but with more embellishments. She makes a small inflection on the word “life”; the word “lived” is preceded by a glottal stop and “eyes” is sung with more vibrato, an inflection and the word is stressed by a slight glottal “push”.

The connection between an imagined past (suggested by the word “relics”), present and maybe even future (going to sleep with the intent and hopes of waking up afterwards), adds a type of timelessness to the song, while the reference to a “wand” as carried by the “weary traveller” speaks to the fantasy world created in the song. In this way, the aged traveller is connected to the idea of a wizard (“rest your wand”), as well as a wise old man, ultimately linking these images to the Jungian explorer, magician and wise old man archetypes (Jung 1981:270).

“Sleep the journey from your eyes” refers to a long and taxing physical and/or mental journey, after which it is necessary to rest in order to recover. The word “journey” evokes connotations of distance, exotic places, discovery and imagination. In the context of Holopainen’s lyrical output, a journey may also be linked to a form of transcending the here and now; in other words, escapism. The guitar’s continuous picked broken chord patterns in the Verses musically depict travelling and journeys. Ironically, the Verses’ – or the journey’s – harmonic rhythm is much slower than that of the Refrain sections (see Table 5.4) that describe a resting place. Here, the major sonority and the articulation (*legato*) of the melody which the Hardanger fiddle plays, help to create a soothing sense of calm.

In Verse (3), the “musical journey” continues with the guitar’s signature of picked broken chords, this time supported and coloured by a countermelody which the piano plays:

Good journey, love, time to go  
I checked your teeth and warmed your toes  
In the horizon I see them coming for you

The guitar still serves as the main accompanying instrument. The piano’s countermelody adds a flowing, yet somewhat percussive element to the section and it

acts as the driving force that moves the music forward in this section. Olzon's delivery of the vocal melody is similar in approach and intensity to that of Verses (1)-(2), but Verse (3) sees the first addition of backing vocals, also by Olzon. These backing vocals are added below the main melody when the words "In the horizon" are sung. Its placement not only supports the lyrics at this moment, but also emphasises the specific words. In this way, the broad horizon is musically depicted in the "broadening" of the texture and the vocal range, with the addition of the lower voice part. The words "in the horizon" are further highlighted by the chord change to III<sup>6</sup> of C minor (a major chord) at timecode 1'35" and the result is comparable to the "brightening" or lightening of mood heard at the same point in the harmonic progressions of Verses (1) and (2).

Near the end of the Verse, on the word "you" (timecode 1'39.5"), the violins play a sustained, dissonant chord with "hanging", flageolets "hovering" above the other pitches. The great registral differences between the flageolets, vocals and accompaniment create the idea of space or distance within the extended present's textural space.<sup>95</sup> These "hovering" sounds, heard in the (created) distance, may be a musical manifestation of the lyrics' last line: "In the horizon I see them coming for you". The "hanging" flageolets add an element of mystery to the soundscape and atmosphere, while the dissonance of the soft violin chord (initially played *ppp* with a *crescendo* to *piano* and *diminuendo* to *pianissimo*) creates a sense of unease, as the entities simply and elusively named "them" in the line are never identified in song.

Verse (4) can be regarded as a repetition of Verse (3) with a few small differences in terms of Olzon's vocal delivery and backing vocals. Similar to Verse (3), in Verse (4) Olzon sings the melody in the section, but here her delivery has a higher level of intensity staged against the guitar accompaniment (signifying the continued journey):

The mermaid grace, the forever call  
Beauty in spyglass on an old man's porch  
The mermaids you turned loose brought back your tears

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<sup>95</sup> Tagg defines the extended present as "lasting roughly as long as it takes a human being to breathe in and out, or the duration of a long exhalation, or of a few heartbeats, or of enunciating a phrase or short sentence" ([2012] 2013:272).

Alike Verse (3), Olzon sings backing vocals on specific words, thus thickening the texture and highlighting the lyrics at that specific moment. In Verse (4), Olzon’s backing vocals entry coincides with the words “the mermaids” (timecode 1’52.2”) and these backing vocals are higher in pitch than Olzon’s main vocal melody. The backing vocals above the main vocal melody in this Verse not only create room for variation in terms of register compared to Verse (3), where the backing vocals were lower than the melody, but Olzon’s placement of the backing vocals above or below the main vocal line in the respective Verses corresponds to the lyrics and atmosphere of these Verses.

In addition, the presence and then absence of the violins in Verse (3) and (4) respectively, may be explained speculatively by examining the instruments’ placement within the phrase structure of Verse (3) in terms of and in conjunction with the lyrics, compared to the corresponding place in the phrase structure of Verse (4). In this way, it shows the corresponding place in Verse (4) where the violins should/would have entered:

**Table 5.3: The lyrics and corresponding phrase structures of Verse (3) and (4)**

Bar	39 <sup>4</sup>	40	41	42	43	44	45	46 & 47
Verse (3)	Good	journey love	time to go	I checked your teeth and	warmed your toes	In the horizon I	see them coming for	you
Bar	47 <sup>4</sup>	48	49	50	51	52	53	54 & 55
Verse (4)	The	mermaid grace, the	forever call	Beauty and spite lies on an	old man’s porch The	mermaids you turned	loose brought back your	tears

In order to explain hypothetically, the absence of the violins in Verse (4) at timecode 1’56.8”, Tagg’s idea of *hypothetical substitution* is applied to this bar (54). In this regard, the substitution is not in the form of an instrument change, pitch or rhythmic adaptation or a timbre change. The substitution in bars 54-55 (or timecode 1’56.8”) constitutes the imaginary entry of violins where they are not supposed to play at all, in effect substituting rests with sound.

If the violins played a flageolet in these bars, the hypothetical violins' entrance would have coincided with the word "tears". In Verse (3) the flageolet sounds mirror the lyrics by adding dissonance and mystery (as explained previously). In terms of Verse (4), the hypothetical "hovering" flageolet sound of the violins would have infused the word "tears" with the same connotations of mystery, but the word "tears" here is not meant to be the main idea of the Verse's lyrics. The Verse speaks of a joyous happening, coinciding with the chord changes from the major sounding E-flat chord (III), followed by a B-flat major chord (♯VII) and then the tonic chord of C minor. The absent violins at this point in the score correspond to the text and overall atmosphere; in this way establishing a connection between the Verse's soundscape and lyrics.

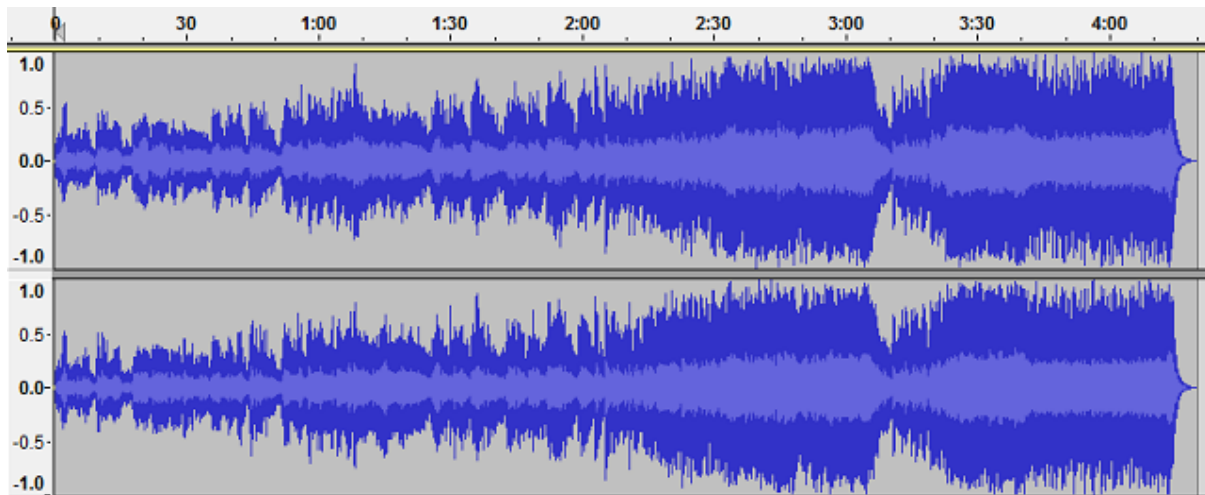
The lyrical content of Verse (4) draws on both the fantasy and ocean themes prevalent in Holopainen's lyrics from both phases of their output. The mermaids in the last line of this Verse can be considered the antithesis of the siren and other images of a femme fatale in Nightwish's lyrics (see Chapter 4.5.1), but the line can also be interpreted as a metaphor for creative and artistic endeavours or energy, the role of escapism as a coping strategy, healing through fantasy (which I explore in terms of the quotation below) and ultimately the redeeming role of art. In fact, it may speak to the concept and title – *Imaginaerum*, originally from the word "imaginarium" – of the entire album, namely healing through fantasy and imagination.<sup>96</sup>

Well [a] sanitarium [sic] is a place where you go and heal your sanity so  
"Imaginaerum" is a place where you go and heal your imagination — that's  
the idea behind the word (Holopainen quoted in Ramanand 2012).

After the conclusion of Verse (4), the Refrain is repeated twice and there are differences in terms of instrumentation and connotations between Refrain (2) and (3). The Hardanger fiddle does not play in the same register as the vocal melody, but an octave higher in both Refrains, suggesting and mirroring a higher level of intensity that is gradually built up throughout the song through a steadily thickening texture and the vocal delivery of the song:

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<sup>96</sup> The original title of the album and film was "Imaginarium", but it was changed to "Imaginaerum" to avoid confusion with existing products with the same name.



**Figure 5.4: A sound wave graph of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”<sup>97</sup>**

The bodhrán’s entry in Refrain (3) at timecode 2’18.8”, makes this Refrain more “rhythmically driven” than the preceding Refrain (2). Olzon’s slightly more intense delivery of Refrain (3) with more vibrato than in Refrain (2) adds to the thickening texture in this Refrain. The Spaghetti Western C-section follows Refrain (3).

After the C-section, the Refrain is repeated twice: one softly with a sparser texture (as a type of “soft chorus”), while the final Refrain has the thickest texture and highest level of intensity. In Refrain (4), Olzon sings the melody softly with very little vibrato and she sings the words “sun down beams” carefully, singing these words as if whispering. Towards the end of the Refrain, Olzon steadily heightens the level of intensity with which she sings the melody. In keeping with the sparser texture and softer dynamics of Refrain (4), there are no backing vocals in the beginning of this Refrain. However, backing vocals are added when the last two lines of the Refrain are sung and correspond to the following words:

Here, weary traveller rest your wand  
Sleep the journey from your eyes

The section’s thin texture, soft dynamics, instrumentation changes and Olzon’s volume and vibrato restraint bring about a complete change in sound and atmosphere. This section is in stark contrast with the two sections directly preceding and following it,

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<sup>97</sup> The graph is a screen shot of the song as viewed in the program Audacity®.

namely the C-section and Refrain (5) respectively. Refrain (4) sees the return of the guitar accompaniment as heard in the previous Refrains, which is also perpetuated in Refrain (5).

In Refrain (5), the texture immediately thickens with the joining of the bodhrán, harp glissandi, the string section of the orchestra and backing vocals by Olzon. The backing vocals that feature here are freer than in previous sections and almost act as a countermelody. The melismas are not identically placed to match those of the main vocal melody, while the backing vocals in this Refrain are belted. This change in timbre and delivery, as well as the freer arrangement of the backing vocals not only add to the volume and lively nature of the section, but also create the feeling of freedom and joyous celebration.

The belted vocals (together with the denser overall texture), increase the intensity of the section and help to emphasise Refrain (5) as the climax of all the Refrains. The vocal melody includes a pitch bend (scoop) on the word “eyes” and this word is sung on the C one octave above middle-C, an octave higher than in the other Refrains. The vowel of the first “e” of the word “eyes” is sung even more “explosively” than in the preceding Refrains, not only emphasising the word “eyes”, but probably also aiding in the successful belting of the C an octave above middle-C; a pitch quite possibly located in Olzon’s “voice break” (or the place where there is a transition between two registers of the voice).

At the end of the word “eyes”, Olzon inserts a pitch inflection to decorate and emphasise the word. What is salient about her pitch inflection on the word “eyes” is that she makes pitch inflections on the word each time it occurs, although the inflection is much slighter earlier in the song. The reason for this inflection may be that of: (a) her accent; (b) an attempt to create a Celtic vocal effect; or (c) a combination of (a) and (b).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> She makes inflections on the word “eyes” in the songs “Meadows of Heaven” (*Dark Passion Play*) and “Cadence of Her Last Breath” (*Dark Passion Play*) as well, but since these songs do not have Irish Celtic soundscapes, the inflections in these songs are most likely the result of Olzon’s Swedish accent.

Throughout the song, the different soundscapes (Irish Celtic, Spaghetti Western, and Norwegian folk music, with the addition of the Hardanger fiddle), have connotations with place and landscape that are arranged to complement or contradict each other within the overarching narrative of the song that shapes it into a meaningful whole. These different soundscapes may have links to specific music traditions, cultures and geographic locations, but in the context of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” they are not meant to be read as an attempt to produce a collection of authentic traditional musics.

Holopainen’s weaving of Irish Celtic, Spaghetti Western, and Norwegian elements into the soundscape of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” underlines a geographical vagueness in the song. This vagueness coupled with the non-authentic writing for region- and tradition-specific instruments such as the bodhrán, low whistle and Hardanger fiddle, evoke images and connotations of landscapes and soundscapes of exotic, “other” places; in other words, the “images of Elsewhere” that Locke (2009:3) refers to. In this way, the traditional elements in the song are placeholders for that which is “different”, “elsewhere” and “innocent”, signifying nostalgia for a time before industrialisation and, ironically, globalisation which made these “foreign” elements readily available. In turn, these elements ultimately signify placeholders within the receiver’s imagination and fantasy as well. The receiver is transported to another place and another time through the different soundscapes and fantasy connotations, bringing the escapist narrative of the song – and the entire *Imaginaerum* album – to the forefront.

### **5.3 Celtic connotations**

The Irish Celtic connotations in the song are evoked by modal chord progressions that are based on progressions associated with traditional Irish music, as well as the incorporation of traditional instruments. These connotations are discussed respectively in section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2.

#### **5.3.1 Modality: Chord progressions with ♯VII and the dominant minor**

Philip Tagg asserts that chord progressions, just like types of chords, may have semiotic properties ([2012] 2013:340). In this way, certain chord progressions may indicate a mood or help to identify/indicate a “home style” (Tagg [2012] 2013:340). Although he does not elucidate particular chord progressions, Chris McDonald states

that most of the (Celtic) folksongs collected by musicologist Kenneth Peacock and folklorist Helen Creighton, were written in either the Dorian or Mixolydian mode (McDonald 2008). For Peacock and Creighton, the sounds of these modes had an archaic sound (McDonald 2008).<sup>99</sup>

There are numerous examples of traditional Irish songs that rely on or include ♭VII or dominant minor chords. A few examples are:

- “Rocky Road to Dublin” (traditional, as performed by The Dubliners): i - ♭VII - i in verses;
- “The Foggy Dew” (traditional, as performed by The Dubliners): i - ♭VII - min v -- i - iv - i in verses; and
- “Siúil a Rún” (traditional, as performed by Clannad): i - ♭VII - VI - ♭VII - i - III - VI - ♭VII - i.

Similar to “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, one of these examples also features III as part of the harmonic progression as can be seen above. Specifically ♭VII and sometimes the dominant minor are ubiquitous chords in all the examples listed above.

In “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, the dominant minor (G minor), ♭VII (B-flat major) and III (E-flat major) chords in chord progressions signify Irish Celtic music. The natural 7<sup>th</sup> step which features in both the ♭VII and dominant minor chord respectively, is “borrowed” from the Dorian and Mixolydian modes (Ekizoglou 2012). The modal progressions formed by the inclusion of ♭VII and the dominant minor adds a “folky” essence to the soundscape of the Verses, Refrains and Instrumentals and become *musemes* that may connote “old”, “mediaeval”, “fantasy” or “another time”. Olzon’s melody avoids A-flat (the sixth step of C minor) in the Verses and Refrains, and later in Instrumental (4) when the Hardanger fiddle plays the melody, brings about a “gapped”, hexatonic scale which in turn, is a marker of exoticism.

The harmonic progressions as found in the song are as follows:

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<sup>99</sup> McDonald (2008) also notes that this emphasis on particular modal sounds when deciding on which songs to publish or collect may have shaped the folksong repertoire.



**Table 5.4: Harmonic progressions in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”**

		Bar 1	Bar 2	Bar 3	Bar 4	Bar 5	Bar 6	Bar 7	Bar 8	Bar 9
A	Verse (1)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III <sup>6</sup>	v $\sharp$	i	i	
	Instrumental (1)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III	$\sharp$ VII	i	i	
	Verse (2)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III <sup>6</sup>	v $\sharp$	i	i	
B	Refrain (1)	VI <sup>6/4</sup>	$\sharp$ VII <sup>6</sup> i	III	IV I	VI III <sup>6</sup>	$\sharp$ VII i	IV VI v $\sharp$	i	
A	Instrumental (2)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III	$\sharp$ VII	i	i	
	Verse (3)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III <sup>6</sup>	v $\sharp$	i	i	
	Verse (4)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III	$\sharp$ VII	i	i	
B	Refrain (2)	VI <sup>6/4</sup>	$\sharp$ VII <sup>6</sup> i	III	IV I	VI III <sup>6</sup>	$\sharp$ VII i	IV VI v $\sharp$	i	
	Refrain (3)	VI <sup>6/4</sup>	$\sharp$ VII <sup>6</sup> i	III	$\sharp$ VII I	VI III <sup>6</sup>	$\sharp$ VII i	IV VI v $\sharp$	(i)	
C	Western	i	i	IV	IV	v $\sharp$	$\sharp$ VII	i	i	
		i	i	IV	IV	VI	min v	i	i	
B	Refrain (4)	VI <sup>6/4</sup>	$\sharp$ VII <sup>6</sup> i	III	IV	VI III <sup>6</sup>	$\sharp$ VII i	IV VI v $\sharp$	i	
	Refrain (5)	VI	$\sharp$ VII <sup>6</sup> i	III	$\sharp$ VII I	VI III <sup>6</sup>	$\sharp$ VII i	IV VI v $\sharp$	(i)	
A	Instrumental (3)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III <sup>6</sup>	v $\sharp$	i	i	
	Instrumental (4)	i	i	v $\sharp$	v $\sharp$	III	$\sharp$ VII	i	i	i

As I show in Table 5.4, either the dominant minor or  $\sharp$ VII chord precedes the final tonic chord of each section. Although it is audibly clear that the ends of sections do have a “closing” in the form of a type of cadence, these preceding chords deliberately steer away from the typical V-i cadence associated with Western art music, as well as a myriad of (Western) rock and pop songs. The deliberate avoidance of the typical authentic cadence further adds to the perceived “otherness” and fantasy setting of the song, as opposed to “mainstream” ballads. It should be noted that modal “cadences” are not unique to traditional Irish music. Modal progressions and “cadences” are often found in, among other things, metal music as modality is a crucial part of conveying meaning in metal (Walser 1993:46).

### **5.3.2 Instruments**

The Verses, Refrains and Instrumental sections of the song include, in different combinations, three instruments that are closely associated with Celtic music (and Irish traditional music in particular). These instruments, in no specific order, are the low whistle, bodhrán, and steel string acoustic guitar (sections 5.3.2.1-5.3.2.3 respectively). These instruments are mainly included to add an Irish flavour to the soundscape of the majority of the songs. Their link to fantasy through Celtic music's associations with fantasy, legend and mythology (see section 5.1.2), is an equally important aspect.

#### 5.3.2.1 Low whistle

The low whistles are a recent development in traditional Irish instruments as it was developed only in the 1970s by Bernard Overton (*Whistles History* 2005). Low whistles are bigger than penny whistles (or tin whistles) and subsequently produce lower sounding pitches (Collins n.d.). The uilleann pipes are pitched in D or G (Ekizoglou 2012), but usually in D-D with a two-octave range and subsequently, the most popular whistles are in D (Carolan 2001:564).

The first Instrumental section of "Turn Loose the Mermaids" sees a low whistle with its characteristic "breathy" sound. A low whistle also plays in Instrumental (2). Both these Instrumentals have a rather sparse texture and are two "softer" sections within the framework of the song. These "softer" sections can be linked to the intimate atmosphere created in the beginning of the song, adding a "delicate" quality to these sections. The "breathy" sound of the instrument helps to create a somewhat mysterious, almost magical atmosphere, befitting the fantasy titled and themed ballad. The "breathy" sound of the low whistle is also reminiscent of the ocean and more specifically, of constantly breaking waves, thus referencing the ocean and the magical and mystical mermaids referred to in the song title and lyrics.

#### 5.3.2.2 Bodhrán

The bodhrán is a traditional Irish Celtic instrument, more specifically, an Irish drum that is struck by hand or with a small stick (Skinner Sawyers [2000] 2001:339). In

Nightwish's "Turn Loose the Mermaids" the bodhrán replaces the drum kit as the rhythmic driving force of the song. It plays for the first time in Refrain (3, timecode 2'16.5"-2'33.7") and plays in Refrain (5, timecode 3'22"-3'38.9"), Instrumental (3, timecode 3'39.4"-3'56.3"), as well as in Instrumental (4, timecode 3'56.9"-4'20"). The inclusion of the bodhrán in Refrain (3) adds to the texture of the section, in order to make it denser. Of the first three Refrains, Refrain (3) has the densest texture and greatest instrumental variety, making the section sound as if it is the climax of the first half of the song or the climax of the "Celtic" section, before the start of the contrasting Spaghetti Western section.

Similar to the thickening of the texture in Refrain (3), the bodhrán aids in creating a denser texture in Refrain (5) and the last two Instrumental sections, making Refrain (5) the climax of the "Celtic" section, after the Spaghetti Western interlude in terms of texture, instrumental variety, sheer volume and liveliness. In fact, Refrain (5) can be seen as the "high point" of all five of the Refrains. The hand claps on the second and fourth beats of every bar not only acts as a rhythmic driving force, but also contributes to the joyous sound, creating a jubilant atmosphere in the last two Instrumentals.

#### 5.3.2.3 Steel string acoustic guitar

A steel string guitar, doubled in-studio and aurally staged to sound as if two guitars are playing on opposite sides (left and right) of the textural space or on opposite sides (left and right) of Olzon's vocals when she sings, is the main accompanying instrument of "Turn Loose the Mermaids". There has been a visible increase in harmonisation in Irish folk music since the 20<sup>th</sup> century and accordingly, many Irish folk music groups and bands include guitars or pianos as accompanying instrument, even though banjos and mandolins are more typically associated with Irish folk music (Carolan 2001:264). The guitar is usually "downtuned" from the standard EBGDAE tuning to DADGAD in order to easily accompany the uilleann pipes that are usually tuned in D (as I explained in section 5.3.2.1).

The guitar plays in all sections of "Turn Loose the Mermaids" except in the Spaghetti Western C-section and may be a musical representation of the continuing journey spoken about in the lyrics. The choice of the guitar as accompanying instrument in the song also speaks to the atmosphere of the song, particularly in the first phrase. If the

acoustic guitar in the first phrase is substituted, by means of Tagg's *hypothetical substitution*, with an instrument that is more closely associated with the picture of the graveyard such as, for instance, the pipe (church) organ, the changes in the soundscape would constitute changes in the connotations that are evoked. The pipe organ may suit the setting of the lyrics of Verse 1, as its sound has connotations with "death", "buried", "church", "graveyard" and "dark". The instrument also has connotations with "Gothic", "creepy", "horror" and even "vampire" (see Chapter 4.8.4). Although the pipe organ might have fitted the lyrics in the opening bars, it would have set the stage for the receiver to expect a very different soundscape in the rest of the song, as the instrument is not appropriate for a ballad.

Furthermore, it would have counteracted the song's fantasy-inspired narrative and Olzon's light, devoid of drama, "story-telling" delivery of the vocal melody. Besides its connection with Irish Celtic music, the use of the acoustic guitar as accompanying instrument inspires connotations associated with serenading or campfire stories befitting the intimate atmosphere created in the Irish Celtic-inspired sections.

#### **5.4 The Spaghetti Western C-section**

The beginning of the Spaghetti Western C-section in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" coincides with Olzon's singing the word "eyes". The C-section is a purely instrumental, orchestral section and its thematic material, as well as overall atmosphere differs completely from that of the Instrumental interludes heard earlier in the song. The orchestra that the receiver hears in this section is not a full-scale symphony orchestra, as some lower-pitched instruments (tuba, bassoon, trombone and bass clarinet) and instruments with a "mellower" wood sound (clarinet, oboe and cor anglais) are omitted. The higher-pitched, "brighter" sounding woodwinds and brass instruments are included, featuring the piccolo, flute, horns and trumpets<sup>100</sup>, with the snare drum and timpani the rhythmic driving force in this section. The entire string section of the orchestra plays, but the Hardanger fiddle that featured in the Refrains and the Irish Celtic instruments do not play in this section.

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<sup>100</sup> As indicated in the score.

The sudden entry of the orchestra and the immediate change in sound and texture effects an instant change of atmosphere. The woodwinds and brass are the most dominant instruments throughout the section: the piccolo and flute double the whistling of the melody, while the trumpets play a type of “echoed afterthought” of the whistled theme:

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Piccolo, Flute, and two Trumpets in Bb. The Piccolo and Flute parts are in the upper staves, both playing a melody marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The two Trumpet in Bb parts are in the lower staves, playing a staccato echo of the melody marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The instruction "Pure spaghetti Western vibrato!" is written above each trumpet staff. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb).

**Figure 5.5: C-section woodwind theme and brass echo<sup>101</sup>**

The trumpets play with a lot of vibrato which further underlines the Spaghetti Western character of the section. They also play staccato, while the other instruments play mostly legato. In this regard, the strings play relatively long notes, especially the violins and violas. The long notes provide the foundation and necessary support in the section, also creating the musical representation of an “open space” or “wide” landscape. Around timecodes 2’44.9”-2’45.5” and 3’01.3”-3’01.8”, bar long time signature changes from 4/4 to 2/4 occur to speed up the arrival of the ends of phrases. The C-section concludes with a modal cadence between the dominant minor (v, Gm) and tonic (i, Cm) of C minor.

Certain features and elements that make up the C-section of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” are reminiscent of the scores of Spaghetti Westerns, especially those by Ennio Morricone. These features, in no particular order, include: the whistling of the melody line in the section; the harmonic progression i (Cm) to IV (F); and the inclusion of the snare drum which serves as the rhythmic driving force of the section. I discuss these features in sections 5.4.1-5.4.3 respectively.

<sup>101</sup> As seen in the score.

### 5.4.1 Whistling

The receiver hears a whistling melody at around timecode 2'34" to 3'06.4" in the C-section of "Turn Loose the Mermaids". This whistled melody is doubled by the piccolo and flute:



**Figure 5.6: The whistled melody**

The whistling sound is similar to Alessandro Alessandroni's whistling on the soundtracks of numerous well-known Spaghetti Westerns (Hughes 2010:28, 31, 38). This sound has become associated with Spaghetti Westerns through film scores such as *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964, "Titoli"); *For a Few Dollars More* (1965, "Quasi Morto" and "Titoli"); and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966, main theme and "Marcia"). *A Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More* and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* are also known as the "Dollars Trilogy" (Kausalik 2008:iii) or "The Man with No Name Trilogy", which catapulted actor Clint Eastwood as the films' protagonist into the spotlight (Anderson 2010).

The scores of all the films mentioned here are written by Ennio Morricone and are all directed by Sergio Leone, except *The Mercenary*, which was directed by Sergio Corbucci and *My Name is Nobody* which was directed by both Tonino Valerii and Leone. Thus, the whistling sound has become almost synonymous with both Morricone and Leone's work and the sound evokes connotations associated with the Spaghetti Western genre in general, as well as the canonised Morricone and Leone collaborations. Alessandro Alessandroni is also heard whistling on the soundtrack of *Adios, Sabata* (1970), specifically in the main theme, with the score composed by Bruno Nicolai (Hughes 2010:114), Morricone's assistant and a conductor before becoming a composer himself (Hughes 2010:30). Alessandroni's whistled melodies in the title themes of both *A Fistful of Dollars* and *For a Few Dollars More* start with an upbeat, together with a perfect fourth interval between the first two pitches.

#### 5.4.2 Harmonic progression: i to IV

Even though the melody of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” has a “filled” fourth interval in the melody, unlike the “unfilled” fourth intervals in whistled melodies of the themes of *A Fistful of Dollars* and *For a Few Dollars More*, the fourth does feature in terms of the chord progression from i to IV in C minor:



**Figure 5.7: The chord progression from i to IV in the C-section**

The movement from a tonic chord (minor) to a major chord is an iconic feature of Ennio Morricone’s main theme of *For a Few Dollars More* where i in D minor, i to IV in D minor in the theme of *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* and i to III in D minor in the theme of *A Fistful of Dollars*.

#### 5.4.3 Snare drum

The snare drum acts as the rhythmic driving force in the C-section of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” and the rhythmic patterns which the instrument plays are based on the rhythms in the first four bars of the C-section (as seen in the score):



**Figure 5.8: The first four bars of the snare drum rhythmic pattern in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”**

The snare drum’s unique sound adds a militaristic quality to the soundscape in the C-section of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”. The snare drum features in the scores of war films such as *The Alamo* (“What We’re Defending”); American Westerns such as *Dances with Wolves* (“Ride to Fort Hays”); *The Cowboys* (“Overture” at around timecode 8’38”); *How the West Was Won* suite; the theme of *Silverado*, *Wyatt Earp* (“It All Ends Now”); Spaghetti Westerns such as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (theme, “Marcia without Hope” and “The Ecstasy of Gold” around timecode 0’49”); and

*Once Upon a Time in the West*. The connoted “The Ecstasy of Gold” in the Nightwish song in turn connotes American thrash metal band Metallica’s cover of “The Ecstasy of Gold”. The San Francisco Symphony orchestra plays Morricone’s “The Ecstasy of Gold” on Metallica’s 1999 live album *S&M* – a recording of the band’s live show with the orchestra which may suggest a link between Ennio Morricone’s score, the Spaghetti Western genre, metal and the orchestra to fans of Metallica and other metal.<sup>102</sup>

Besides the landscape connotations and change in scenery from the luscious Celtic landscapes to a barren or desert landscape, the Spaghetti Western C-section also adds a new depth to the idea of the “weary traveller” referred to in the Refrains’ lyrics. As discussed previously, the anti-hero protagonist of the Spaghetti Western is a withdrawn, gun-toting lone ranger who is just slightly better in character and morals as the “bad guys”. In the fantastical realm of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, and in keeping with the mermaids and “faery lands forlorn” of the Irish Celtic sections, the lone traveller is given a wand instead of a gun (see section 5.2). At first glance it may appear as though the fantasy elements in the lyrics and musical material serve to paint over the connoted violence emerging through the musical cues à la Morricone in the section. These cues connote the violence of Leone’s Spaghetti Westerns, focusing the receiver’s attention on the “weary traveller” as a being with magical abilities instead. I explore the connection between fantasy and violence in greater detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

Epic fantasy, as a genre, has its origins in how writers experienced world wars and high-fantasy literature such as *The Lord of the Rings* expressing nostalgia for “safe destinations”, while simultaneously tracing the “vulnerability of borders and identities” (Gelder 2006:111). Fantasy (the genre), allows characters and authors alike to express deeper yearnings, but often refuses to reach any form of closure, suggesting

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<sup>102</sup> Although there is a possible connotative link between Metallica’s cover of “The Ecstasy of Gold” and Nightwish’s Spaghetti Western C-section in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, it is difficult to prove that the Metallica cover is the main inspiration for Nightwish’s incorporation of Spaghetti Western-inspired score elements into their song. Holopainen does not name Metallica as the source of inspiration for this song and although there are certain similarities between Morricone’s “The Ecstasy of Gold” and the Nightwish song (such as the similar snare drum pattern as I have indicated), the Nightwish song has more similarities with other Morricone scores, specifically those that feature the whistling of Alessandro Alessandroni, and in this way rather tends to connote these latter scores.



that the initial quest and struggle may become endless battles beyond a safe border (Gelder 2006:111). The reader can imagine and experience “unknown” places in fantasy and epic fantasy which not only stimulates the imagination of the reader, but also continuously focuses on reality, on “its borders and its vulnerability, about whether that original or originating place can still be [...] a ‘safe destination’” (Gelder 2006:111).

Ken Gelder’s (2006) reading of *The Lord of the Rings* touches on the idea that fantasy is not only a means to escape one’s immediate surroundings, but it is also a vehicle that translates reality and its struggles into a magical setting where an author can explore deeper yearnings through a character or scenario. Thus it gives social commentary and critique on a wide range of topics from xenophobia, war, industry, belonging, citizenship, leadership, to class, race, et cetera, which all from part of the struggles in epic fantasy or high-fantasy such as *The Lord of the Rings*.

What is interesting about the harmonic progressions in the C-section of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” (see Table 5.4) is that – besides the movement from i to IV which is also found in some of Morricone’s Spaghetti Western scores – these harmonic progressions are very similar to the modal progressions of the Irish Celtic-inspired sections. In this way, the fantastical and otherworldly connotations (“mermaids”, “land of fairies”, “magic”, et cetera) are retained, even though the landscape and soundscape change, suggesting a deeper narrative link between the seemingly contrasting sections as well.

The wand in the traveller’s hand (in the Refrains and suggested in the C-section) evokes magic and imagination, but the idea that the wand is a substitution for a gun in a Wild West setting may not be nearly as “softening” or far-fetched as it initially seems. The Morricone-inspired soundscape and the violence on the American frontier it connotes (as seen through the eyes of Italian director Sergio Leone in the films) is further translated into an otherworldly, fantastical realm. Besides providing an escape, as I discussed previously, fantasy offers a glimpse into reality where social commentary and critique is often given through unresolved, epic and violent battles, further linking the fantasy elements of the Irish Celtic-inspired sections with the Spaghetti Western section.

The exoticism in Spaghetti Westerns spans further than the appropriation and revitalisation of certain American Western clichés such as “primitive rebel[s]” and the “romance of the sombrero” (Frayling 2006:225) or dancing villagers. The exoticism in Spaghetti Westerns is tied to the landscapes in the films, where the emphasis is on a barren, deserted desert landscape with settlements or towns “in the middle of nowhere” in contrast to the lush landscapes in American Westerns (see Kausalik 2008:iii, 4, 57).

## 5.5 Other fantasy connotations

As I noted in section 5.2, the song’s lyrics contain unambiguous references to fantasy. The soundscapes within “Turn Loose the Mermaids” connote different spaces, locations and landscapes (see sections 5.3 and 5.4) and these different locations are closely related to the imagined journey described in the lyrics. The established connection between fantasy and mythology and the featured Celtic connotations in the song are further compounded by the addition of the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, an instrument with its own connotative links to fantasy, mythology and landscape.

### 5.5.1 Hardanger fiddle

The Hardanger fiddle (or *hardingfele*) is a string instrument similar in design to the violin, but with sympathetic strings below the four “main” strings (Aksdal 2006:15-16). This fiddle is inseparably linked to Norwegian legends and fairy tales, as many of these tales contain references to the fiddle or the instrument may feature as a “symbolic attribute” of mythical subterranean or supernatural beings (*Myth and reality of the Hardanger fiddle and Myllarguten* 2015). In Nordic folklore, a fiddle is linked to the mythological being called the *fossegrim*.

The *fossegrim* is a male water spirit (Kopchick 2007) who lives in the vicinity of a waterfall and is said to teach others how to master playing the violin (Titon 2004:318), but may trick its violin “student” into drowning (Kopchick 2007). Torgeir Augundson – also known as Myllarguten – is one of Norway’s most esteemed fiddlers and legend has it that he was taught to play the fiddle by the *fossegrim* himself (Aksdal 2006:17). In his letter to Sara Thorp, Ole Bull describes the supernatural *fossegrim* as a

“trickster” and devil (Titon 2004:318), thus linking the violin that he is said to play to the idea of a devil.

The connection between a fiddler (or violinist) and the devil is not unique to Norse mythology. Thomas Baltzar – a 17<sup>th</sup> century German violinist – is said to have played with such virtuosity that John Wilson, upon hearing the violinist perform, commented on whether he was in fact, a devil as “he acted beyond the parts of a man” (Scholes 1934:279 in Berger 2012:312-313). Corelli credited German violinist Nicolaus Strunck – also a 17<sup>th</sup> century musician – as being “an Arch-devil”, especially for Strunck’s use of *scordatura* (Berger 2012:313).<sup>103</sup> Two well-known examples, probably the best known, of European violinists whose skill is linked to the devil are Giuseppe Tartini and Niccolò Paganini (Berger 2012:314-321).

The Hardanger fiddle has, as I have previously discussed, a link to fairy tales and legends and ultimately also the folk tunes that keep these legends alive (*Myth and reality of the Hardanger fiddle and Myllarguten* 2015). Besides featuring in folk music, Norwegian composers Halfdan Kjerulf, Thomas Tellefsen and Edvard Grieg set out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to write music based on the rhythms and melodies of songs for the Hardanger fiddle (Aksdal 2006:17). Even though Ole Bull already composed “Souvenirs de Norvège” for Hardanger fiddle, double bass, flute and string quartet in 1832, the instrument only really featured in art music after 1900 (Aksdal 2006:17).

A Hardanger fiddle plays on the soundtracks of *Fargo* (1996, music by Carter Burwell); *Armageddon* (1998, music by Trevor Rabin); *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002, music by Howard Shore); *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003, music by Howard Shore); and *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010, music by John Powell). The latter’s score also exhibits/includes Celtic influences. Dermot Crehan, who plays the Hardanger fiddle in Nightwish’s “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, also plays on three of the soundtracks mentioned above: *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

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<sup>103</sup> *Scordatura* refers to the non-standard pitch tuning of the violin’s strings as also later employed by Paganini (Berger 2012:313).

This traditional Norwegian fiddle is used specifically to musically represent Rohan and its inhabitants – the Rohirrim who are sometimes referred to as the Horse-lords or “masters of horses” (Tolkien [1954] 2007:555, 886) – in the score of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. The Rohirrim are described as “tall men and fair women, valiant both alike, golden-haired, bright-eyed, and strong” (Tolkien [1954] 2007:887). In this regard, Howard Shore’s choice to use the Hardanger fiddle to play the theme of the fictitious region and people of Rohan, serving in this way as the sonic representation of the region, may be intentional in order to evoke a metonymic association (or synecdoche) with Norwegian culture.

Metonymic models, as Raymond Gibbs argues à la Mark Turner, “depend on conventional cultural associations, which reflect the general principle that *a thing may stand for what it is conventionally associated with*” (Gibbs 1993:259; italicised by Gibbs). Therefore, the Hardanger fiddle may connote Norway and Nordic culture, but most probably serves to connote stereotypical descriptions of Norwegians as fair haired and light skinned with blue eyes, drawing a parallel between the typical Norse appearance and the description of the Rohirrim quoted previously in this section. The fiddle theme features again when the Rohirrim engage in an epic battle with the Orcs; of course connoting the Rohirrim, but it also links the fiddle to bravery, resilience in the face of war and the violence of the battle itself.

The Hardanger fiddle’s fantasy connotations (especially in terms of the score of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*) contribute to establishing a connection between the instrument’s sound and fantasy, and exploration and violence in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”. It also links Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* with Nightwish’s output, as Tolkien’s epic fantasy novel is referenced or drawn on in specifically two other Nightwish songs, namely “Elvenpath” (*Angels Fall First*) and “Wishmaster” (*Wishmaster*). As such, the fiddle in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” may serve to suggest “another place”, another landscape within the fantastical lyrical and musical narrative of the song, but also a link to fantasy via the

Tolkien connection created in the score of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*.<sup>104</sup>

Tolkien's output shows his interest in Old Norse culture and mythology; his appropriation thereof in his work can be read as an attempt to show how Nordic mythology can act as a tool to "intervene in contemporary society" and provide "solutions to the political dilemma" of his time (Arvidsson 2010).<sup>105</sup> In this regard, Tolkien is fond of almost feudal hierarchies in *The Lord of the Rings* where a rightful, deserving ruler rules over the rest who are acutely aware of their place and role within society (Arvidsson 2010). Tolkien also draws on other "old" texts as inspiration for his works of fantasy.

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* incorporates philosophies that espouse anti-modernist, anti-industrial and anti-mechanical sentiments (Arvidsson 2010), opting instead for an "ecocentric Middle-earth" where global consumerism is less valued than life (Siewers 2005:140).<sup>106</sup> Early Celtic texts (specifically of Irish and Welsh origin), serve as the inspiration for the lush, green, almost mediaeval and ecocentric Middle-earth (Siewers 2005:140). The Hardanger fiddle in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" connotatively links a Norwegian soundscape with a Norwegian landscape, a Norse-looking tribe in *The Lord of the Rings* and ultimately, with a Celtic-inspired landscape in Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings*. This link implies a connotative link between the Norwegian instrument and a Celtic landscape which connects the Irish Celtic-inspired elements and Hardanger fiddle in "Turn Loose the Mermaids".

In "Turn Loose the Mermaids", the Hardanger fiddle plays for the first time in Refrain (1), doubling Olzon's vocal melody in the same register (see section 5.2). The fiddle plays a central role in all five Refrains, playing variations of the vocal melody an octave

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<sup>104</sup> Led Zeppelin and Blind Guardian also draw on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien in their songs – in fact, Blind Guardian's music is referred to as "Tolkien metal" or "hobbit metal" (Fletcher 2017). Led Zeppelin also draw inspiration from the Vikings (Trafford 2016).

<sup>105</sup> Nightwish's second phase songs suggest a type of "social intervention" in the form of social critique, albeit not politically inclined. I explore this "social intervention" in Chapter 7.

<sup>106</sup> Tolkien's anti-industrial, anti-mechanical, et cetera, sentiments as part of an ecocentric, Celtic-inspired Middle-earth correspond with my reading of the Irish Celtic instruments in the song as representative of a nostalgia for a time before globalisation and industrialisation (see Chapter 5.2).

higher in Refrains (2)-(5). The fiddle is scored only to play in Instrumental (4), but on the recording the fiddle plays a solo in Instrumental (3) which is slightly different from what is originally scored for Instrumental (4). In Instrumental (4), the fiddle's melody is doubled an octave higher:



**Figure 5.9: A transcription of the Hardanger fiddle part in Instrumental (3)**

Including the instrument in the soundscape of “Turn Loose the Mermaids” may signify the instrument’s link to mythology and folklore, evoking “folky” connotations in a similar way as the modal chord progressions in the song that suggest a “Celtic folkiness”. The folkloristic connotations of the instrument’s sound add to the fantastical narrative of the song. The instrument’s link with two films in the high-fantasy film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* further deepens the connection with fantasy in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”. The excerpt above in Figure 5.9 is hexatonic as A-flat is completely avoided/skipped in the Hardanger fiddle melody in Instrumental (3). The avoidance of the A-flat in Instrumental (3) and the creation of a “gapped”, hexatonic scale is similar to the avoidance of the A-flat in the vocal melody of the Verses and Refrains (see section 5.3.1).

## 5.6 Conclusion

“Turn Loose the Mermaids” incorporates three different soundscapes, audible in terms of the choice of instruments; these soundscapes evoke different images and connotations. The bodhrán and low whistle have links to traditional Irish Celtic music, while the Hardanger fiddle is synonymous with Norway. The fiddle also connotes Howard Shore’s theme for the Rohirrim in the film *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, thus linking the instrument’s sound to high-fantasy in the popular consciousness.

The Spaghetti Western C-section provides connotative information about the “weary traveller” referenced in the lyrics. The soundscape resembles the iconic scores by Ennio Morricone, although the chord progressions heard in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” deviate from the connoted key moments in Morricone’s scores. The stereotyping of the Morricone-scores, the Hardanger fiddle and Irish Celtic-inspired elements in the song’s soundscape not only connote “fantasy”, “escapism”, “Elsewhere” or “other”, but also connotes the fantasy film scores (like Howard Shore’s scores for *The Lord of the Rings*), songs and films themselves in which these musemes or similar style of stereotyping occurs. Through these connotations, “Turn Loose the Mermaids” is not a musical representation of reality or a series of realities, but rather a tenet of the band’s brand of fantasy and escapism as it is constructed in terms of the Nightwish world and mythology.

Even though the soundscape (and landscape) connotations change throughout the song to musically represent a journey, the modal harmonic progressions found throughout, give a narrative continuity to the song. The modal progressions in turn, have strong ties with folk music and in this case, Irish Celtic music. The modal progressions and exotic instruments are musical representations of an “Elsewhere”, with the receiver being transported to “another time”, “another place” in the song, highlighting both the fantasy and escapist elements of the song.

The soundscape has three layers in the Verses where Olzon “steps out” of the fantasy-backdrop to tell the story. In the Instrumentals, the cross delay on the high strings and pad creates the feeling that all limitations are removed, signifying imagination, while the delay on the low whistle helps to draw the listener into the fantasy.

The song is also an example of how Nightwish challenges the genre boundaries of their first phase idiom, although this phase already includes diverse, boundary shifting and trend setting features, and symphonic power metal in its entirety.

## Chapter 6 – “The end: The songwriter’s dead”: Intertextuality in “The Poet and the Pendulum”

### 6.1 Background and theoretical framework

“The Poet and the Pendulum” is an almost 14-minute song on Nightwish’s sixth full-length studio album *Dark Passion Play* (Nightwish 2007b). Tuomas Holopainen is both the lyricist and composer, while Pip Williams arranged the song for the orchestra (Nightwish 2007a:20). The orchestra that plays on the album consists of members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and is a larger orchestra than the one on the *Imaginaerum* album which also features members of the same orchestra (Nightwish 2007a:18 and Nightwish 2011a:22). “The Poet and the Pendulum” is scored for 66 players and the conductor is James Shearman (Nightwish 2007a:18, 20). The song features four soloists and 33 members of the Metro Voices as indicated in the score.

The larger orchestra creates a much greater degree of intensity, drama, bombast and theatricality that the comparatively small orchestra in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” had. The orchestra in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” features to introduce specific instruments into the song’s soundscape (like the strings, a flute and piccolo to evoke Alessandro Alessandrone’s whistling in some of Ennio Morricone’s scores and the brass section that all connote Morricone’s scores of, particularly, Sergio Leone’s *Dollars*-trilogy and by extension the Leone films themselves.

#### 6.1.1 Background

“The Poet and the Pendulum” is the first track on Nightwish’s *Dark Passion Play* album. The song’s lyrics are decidedly grim compared to some of the other songs on the album such as the pop-sounding “Amaranth” and the ballad “Eva”. The dark material reflects the band’s biography as *Dark Passion Play* was written in 2005 during a difficult time for the band and in early 2006 after the public firing of female vocalist Tarja Turunen (Holopainen interviewed in Kastner 2008). The song is autobiographical in nature and contains numerous gruesome scenes – one being a suicide scene:

Right now, it feels really awkward listening to that song, especially playing that song, since I'm not that person any more. But I just fancied the idea of killing



myself in a song, in a concrete way [...] I imagined myself being on an altar with the pendulum coming down like in the novel – and that's where the song was born (Holopainen interviewed in Sederholm 2015).

Holopainen acquired the idea for writing himself into the song's narrative from Stephen King's 2004 book *Song of Susannah* (*Interviews: Nightwish* 2009), the sixth book in the series titled *The Dark Tower*. In this book, King is part of the story's plot as a fictionalised version of himself (Vincent 2004:297). In this way, the song's protagonist is closely identified with Holopainen and is, as he labels it, "the most personal song [on] my most personal album" (Holopainen interviewed in Kastner 2008).

For Holopainen, the song represents an "ultimate catharsis" that he – after a time of personal and professional crises – "had to do" (Holopainen interviewed in Sederholm 2015). In psychology, therapists use "pendulation" as a type of role-playing and distancing tool to assist patients in coping with trauma, in this way linking "pendulation" (role-playing) with catharsis (Scheff 2007:109). In "The Poet and the Pendulum" the pendulum is a weapon which kills the protagonist, but it may also connote Holopainen's "role-playing" by writing himself into the song's narrative; a cathartic experience that ultimately leads to emotional healing.

As mentioned previously, the song is almost 14 minutes long and comprises five sections with different settings and complementary stories that ultimately make up the song's narrative. These five sections are (*Dark Passion Play* 2007:1-2):

- (I) "White Lands of Empathica";
- (II) "Home";
- (III) "The Pacific";
- (IV) "Dark Passion Play"; and
- (V) "Mother & Father".

The fourth section's title is similar to that of the entire album, namely "Dark Passion Play" and may have served as the source of inspiration for the album's title as these are "the three words to describe this album best" (Holopainen interviewed in Khorina 2007). The song's lyrics have references to existing literary sources, most specifically

to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum* – the title of the song is one such reference (Sederholm 2015) – and to Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* book series.

### 6.1.2 Theoretical-philosophical framework

As pointed out in section 6.1.2, the song has intertextual links with Poe's short story and King's book series, especially "Song of Susannah". After close inspection of the lyrics, it is apparent that they contain numerous references to (existing) literary works. A myriad of metal lyrics and song themes show connections to, or draw inspiration from literary works, especially songs by the British band Iron Maiden. A few isolated examples are:

- Anthrax – "Among the Living" (Stephen King: *The Stand*);
- Metallica – "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (Ernest Hemingway: *For Whom the Bell Tolls*);
- Rush – "2112" (Ayn Rand: *Anthem*);
- Iron Maiden – "The Clairvoyant" (Orson Scott Card: *Seventh Son*);
- Iron Maiden – "The Trooper" (Lord Alfred Tennyson: *The Charge of the Light Brigade*);
- Iron Maiden – "Out of the Silent Planet" (C.S. Lewis: *Out of the Silent Planet*);  
and
- Iron Maiden – "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*).

Two of these songs are epics; "2112" refers to both a song, as well as an album and the song is 20 minutes long, while "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is over 13 minutes long. Both these songs have more complex form structures than the typical verse-refrain structure and "2112" has seven "movements". Similar to these songs, "The Poet and the Pendulum" is also a large-scale song with a more complex form structure (see Table 6.2).

While some of Nightwish's first phase albums such as *Once*, *Century Child* and *Wishmaster* (three last first phase albums) contain long, larger-scale songs, all three of the band's second phase outputs to date; in other words, including *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* (2015), have larger-scale songs on the albums. "Song of Myself"

(13'40") is the last song of *Imaginaerum*, while "The Greatest Show On Earth" (24'00") is the final song on *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*. A difference between "The Poet and the Pendulum" and the two other relevant second phase songs is that it is the first track on the album on which it is featured, whereas the other two are the final songs on those respective albums. As the first song of the album, "The Poet and the Pendulum" not only sets the album's dark mood but also forms part of a narrative where the darker material is presented first and the utopian "resolution" last ("Meadows of Heaven", see Chapter 7.1.2.3).<sup>107</sup> All three large-scale songs express and explore Holopainen's views and philosophies on selfhood and life. Even though other Nightwish songs such as "Dead Boy's Poem" and "Meadows of Heaven" are autobiographical in nature, Holopainen does not appear as a character in these songs in the same way that he appears in "The Poet and the Pendulum" à la Stephen King.

Many of Nightwish's first and second phase songs contain references to other literary works. A few examples are:

**Table 6.1: Literary references in Nightwish's song lyrics**<sup>108</sup>

Song	Reference(s)	Description
"Elvenpath" ( <i>Angels Fall First</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tapio and Mielikki</li> <li>• Bilbo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mythological figures in the <i>Kalevala</i></li> <li>• Bilbo Baggins: Character in <i>The Hobbit</i> and <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> by J.R.R. Tolkien (Tolkien [1966] 2001:4)</li> </ul>
"Pharaoh Sails to Orion" ( <i>Oceanborn</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serpent Chimera, Stygian fields, Horus, Seteh, Draco's glance, Hunter in the sky</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek mythology</li> </ul>

<sup>107</sup> Even though it is most probably not the model of reference for this song or the album, the placing of "The Poet and the Pendulum" as the first song on the album and "Meadows of Heaven" as the last reminds of the broad structure of Beethoven's two-movement sonatas where conflict in the first movement is resolved in the utopian second movement, in line with Romantic utopian aesthetics (see Kramer 1990:21, 27-30, 69).

<sup>108</sup> I retrieved all lyrics from *Lyrics* (2015).

<p>“Crownless” <i>(Wishmaster)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Sword in the stone”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “Sword in the Stone” is a magic sword that only the legendary King Arthur can remove from the marble block (Gilbert 1983:868). It seems that this sword is sometimes confused with Excalibur in popular consciousness. However, they are two different weapons, as Excalibur was given to King Arthur by the Lady of the Lake (see Kristiansen 2002:329).</li> </ul>
<p>“Song of myself” <i>(Imaginaerum)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title and concept</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Song of Myself” from <i>Leaves of Grass</i> by Walt Whitman (Holopainen interviewed in Nayef 2013).</li> </ul>

The song also contains references to other Nightwish songs in terms of themes, lyrics and in some instances the song’s soundscape. The sometimes disturbing and explicit lyrics describe the protagonist’s torture and his longing for death. The grim lyrics paint a horror-inspired image, while the song’s soundscape is uncanny, terrifying and horrific in sections such as “White Lands of Empathica”, “The Pacific” and “Dark Passion Play” (see Table 6.2).

“The Poet and the Pendulum” can be analysed productively by employing Tagg’s model in conjunction with an intertextual reading to uncover and explore lyrical, thematic and soundscape-related references and links in the song. Intertextuality, as Graham Allen asserts, originated from linguistics, especially the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (Allen [2000] 2011:2). Julia Kristeva invented the term “intertextuality” in the late 1960s; this term describes a methodology by which to compare and contrast different cultural products (Orr 2003:1, 169):<sup>109</sup>

Interpretation is shaped by a complex of relations between the text, the reader, reading, writing, printing, publishing and history: the history that is inscribed in the language of the text and in the history that is carried in the reader’s reading. Such a history has been given a name: intertextuality (Plottel 1978:xx).

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<sup>109</sup> Kristeva’s work is influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas on intertextuality (Briggs & Bauman 1992:146)

Intertextuality is a form of troping and, according to Mary Orr, also probably the oldest form of it (Orr 2003:168). It is an analytical tool that provides a frame or context that guides the reader in his or her comparison of texts or other cultural products (Cartmell & Whelehan 2005:43; Plottel 1978:xix; Landa 2005:181). The connections between different texts in terms of space, articulation, logic and culture, create context (Bazerman 2004:83-84; Leander & Prior 2004:226, 233; Plottel 1978:xviii). Some intertextual references or links are overt such as plagiarisms, imitations and parodies, while others are less explicit (Jenny 1982:34-36).

Besides Kristeva's work, other significant contributions on intertextuality include those by, among others, Roland Barthes (specifically his "the death of the author"); Jacques Derrida; Harold Bloom (specifically his "the anxiety of influence"); Michael Riffaterre; Gérard Genette; Paul Ricoeur; and Umberto Eco.

Writings on intertextuality in music emerged during the 1980s and it is especially Robert Hatten's "The place of intertextuality in music studies" (1984), Vladimir Karbusicky's "Intertextualität in der Musik" (1983) and Günther von Noé's *Die Musik kommt mir ausserst bekannt vor: Wege und Abwege der Entlehnung* (1985, Kawamoto 2006:7) that are particularly influential. Other authors who published on intertextuality in music are, among others, Kevin Korsyn, John Covach, Philip Tagg and Michael Klein's *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (2006). Korsyn employs Harold Bloom's "anxiety of the influence", whereas Covach uses a more semiotic approach to intertextuality (Kawamoto 2006:9). Susan Fast explores intertextuality, gender and ritual in her analysis of Led Zeppelin's song "Dazed and Confused" (Fast 2000:17-48).

It is especially Eco's theorisation of intertextuality and the role of genre as a type of "road map" that may prove to be the most productive framework for my analysis of "The Poet and the Pendulum".

Umberto Eco values both the reader's textual and everyday experiences, arguing for two types of frames within a theory of intertextuality (Primier 2013:16). In this regard, he distinguishes between "intertextual frames" and "common frames" which respectively relate to "stereotyped situations" in textual traditions (Eco [1979] 1984:20-21) and knowledge gained from everyday living (see Eco [1979] 1984:21). Eco's

inclusion of the latter implies that his model provides for a broader scope of possible intertextual links than models which take only texts and other cultural products into account.

Eco's idea of "intertextual frames" relates to literature and genre (see Premier 2013:16; Eco [1979] 1984:20-21). He believes that the reader has the ability to envision aspects of a character or situation that are not explicitly manifested in the text (for example, a novel), through the process of "borrowing" intertextual knowledge (Eco [1979] 1984:21) that the reader acquires over time and from different sources or "frames". For Eco, genre plays a cardinal role in intertextual analyses and interpretations. He refers to genre cues as "genre signals" (see Eco [1990] 1994:201) and he calls the specific analytical and interpretational frame that each different genre provides the "genre rules" (Eco [1979] 1984:19). This does not mean that genres cannot overlap to form new frames; for example, in terms of the materials I analyse in this thesis such as "Gothic horror" and "fantasy thriller".<sup>110</sup> Genre references also aid in creating "imagined communities" (Anderson [1983] 1991) and construct ethnicity, tradition and history which differ from one genre to the next in terms of ideology (Briggs & Bauman 1992:150). Briggs & Bauman (1992) focus specifically on how speech genres create or mirror social power (Briggs & Bauman 1992:150) and, in my opinion, this notion holds true for other genres as well.

As demonstrated in the previous two chapters, intertextuality plays a cardinal role in the construction and interpretation of meaning in all my analyses, as Tagg's *interobjective comparison* (Tagg [2012] 2013:238; also see Chapter 3.2.1) relies on intertextuality where the analysis object (AO) is compared to *interobjective comparison material* (IOCM) in order to establish *paramusical fields of connotation* (PMFCs). However, intertextual references in "The Poet and the Pendulum" are explicit, as Holopainen drew inspiration for the song from very specific sources, namely King's book series and Poe's novel (see section 1.1.1). In this regard, intertextuality serves a dual role as a facilitator of *interobjective comparison*, as well as an extension of

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<sup>110</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of genre includes the ideas that genres can overlap as genre is not a static entity (see Briggs & Bauman 1992:145).

Tagg’s model in the form of a theoretical tool in my analysis of “The Poet and the Pendulum”.

### 6.1.3 Key questions that govern the analysis of “The Poet and the Pendulum”

The following questions underpin my reading of “The Poet and the Pendulum”:

- What *musemes* can be identified in the song?
- Where do these *musemes* occur and what is the nature of the *museme* stacks in which they occur?
- How do they help to create the song’s soundscape and what insights do their PMFCs yield (Tagg [2012] 2013:229)?
- In what ways do the lyrics and the different soloists’ vocal costumes (Tagg [2012] 2013:360-375) aid in the construction of meaning in the song?
- What significance could the choice of different vocalists with different vocal costumes have in terms of the song’s narrative?
- How does the aural staging (Tagg [2012] 2013:299-303) of the different soloists’ vocals within the song’s textural space inform the meaning of the sections?

### 6.1.4 The form structure of “The Poet and the Pendulum”

A summary of the song’s form structure, main sections, time signature, key, key changes and tempo is as follows:

**Table 6.2: The form structure of “The Poet and the Pendulum”**

Section	Sub-section <sup>111</sup>	Phrases	Time	Key	Tempo
White Lands of Empathica	<i>(Introduction)</i> (0’00”-0’26.3”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min F# min	1/4 = 72.5
	Verse (1) (0’26.9”-0’52.7”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	F# min	1/4 = 72.5
	Verse (2) (0’53.5”-1’19.1”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	F# min D min	1/4 = 72.5
Home	<i>(Introduction)</i> (1’19.9”-1’32.9”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Heavy (1) (1’33.2”-1’46.1”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Heavy (2) (1’46.5”-1’59.4”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Verse (1a) (1’59.7”-2’12.5”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Verse (1b) (2’12.9”-2’25.8”)	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Link (1) (2’26.2”-2’32.4”)	1 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145

<sup>111</sup> Sub-sections as indicated in the score, except those I named and printed in italics.

	Refrain (1a) (2'32.8"-2'45.7")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Refrain (1b) (2'46"-2'58.8")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Instrumental (2'59.3"-3'12.2")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Verse (2a) (3'12.5"-3'25.3")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Verse (2b) (3'25.8"-3'38.6")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Link (2) (3'39"-3'45.3")	1 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Refrain (2a) (3'45.6"-3'58.5")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Refrain (2b) (3'58.8"-4'19.2")	3 x 4 bars 1 x 2 bars	4/4	D min G min	1/4 = 145
The Pacific	(Link) (4'19.6"-4'27.3")	1 x 2 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
	Cello Solo (4'27.8"-4'49.2")	2 x 4 bars 1 x 2 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
	Verse (1) (4'49.9"-5'11.5")	2 x 4 bars 1 x 2 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
	Verse (2) (5'12.1"-5'29.2")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
	Verse (3) (5'29.8"-5'51.6")	2 x 4 bars 1 x 2 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
	Verse (4) (5'52"-6'18")	3 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
	Gloom (6'18.7"-6'35.6")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
	Even Gloomier ((6'36.4"-7'11.4")	4 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 108
Dark Passion Play	(Introduction) (7'12.8"-7'25")	4 x 3 bars	3/4	E min	1/4 = 145
	Band Entry (7'25.4"-7'38.1")	2 x 3 bars 1 x 5 bars	3/4	E min	1/4 = 145
	Solo Violin (7'38.5"-8'07.9")	4 x 4 bars 1 x 2 bars	4/4	E min	1/4 = 145
	Heavy Verse (1) (8'08.3"-8'21.2")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	E min	1/4 = 145
	Reintro (8'21.6"-8'34.4")	2 x 3 bars 1 x 5 bars	3/4	E min	1/4 = 145
	Heavy Verse (2) (8'34.8"-8'47.8")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	E min	1/4 = 145
	Bridge (8'48.1"-9'00.9")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Refrain (A) (9'01.3"-9'14.1")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Refrain (B) (9'14.5"-9'30.7")	2 x 4 bars 1 x 2 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Recital (9'31.1"-10'12.1")	4 x 4 bars 1 x 2 bars	4/4	D min	1/4 = 145
	Mother & Father	Instrumental (1) (10'12.4"-10'38.4")	2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min
Instrumental (2) (10'39"-11'04.9")		2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 72.5
Verse (1) (11'05.4"-11'57.6")		2 x 4 bars 2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 72.5
Verse (2) (11'58.3"-12'50.8")		2 x 4 bars 2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 72.5
Outro (1) (12'51.4"-13'17")		2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 72.5
Outro (2) (13'17.8"-13'54")		2 x 4 bars	4/4	G min	1/4 = 72.5

Each larger section has its own introductory section and the Verses of each section are unique to that particular part of the song. Refrain (A) and (B) in "Dark Passion Play" are similar to Refrain (1a) and (1b) or (2a) and (2b) in "Home".



## 6.2 “White Lands of Empathica”

The title of “The Poet and the Pendulum’s” first section “White Lands of Empathica”, is another reference to King’s *The Dark Tower* series. In *The Dark Tower*, the White Lands of Empathica is an idyllic, snow-covered tundra in the imaginary End-World where living creatures roam (King 2004:647; Furth 2012:102).

### 6.2.1 The lyrics and Guy Elliott’s vocal costume

“White Lands of Empathica” is subdivided into three sections (see Table 6.2), namely an Introduction, Verse (1) and Verse (2). The Introduction is an instrumental section consisting of 8 bars. Boy soprano Guy Elliott (Nightwish 2007a:20) is the narrator of the section and starts singing around timecode 0’26.9”. He sings both Verses of “White Lands of Empathica”:<sup>112</sup>

The end.  
The songwriter's dead.  
The blade fell upon him  
Taking him to the white lands

Of Empathica  
Of Innocence  
Empathica  
Innocence

The lyrics describe a character called the “songwriter’s” fate: a gruesome death. Throughout the song it becomes apparent that the songwriter is the song’s protagonist, making it biographically directly relatable to Nightwish’s songwriter Tuomas Holopainen. The lyrics are a prolepsis of the protagonist’s death later in the song (in “The Pacific”), as well as of the means of his death (by a blade). The falling blade is musically depicted by an A-sharp major chord (enharmonically B-flat major) on the word “upon” which is a semitone lower than its preceding B minor chord, “falling” from B to A-sharp.

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<sup>112</sup> All lyrics quoted in this chapter were retrieved from *Lyrics* (2017).

## 6.2.2 Connotations

King's White Lands of Empathica is an idyllic place, but also the place where the character Dandelo lives (King 2004:547, 556). Dandelo is a creature who appears in human form as Tom Collins to protagonists Susannah Dean, Oy and Dean Deschain (King 2004:657, 709). He has the ability to “consume” human emotions which adds a sinister spin to the concept of an “empath” as someone who identifies with others’ emotions (Furth 2012:102). Nightwish’s version captures the White Lands’ fantastical associations and atmosphere, but the song’s soundscape also overwhelmingly suggests an uncanny quality that stands in contrast with the connoted seemingly paradisiac place. Specific *musemes* in “White Lands of Empathica”’s soundscape evokes connotations of horror, the uncanny and fantasy. I identify and examine these *musemes* in sections 6.2.2.1 and 6.2.2.2.

### 6.2.2.1 Horror and the uncanny

Four main *musemes* contribute to create the horror-inspired soundscape in “White Lands of Empathica”. These *musemes* are:

- A pedal point;
- Semitone shifts;
- Tremolo strings; and
- A spoken monologue.

The Introduction’s opening chord is a D minor chord, hinting that “White Lands of Empathica” might be in D minor, despite the key signature of F-sharp minor (this is the key of the Verses). The Introduction is almost entirely built on a pedal point (*Museme 1*, indicated with brackets in Figure 6.1 below) on D which the double basses play, with only one shift to an F-sharp minor triad, foreshadowing the key of the Verses:



**Figure 6.1: Museme 1 – Pedal point on D**

Pedal points anchor the harmony of a given section or piece and they greatly aid in creating tension within a given soundscape (also see Chapter 4.2.4; Chapter 4.5.2), making them a useful tool in horror film scores and at dramatic moments in films. Some examples of where pedal points are used to underscore dramatic moments in films or to create tension and an uncanny ominousness in horror films are:

- Scores for films composed by William Alwyn: *A Way Ahead* (1944); *Fires Were Started* (1943); *The Magic Box* (1951); and *Desert Victory* (1943), as well as the 1954 film *Svengali* (Johnson 2005: 65, 97, 238, 259);
- In the film scores of the horror films *Village of the Damned* (1995 remake); *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1996); *Halloween* (1978); and *The Shining* (1980; Brownrigg 2003:125-126);
- Bernard Herrmann uses a timpani pedal point in *North by Northwest* (1959) to create a sense of building tension and doom; and
- A pedal point in the underscore of the 1997-2003 television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* creates tension in the track “Walk through Fire” (Bauer 2010:230) and it destabilises/distorts the cadence in “Going through the Motions” (Bauer 2010:226).

The semitone movement E-sharp-E-natural-E-sharp (E $\sharp$ -E $\natural$ -E $\sharp$ ; *Museme 2*) is reminiscent of the semitone shuttle in “Scaretale” (see Chapter 4.2.1):



**Figure 6.2: Museme 2 – Semitone movement**

Although the semitone movement in “White Lands of Empathica” is similar to “Scaretale’s” semitone shuttle, its effect in “White Lands of Empathica” is different.<sup>113</sup> Here, the semitone movement is ominous and creates tension as in “Scaretale”, but it also facilitates third-shifts to the chord of  $\text{ciii}$  (F-sharp minor chord), the E-sharp-E-

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<sup>113</sup> I use the term “semitone movement” to describe the chromatic movement between E-sharp-E-natural-E-sharp whereas I use “semitone shuttle” to denote a repeated or oscillating chromatic movement between two pitches (see Chapter 4.2.1).

natural-E-sharp functioning by turns as  $\widehat{3}-\widehat{2}-\widehat{3}$  in D minor (where the E-sharp is enharmonically interpreted as F) and  $\#\widehat{7}-\widehat{4}\widehat{7}-\#\widehat{7}$  in F-sharp minor. Thus, the melodic semitone movement adds the ambiguity of the Introduction's key and gives these eight bars an atmosphere of instability.

Verse (2) sees an oscillation between the keys of D minor and F-sharp minor at timecode 0'53.5"-1'19.1". In neo-Riemannian theory, this type of relation between D minor and F-sharp minor is a PL-transformation where "PL" represents a parallel leading-tone exchange (Capuzzo 2004:178). This PL-transformation (a *museme*) between the oscillating D minor and F-sharp minor chords differs from, but bears similar connotations to, the large-scale PR-transformation found in the keys of Ghost Dance (1) and Ghost Dance (2) in "Scaretale". The keys of Ghost Dances (1) and (1) are B-flat minor and G minor respectively (Chapter 4.6.2; Table 4.1 in Chapter 4.1.4).

This PL-transformation evokes connotations of the uncanny. The "shift" between key areas is more remote than, for example, the L-transformation between E-flat major and G minor in "Meadows of Heaven" (see Chapter 7.2) and it may suggest a connection with the otherworldly. This connection is noted in writings on 19<sup>th</sup> century music such as, for example, Richard Taruskin's (2005) work on Schubert's music. "Transformed chords" such as  $\flat\text{IV}$  play a role in creating Romantic "timelessness" or the feeling of a "music trance" in 19<sup>th</sup> century music (Taruskin 2005:94). In this regard, Taruskin highlights Schubert's practice of using cycles of thirds to denote the "unearthly" or otherworldly (Taruskin 2005:101).  $\flat\text{IV}$  is a feature within these cycles and is a PL-transformation akin to the one between D minor and F-sharp minor in "The Poet and the Pendulum".

The PL-transformation's connection with the uncanny and otherworldly further underlines the fantasy connection in "White Lands of Empathica's" soundscape. The "Imperial March" track from the *Star Wars* film series (music by John Williams; Figure 6.3 below) and the "Tarnhelm" (magic helmet) Leitmotif in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Figure 6.4) contain chord progressions with PL-transformations:



**Figure 6.3: “The Imperial March” from Star Wars**



**Figure 6.4: Reduction of Wagner’s “Tarnhelm” Leitmotif**<sup>114</sup>

The first time that Batman appears on screen in Burton’s *Batman* (not the Batman theme itself), Elfman’s score at that point resembles Wagner’s “Tarnhelm” motif; in other words, the score has a chromatic third relation (PL-transformation) at that moment (Bribitzer-Stull 2015:147). As noted in Chapter 4.6, the harmonic progression of the “Batman” theme – not the score at Batman’s first appearance in the film with the PL-transformation noted above – is from tonic (B minor chord) to submediant major (G major chord) to dominant. The theme has an L-transformation, but not a chromatic relation as is the case with the “Tarnhelm” motif’s PL-transformation or Batman’s first appearance in Burton’s *Batman*.

Some of Elfman’s other scores that feature similar progressions as that in the “Tarnhelm” motif are those of the Burton films *Beetlejuice* and *The Nightmare before Christmas* (Bribitzer-Stull 2015:152). It is apparent that there is an intertextual link between the “Tarnhelm” motif, Elfman’s scores, Burton’s style of Gothic horror films and Nightwish’s “The Poet and the Pendulum”.<sup>115</sup> Another sonic gesture that creates a sound and atmosphere of uncertainty, tension and ominousness is the tremolo articulation (*Museme 3*) which the string instruments play:

<sup>114</sup> I used Drabkin (2014:261) as notation source to make my reduction of Wagner’s “Tarnhelm” motif.

<sup>115</sup> Holopainen indicates that some songs on the album are influenced by Danny Elfman’s scores, but he does not specify which (Holopainen interviewed in Kastner 2008).



**Figure 6.5: Museme 3 – Tremolo strings**

The sound of string instruments playing tremolos, together with the tritone and low playing clarinets, is a sonic signpost for danger and suspense (Kassabian ([2001] 2002:107). Therefore, it is one of the musical “ingredients” readily associated with horror films, especially with Gothic horror film scores (Huckvale 2010:85). Some examples of tracks from Gothic horror film soundtracks that feature tremolo playing are: “The Others”, “Wakey Wakey”, and “They Are Everywhere” from *The Others* (2001); “Masbath’s Terrible Death” from *Sleepy Hollow* (1999); as well as *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961). The latter movie is based on Poe’s short story of the same title which is, as mentioned previously, an inspiration for the Nightwish song “The Poet and the Pendulum”. “The Poet and the Pendulum’s” soundscape has important similarities to the soundscapes of tracks from the soundtrack of *Sleepy Hollow*.

American director Tim Burton (who directed the 1991 film *Sleepy Hollow*), was inspired by horror films when he was young and this film genre greatly influences his vision and style of the Gothic fantasies he writes and directs such as *Edward Scissorhands* (Page [2007] 2009:12). Burton names the films *The Raven* (1963) and *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961) as some of his favourites and greatest inspirations (Page [2007] 2009:12). Both these films were directed by Roger Corman and both are, of course, based on short stories by Edgar Allan Poe; thus creating a type of intertextual link between the Nightwish song, Poe’s short story and some of Tim Burton’s creative output.

The soundscape of Elfman’s soundtrack to Burton’s *Sleepy Hollow* is interesting in terms of my analysis of “White Lands of Empathica”. Although the plots of the two stories differ immensely, their soundscapes do have certain features in common. *Sleepy Hollow’s* soundtrack (composed by Danny Elfman), relies on an adult choir to complement the Gothic overtones of the film in tracks such as “Introduction”. “Young Icabod” features a boy soprano (or even an adult female soprano who adjusts her

timbre to sound similar to a young boy's) and later in the song at around timecode 0'50", a second soprano joins in.

Nightwish's "White Lands of Empathica" has several similarities with Elfman's "Masbath's Terrible Death" in terms of the songs' *museme stacks*.<sup>116</sup> The most striking similarities are the tremolo strings, choir, prominence of the brass section and a "wave swelling" effect created by dynamic changes and the choir's pitches in "White Lands of Empathica" at around timecode 0'58" and around timecode 0'32" in "Masbath's Terrible Death". The similarities between "White Lands of Empathica" and "Masbath's Terrible Death" create a connotative link between the Nightwish song, Elfman's score for the Tim Burton directed Gothic horror film and Burton's particular style of Gothic horror films.

The "wave swelling" effect and prominence of the brass section also reminds one of Elfman's score for Burton's *Batman Returns* (1992) in tracks such as "Birth of a Penguin" (first 15 seconds of the track and at timecode 1'25"-1'27").<sup>117</sup> Other examples, of such "wave swells" that occur in the score are: Elfman's "Alice's Theme" for Burton's 2010 film *Alice in Wonderland*; as well as Harry Gregson-Williams's "Only the Beginning of the Adventure" from *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005). These "wave swells" give scores an "epic" and fantastical soundscape. In Elfman's scores in particular, these "wave swells" tread a fine line between fantasy and horror, as Burton's Gothic horrors are also "fantasy horrors" or Gothic fantasy.

Tom Williams speaks (*Museme 4*) in the eight-bar Introduction section of "White Lands of Empathica", connoting horror. What is interesting about this spoken part is that it is Williams's monologue from "The Pacific" (see section 6.4.1 for the lyrics), played backwards and inserted into the soundscape in-studio as one of the "strands" or tracks that make up the overall soundscape of the Introduction. This is another example of how in-studio sound manipulation directly influences the aesthetics of a section. The

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<sup>116</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=em03\\_K8advE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=em03_K8advE)

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a46tKhCcNG0>

receiver hears Williams's monologue in reverse and consequently, it is difficult to make any sense or meaning of the words Williams says.

This spoken section portends an incantation which, in turn, signifies horror as the incantations together with tritones, diminished seventh chords and low-playing clarinets are closely associated with horror film scores (Huckvale 2010:85). Williams's monologue is a horror cue or *museme*, part of the *museme stack* that informs the Introduction's horror-inspired soundscape. All these *musemes* with horror-related PMFCs actively undermine the idea that the White Lands of Empathica could be the idyllic place of King's book series.

#### 6.2.2.2 The fantastical

The keyboard's oscillating accompaniment figures recap the oscillating figures in "Scaretale" (see Chapter 4.6.2, specifically Figure 4.29). Oscillating figures are often used by composers and arrangers to give momentum to songs or sections that have slow tempos, slow harmonic rhythms or limited melodic movement; for example, "Theme of Sadness" from *The Neverending Story* (1984; music by Klaus Doldinger). "White Lands of Empathica's" Introduction, on the other hand, is based on a pedal point but the choir's lines and the chromatic shifts between pitches provide sufficient movement. Here, the keyboard accompaniment figure is not only a composition technique but has connotative semiotic properties. These types of accompaniment figures are also readily associable with numerous Danny Elfman's scores (see Chapter 4.6.2); for example, in *Batman*, ("The Joker's Poem"), *Batman Returns* ("Birth of a Penguin") and *Edward Scissorhands* ("Ice Dance").

The bell-like sound that Elfman favours for the oscillating figures adds a phantasmagorical sound to the songs' respective soundscape. In the *Batman* and *Batman Returns* scores, the sound effect (or rather, choice of instrumentation or keyboard voicing), the oscillating figures act as a link between the fantastical, otherworldly and gothic horror as Elfman's music often "foreshadows" the "visual appearance of the fantastical" (Van Elferen 2013). In this way, Elfman's scores actively contribute to the fantasy element of the Tim Burton films in which they feature (Van Elferen 2013). The Elfman-esque keyboard accompaniment in "White Lands of Empathica" may not only suggest Gothic horror in general, but also Burton-style



visuals in particular; thus making the intertextual links between Burton's work, Elfman's scores, the Poe story, Gothic horror and the Nightwish song even stronger.

The "wave swell" effect in "White Lands of Empathica", the choir's ascending and descending patterns on "ah" in the Introduction's second phrase, together with the harp's glissandi between the two phrases create a fantastical, otherworldly, yet ominous sound effect and soundscape. The harp and bell-like sounds also have connotations with the magical; for example, in "Harry and Hermione" (*Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*); "Harry's Wondrous World" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*); and "Fantasia" where these sound may connote both magic and mystery (*The Neverending Story*).<sup>118</sup>

### 6.3 "Home": Lyrics and connotations

"Home" starts with an Introduction followed by two repetitions (Heavy (1) and Heavy (2)) of the introductory material. Similar to the textural and intensity build-up by the repeated theme of the Themes section in "Scaretale" (see Chapter 4.4), "Home's" introductory material repeats three times in timecode 1'19.9"-1'59.4" (Introduction to Heavy (2)). The high, "cutting" piccolo is greatly contrasted with the bass drum, bass guitar and distorted guitar.

The descending chromatic lines in the Introduction of "Home" and the Violin Solo section of "Dark Passion Play" act as a counterbalance to the ascending flute and piccolo runs in the same sections. The horns play similar ascending runs in "Home's" Introduction, adding an element of war as the sound of horns connote epic battle scenes in the scores of films such as (1) the "Battle of Beruna" (timecode 0'38" and 1'53") in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; (2) the "Battle of Hogwarts" in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows II* (around timecode 3'00"); and (3) "The Battle of the Hornburg" (starting around timecode 1'06") in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*.<sup>119</sup> These ascending and descending lines create

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<sup>118</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_yNQDUBO\\_RA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yNQDUBO_RA)

<sup>119</sup> (1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZS3t6MkiCw>,  
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a deeply unsettling effect and may be a “larger-scale” depiction of the terrifying, swinging pendulum, thus linking all these elements to the protagonist’s violent ending and the blade-like murder weapon.

Anette Olzon is the only soloist in “Home”. Her intensity and timbre is heavier and darker than the Verses in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” and “Meadows of Heaven” and it is not theatrical with character-singing as in “Scaretale”. She does not belt it out in these lower-pitched sections in “Home”. Verse (1a) and (b)’s lyrics describe the protagonist’s crestfallenness and disappointment:

The dreamer and the wine  
Poet without a rhyme  
A widowed writer torn apart by chains of hell

One last perfect verse  
Is still the same old song  
Oh Christ how I hate what I have become

Take me home

Three nouns in the lyrics above are either different aspects of the protagonist’s personality or how he sees himself, namely “dreamer”, “poet” and “writer” (or more specifically, “widowed writer”). Other Nightwish songs that contain references to these self-descriptors are, for example, “Stargazers” (“separating the poet from the woe”); “The Riddler” (“a poet’s paradise”); “Sleeping Sun” (“a moment for the poet’s play”); “Nightquest” (“hand in hand with a dreamer’s mind”); “Slaying the Dreamer”; and “Meadows of Heaven” (“rocking chair without a dreamer”). The protagonist is also a storyteller and wanderer in “Nightquest”, a songmaker in “Dead Boy’s Poem”, and a child in “Bless the Child”. These self-descriptors may be associated with Holopainen as they tend to appear in songs that have a more biographical undertone and in this way they imbue Holopainen’s image as composer with Romantic connotations.

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(2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSJx7STd6j4>, and

(3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBLziDjkd7E>.

“Poet without a rhyme” signifies either writer’s block (a concept Holopainen explores in the song “Dead Gardens” on the band’s *Once* album) or “unfinished work” which, in turn, is reminiscent of a line from Sam Hardwick’s recitation in the “Christabel” section of the song “Beauty of the Beast” (*Century Child*):

Oh, sweet Christabel. Share with me your poem.  
For I know now, I'm a puppet on this silent stage show.  
I'm but a poet who failed his best play.  
A Dead Boy, who failed to write an ending  
To each of his poems (*Lyrics* 2015)

This quotation from “Beauty of the Beast” also links the ideas of a poet with an inability to finish his work, the Dead Boy trope, a play (“stage show”) and the idea that the protagonist of “Beauty of the Beast” is a “puppet” in the show for an audience, similar to how the protagonist of “The Poet and the Pendulum” is tortured in front of, or for an audience. “Christabel” may connote Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem with the same title. Interestingly, Coleridge’s poem is unfinished (Holstein 1976:126), creating a parallel between Coleridge’s poem and the character Christabel’s unfinished poem that she should “share” with the protagonist in Nightwish’s “Beauty of the Beast”.

The “last perfect verse” in “Home’s” Verse (1) may suggest that “The Poet and the Pendulum” is the protagonist’s last song before he “dies”. “Still the same old song” may point to the recurring themes and narratives in Nightwish’s lyrics that serve as a personal sanctuary and familiar space for fans through “repeated features and signature environments” that Toni-Matti Karjalainen points out (Karjalainen 2016:64). The “home” in this Verse is the protagonist’s childhood home (see section 6.6; Chapter 7) and “home” is the dreamer’s hideaway and sanctuary; therefore imbuing “home” with the potential to inspire creativity and fantasy as the antithesis of and perhaps “cure” for the protagonist’s state of mind at this juncture in the song.

The soundscape in Refrain 1 (a) and (b) is much heavier overall than in the Verses. Only the strings of the orchestra play in the entire Verse (1). They play *staccato* figures and they play similar figures in Verse (2a). The keyboard replaces the strings as melodic accompaniment in Verse (2b). The rest of the orchestra does not feature in the Verses but the entire orchestra plays in the Refrains of “Home”, creating a

difference between these sections in terms of texture and sheer power. The weighty soundscape in the Refrains supports the protagonist's inner struggle as he longs to be saved and to return home for comfort, as he is not afforded the opportunity to purge himself of self-hatred and pain, neither through tears nor death:

Getaway, runaway, fly away  
Lead me astray to dreamer's hideaway  
I cannot cry 'cause the shoulder cries more  
I cannot die, I, a whore for the cold world

Forgive me  
I have but two faces  
One for the world  
One for God  
Save me  
I cannot cry 'cause the shoulder cries more  
I cannot die, I, a whore for the cold world

The texture is immediately less dense at the start of Verse (2a) and (2b) where the keyboard plays a central role and Olzon's singing is more restrained than in Refrain (1), in order to match her level of intensity in Verse (1):

My home was there 'n then  
Those meadows of heaven  
Adventure-filled days  
One with every smiling face

Please, no more words  
Thoughts from a severed head  
No more praise  
Tell me once my heart goes right

Take me home

The protagonist claims his childhood home as his true home at that time, describing it as "meadows of heaven". This is also the title of the song about Holopainen's childhood home that I analyse in Chapter 7. The "home" represents adventure and

happiness compared to his current mental space where he is a “severed head”. Refrain (2a) and (2b) are identical to (1a) and (1b) in terms of the lyrics and soundscape. At the end of the section, a piano passage links “Home” to the next section namely “The Pacific”.

The “Home” section is in D minor which differs from the idea of “home” as seated in G minor which I argue later in section 6.6. The D minor key as “not home” supports the lyrics and soundscape in the “Home” section, as the protagonist longs for his childhood home, but he is not there as he is a “severed head”, separated from his body, not “whole”, in a dark, lonely space without comfort.

## **6.4 “The Pacific”**

The Pacific largely consists of sung verses and a spoken monologue (see Table 6.2). Here, as in “White Lands of Empathica”, the singing and speaking narrators are children (probably representing the same child) as a fictionalised version of the protagonist who is, as I mentioned in 6.1.1, strongly associable with Holopainen.

### **6.4.1 The Verses’ lyrics and the soloists’ vocal costumes**

Guy Elliott (lead soprano) sings four consecutive Verses with no Refrains or interludes interspersed between them, while Tom Williams adds a second (lower) voice part to the underlined lyrics in Verse (1) and (3):

Sparkle my scenery  
With turquoise waterfall  
With beauty underneath  
The Ever Free

Tuck me in beneath the blue  
Beneath the pain, beneath the rain

Goodnight kiss for a child in time  
Swaying blade my lullaby

Both the boys sing straightforward, clean lines without embellishments or effects such as scoops and slides in these Verses. Their calm, soothing approach to the vocal delivery of the lyrics underpin the feelings of calm, peace, beauty and rest described in the lyrics. The “Ever Free” and “beneath the blue” may refer to the ocean, similar to how “the deep, the silent, the complete” is used to describe the ocean in “Deep Silent Complete” (*Wishmaster*). Furthermore, the reference to being tucked in “beneath the blue” and a “goodnight kiss” as one would give a sleeping child signifies, in my opinion, death. Here, the tucking in beneath waves equates to drowning or being drowned. The “goodnight kiss” is a final kiss goodbye before the swaying pendulum-like blade sadistically and gruesomely kills the child protagonist, as a “rocking”, “swaying” lullaby would put a baby to sleep.

There is a stark contrast between the sonic and lyrical (text, excluding the delivery thereof) material for the duration of the three Verses. The cello’s low, smooth, soothing line is supported by the section’s steady metre, the repetitive and steady piano accompaniment, the drum kit and Elliott’s (and sometimes Williams’s) unembellished, “restrained”, calm, *legato* delivery of the vocal melody. However, the lyrics hint at torture and describe a longing for death. The “soothing” accompaniment and “calm” vocal delivery of such grim lyrics may indicate the protagonist’s acquiescence, but the contrast between the soundscape and the lyrics may also signify the protagonist’s inner turmoil and struggle.

Anette Olzon joins Elliott for Verse (4) where she, moderately softly and “restrained” without belting it out, sings the melody an octave lower:

On the shore we sat and hoped  
Under the same pale moon  
Whose guiding light chose you  
Chose you all

The word “shore” points to the ocean-based setting of the scene, while “chose you all” instead of “us all” may allude to exclusion, rejection and feelings of loneliness and abandonment. The lyrics in these three Verses also touch on two of the tropes found in Nightwish’s output, namely the Dead Boy trope (see Chapter 4.2.5.2) as well as the Ocean Soul trope (see Chapter 5.2) through the references to the sea and death by

drowning, ultimately becoming one with the sea or highlighting the protagonist's wish to become one with the sea. Other Nightwish songs that have lyrical references to drowning are "Whoever Brings the Night" (*Dark Passion Play*), "Ghost River" (*Imaginaerum*), and it is hinted at in "The Forever Moments" (1996 demonstration recording).<sup>120</sup> Water is a metaphor for cleansing and drowning and individuals often use it when they feel overwhelmed (Barker 2000:101); perhaps pointing to the cathartic experience (i.e. the purging of negative feelings) Holopainen describes in terms of the song (Holopainen interviewed in Sederholm 2015).

Certain instruments may connote the ocean at the beginning of the section such as the harp and cello. The cello plays *legato* in a lower register which may suggest a calm, deep ocean, while the harp may remind one of ocean-themed film music and songs; for example, the glimmering sea and the "ripple of the waves" in "Her Voice" and "Part of Your World" (*The Little Mermaid*; original Broadway cast recording). The wind chimes at the beginning of "The Pacific" may sonically depict the shimmering ocean, while the slow, harmonic rhythm and absence of percussion instruments in the Introduction may further depict a calm ocean.

#### **6.4.2 Tom Williams's monologue and connotations**

After the conclusion of Verse (3), the timpani and brass section announce the start of a new section fittingly titled "Gloom", followed by the "Even Gloomier" section (see Table 6.2). It is here that the protagonist's death scene inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum* is portrayed. Poe's short story is a first-person account of an unnamed protagonist's experiences of torture in Toledo, Spain, during the Spanish Inquisition (Poe [1961] 2007:445, 451). Poe's protagonist is sentenced to death, "swoon[s]" and wakes up in a dark, foul smelling "tomb" – a prison room with a pit inside – after regaining consciousness (Poe [1961] 2007:444-445, 447). He lies tied to a wooden framework, his "wooden bed of horror" (Poe [1961] 2007:452). A blade swings over him from side to side as a pendulum does and it swings closer and closer to his body (Poe [1961] 2007:449-451).

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<sup>120</sup> The relevant lyrics in "The Forever Moments" are "Now I hear my mother from the deep, Sing me a lullaby of eternal sleep" (*Lyrics* 2015).

In the Nightwish song, Williams almost whisperingly recites a highly disturbing, horrifying monologue:

I'm afraid. I'm so afraid.  
Being raped again, and again, and again  
I know I will die alone.  
But loved.

You live long enough to hear the sound of guns,  
long enough to find yourself screaming every night,  
long enough to see your friends betray you.

For years I've been strapped unto this altar.  
Now I only have 3 minutes and counting.  
I just wish the tide would catch me first and give me a death I always longed  
for.

The blaring low brass instruments play “harshly”, loudly and are over-emphasised, creating the sound, feeling and atmosphere of harsh finality which completely contradicts the calm Verses. At around timecode 6’30” a “swooshing” sound effect, akin to the sound of blowing wind, appears in the soundscape, although there are sonic indications that this effect already features softly in the background around timecode 6’20”. The “swooshing” sound repeatedly expresses its moving closer to and at the same time, further away from the receiver. This “swooshing” sound effect is a sonic depiction of the blade swinging pendulum-like above the “strapped” down protagonist. Ivo Cota (2013:8) views the swinging pendulum as a metaphor for the protagonist’s conflicting feelings of hopelessness, despair, fear (fear of rape, dying alone) and hope (“alone but *loved*”; my italics). I might also venture to suggest that the pendulum could additionally be a metaphor for “running out of time” as each swing of the pendulum is like the tick-tock of a clock.

The song’s soundscape here is reminiscent of the corresponding scene from the 1961 Corman directed film *The Pit and the Pendulum*.<sup>121</sup> The swinging pendulum is audible

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<sup>121</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPG92YqKx5A>



in the soundscape, thus creating extreme tension, as the biggest element of the torture in the scene is the idea that the protagonist has time to contemplate his impending demise. High-pitched string instruments are aurally staged “far” in the background of the textural space, suggesting looming terror and fear. Later in the scene, (starting around timecode 2’25” of the video clip), the pendulum’s swinging sound is also aurally staged to sound as if it is coming from afar. Here, its soft swinging sound sounds similar to a heartbeat.

The last Verse expresses the protagonist’s hope of and longing for death by drowning in order to avoid any further torture, akin to Poe’s protagonist who claims that “death would have been a relief” (Poe [1961] 2007:451). The “altar” in the first line of the Verse (3) is a reference to the “low framework of wood” (Poe [1961] 2007:449) on which Poe’s protagonist lies, while the pendulum-like blade moves steadily closer to his body.

The protagonist’s exact moment of death in “The Pacific” is not specified in the lyrics. Ivo Cota regards the choir’s “save me” at the end of “Dark Passion Play” to be the protagonist’s death as the timecode at the end of it is about three minutes after the narrator and protagonist Williams claims that “now I have only 3 minutes and counting” (Cota 2013:10). This is an interesting observation as the lyrics of the two narrated sections in “The Pacific” and at the end of “Dark Passion Play” respectively, may support his theory, but the soundscape in “The Pacific” is a key element in the scene that Cota did not explore.

In fact, in my opinion, the protagonist’s death already occurs in “The Pacific”. The protagonist’s death is portrayed by the soundscape (starting at around timecode 7’04”), where the textural space is completely dominated by horrific and terrifying splicing-sounds, signalling that the blade has, in fact, killed the protagonist violently. Another clue may be located in the lyrics of “Dark Passion Play” as it mentions the “remains of the dark passion play” and that the protagonist is “cut in half”. These lyrics strongly suggest that the “passion play” – or the torture and ultimately, the violent death of the protagonist – has already happened.

## 6.5 “Dark Passion Play”

“Dark Passion Play” is the fourth section of *The Poet and the Pendulum*. Here, the band plays a central role in the soundscape as both the orchestra and the choir are absent when Hietala sings. The section has vocal solos by both Marko Hietala and Anette Olzon and is by far, the “heaviest” of all five sections of the song. Tom Williams recites a short monologue at the end of the section.

### 6.5.1 The lyrics and Marko Hietala’s vocal costume

Hietala “sings” two Verses (Heavy Verse (1) and Heavy Verse (2)) that paint the aftermath of the protagonist’s death:

2nd robber to the right of Christ  
Cut in half - infanticide  
The world will rejoice today  
As the crows feast on the rotting poet

Everyone must bury their own  
No pack to bury the heart of stone  
Now he's home in hell, serves him well  
Slain by the bell, tolling for his farewell

These two Verses are separated by an 11 bar instrumental section titled the “Reintro” (see Table 6.2). Hietala is aurally staged in the centre of the textural space, slightly more to the front than the guitar, drum kit and bass guitar, but the overall sound gives the impression that he sounds “among” the instruments. Hietala’s delivery of the lyrics can best be described as somewhere between growling and screaming; very fitting in terms of the lyrics’ content and the distorted electric guitar sound. Hietala’s placement in the textural space and his performance of the two Verses suggest that he is “part of the distorted sound” and moreover, he is contributing to the creation of the heavy, overwhelming “wall of sound” in the first place.

### 6.5.2 Connotations

Accented beats (especially the last beat in three-beat bars), mark the soundscape at timecodes 7’12.8”-7’38.1” and 8’21.6”-8’34.4”, as well as numerous time signature

changes from 3/4 to 2/4 and 4/4 at the ends of sub-sections. The phrase structure deviates from the four-bar phrases in the vast majority of the song, as the phrase structure at timecodes 7'12.8"-7'38.1" and 8'21.6"-8'34.4" are irregular, with six-bar and intermittent five-bar phrases, creating a feeling of instability and the unexpected. The inconsistency is further exacerbated by a 4/4 time signature in the Heavy Verses. The time signature changes, accented beats, irregular phrasing and alterations in the rhythmic grouping of semiquavers, gives the relevant sections an "off-balance" or "decentred" feel in terms of metre and atmosphere.

Besides the feeling of "instability" that the soundscape connotes, it also communicates violence to the receiver. Unlike literature or visual material such as art and films that may incite violence, music – and more specifically, sound – can, in itself, *be* violence (Johnson & Cloonan 2009:148). Recent research and publications illustrate how sound is used as a "weapon" for crowd control (Volcler [2011] 2013:35, 51, 57, 140); to prevent loitering (Volcler [2011] 2013:118); as a military tactic during wars and other operations; as well as torture (Goodman 2010:xvi, 21). In this way, the deafening splicing sounds of the pendulum in "The Pacific" are not only fear inducing because the receiver is faced with his/her own mortality (see section 6.4.2), but also because the sounds in themselves *are* violence. In both the end of "the Pacific" and "Dark Passion Play" the visual elements of the plot and the soundscape are aligned through violence as the common denominator.

Gestures that depict violence (*musemes*) in the soundscape of "Dark Passion Play" are the percussive effects and rhythmic instability I discussed previously, as well as tritones (*Museme 5*), chromaticism (*Museme 6*), and semitone clashes (*Museme 7*).

The violin part contains a tritone (B-F) in the first bar that has a time change to 2/4:



**Figure 6.6: Museme 5 – Tritone**

Other tritones in “Dark Passion Play” specifically occur during timecodes 7’12.8”-7’38.1” and 8’21.6”-8’34.4”. These tritones connote violence through their association with horror film scores (see Chapter 4.2.2), the devil (see Chapter 4.2.2), and extreme metal subgenres such as death and black metal where violence is described in the lyrics and typically mirrored by growls, screaming, heavy distortion and drumming patterns in the soundscape.

Chromaticism (*Museme 6*) features especially in the Solo Violin section (timecode (7’38.5”-8’07.9”) at the end of the second phrase, where almost the entire orchestra except for the woodwinds play homorhythmic, chromatically descending lines:



**Figure 6.7: Museme 6 – Chromaticism**

This chromatic passage also mirrors those in the “Home” section (see Table 6.2) at around timecodes 1’44.8” and 1’58.2” (see section 6.3). These passages connote a spectacle through the chromatic lines’ associations with circus music and the circus (see Chapter 4.2.3), which are subversive and humiliating, thus taking on the protagonist’s torture. The idea of a spectacle has a connection with the phrase “dark passion play” and the meaning of this phrase is twofold: it connotes the crucifixion of Christ, but it also alludes to the idea of a (theatre) play (Holopainen interviewed in *Interview Nightwish – Tuomas Holopainen Part 1* 2005).

The song is indeed a meticulously thought-out play, where the songwriter is killed with reckless abandon. This play is a violent, dehumanising spectacle that the orchestra, band and vocalists perform for the audience: the receiver. The (chromatic) ascending semitone clashes which the first violins play (*Museme 7*) starting at around timecode 8’01.8”, together with high-pitched trills which the solo violin plays heighten the tension in the last phrase:



**Figure 6.8: Museme 7 – Semitone clashes**

These semitone clashes connote “danger”, “anguish” and “horror” (see Chapter 4.2.1). The film score that comes to mind when listening to the end of the Violin Solo, is that of *Psycho* (1960, music by Bernard Herrmann). In that film score, the high-pitched violin clashes are central in the stabbing scene’s soundscape. The short, accentuated semitone clashes in the Violin Solo connote the violence of the scene, as well as the blade of the knife with which the killer mercilessly stabs character Marion Crane.<sup>122</sup> The piercingly high-pitched piccolo runs, together with those which the flute plays, also connote short violin runs in the stabbing scene’s score of *Psycho*. These ascending piccolo and flute runs in “Dark Passion Play” are reminiscent of the piccolo and flute runs in “Home” (see section 6.3) and also connote the sharp blade of the pendulum that swings from side to side:



**Figure 6.9: Piccolo and flute runs**

Other elements of the soundscape (except the lyrics) that signify violence are Hietala’s delivery of the lyrics (see section 6.5.1) and the heavy distortion of the guitar in Heavy Verses (1) and (2). Although I also uncovered suggestions of violence in the soundscape of “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, violence is portrayed differently in “The Poet and the Pendulum” and “Turn Loose the Mermaids”. In “Turn Loose the Mermaids” violence is implied by connotations with Spaghetti Westerns, Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and Peter Jackson’s film trilogy of the same title that is based on Tolkien’s books (see Chapter 5.4 3; Chapter 5.5.1). However, in “The Poet and the

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<sup>122</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQLfWZ3qPvU>

Pendulum” violence is presaged through the soundscape and the soundscape *is* violence (see Johnson & Cloonan 2009:148).

The very first line of this set of Verses speaks to the crucifixion of Jesus that the “passion play” fragment of the section’s title “Dark Passion Play” already depicts, which in turn, suggests that the section contains Messianic connotations. The line specifically points to the image of Jesus hanging on the cross with two robbers or criminals crucified on both His sides as described in Luke 23:33 in the Bible.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, it draws attention to the ideas that the protagonist (“the poet”) is already dead (“cut in half”), is a child (“infanticide”) and that the protagonist is not metaphorically Christ but a robber next to Christ (“to the right of Christ”). The word “infanticide” connotes violence as the child does not die of natural causes; he is murdered.

The lyrics state that the protagonist was “slain by the bell, tolling for his farewell”.<sup>124</sup> Here, the torture device or weapon is a bell instead of a blade. The pendulum (with a blade as earlier in the song), takes on other forms in the song as it may be a type of clock counting down what is left of the protagonist’s time or a bell that swings from side to side, a countdown marked by each metallic “clang”. The bell “tolling for his farewell” connotes the title of Ernest Hemingway’s novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and by extension, the Metallica song with the same title. Hemingway’s novel touches on the protagonist Robert Jordan’s thoughts on suicide as a means to avoid being caught by the enemy (Hemingway 1940:470), to save others (Hemingway 1940:470) as an “individual sacrifice to assure collective freedom” (Solow 2009:112) or as a selfish act (Hemingway 1940:338), as the character tries to make sense of the happenings during the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway himself committed suicide in 1961 (see Annas 1997:1098; Martin 2006:351).

Hemingway’s novel in turn signifies a line from John Donne’s “Meditation XVII” from his collection of meditations *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, originally published in

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<sup>123</sup> “And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left” (New King James Version).

<sup>124</sup> The Nightwish song “Gethsemane” (*Oceanborn*) also has a reference to a tolling bell: “Toll no bell for me Father, but let this cup of suffering pass from me” (*Lyrics* 2015).

1624. This collection deals with topics such as, among others, death and rebirth. It is specifically the Latin inscription preceding “Meditation XVII” that is relevant in terms of both the Hemingway novel and the Nightwish song. The inscription reads “Nunc lento sonitu dicunt, Morieris” and is translated on the same page as “Now, this Bell tolling softly for another, saies to me, Thou must die” (Donne [1624] 1923:96).

Jonathan Charteris-Black uses the idea of a “bell jar”, borrowed from the title of Sylvia Plath’s 1963 novel *The Bell Jar*, as a metaphor for depression, highlighting the similarities between the intense experience of depression and the highly descriptive language in literature (Charteris-Black 2012:212). The glass bell jar is also a metaphor for a container, in the sense that the depressed person is likened to a container with boundaries that holds feelings and emotions within (Charteris-Black 2012:212). Opening up about these feelings in order to heal equates to the metaphorical shattering of the bell jar (Charteris-Black 2012:214).

The “tolling bell” reference signifies death and depression, but it is also linked to the idea that all people are connected. Later in the same Meditation mentioned previously, John Donne highlights his philosophy that all human beings are connected through our shared humanity: “No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the maine” (Donne [1624] 1923:98). In this context, the bell tolling for the protagonist’s farewell in “The Poet and the Pendulum” is a subversive reminder of the idea that all of humanity is connected and that the death of one person affects or hurts everyone. On a more positive note, it is our shared mortality that should render us more empathetic. In terms of Hemingway’s novel, sacrificing one’s life for another or for the greater good, has the potential to save the world from the clutches of evil-doers and oppression (see Solow 2009:118).

The word “infanticide” may be read as a reference to the child protagonist, but also to the “rocking”, lullaby-like rhythm of the swaying pendulum in section 6.4.1: “swaying blade, my lullaby”. Traditionally, children and childhood represent hope, purity, innocence and imagination, being associated with an implied futurity (Kraftl 2008:83). Edgar Allan Poe even relates childhood and infancy with the divine (Malloy 1991:86). The child’s murder in “The Poet and the Pendulum” connotes the metaphorical

destruction of hopes, dreams, a future, innocence, vulnerability and perhaps even naivety.

Children play key roles in numerous Nightwish songs, be it singing or speaking. I have discussed children's role in creating a horror-inspired soundscape in "Scaretale" as "creepy children singing" (see Chapter 4.2.5) and a child's modulated voice in "Bless the Child", as well as the "Christabel" section of "Beauty of the Beast" to create an uncanny timbral effect (see Chapter 4.2.5.2). Contrary to these examples, the children's choir in "Storytime" (*Imaginaerum*) represents innocence and youth and they vocally emphasise the essence of the song, as captured in its refrain: "I am the voice of Never-Neverland, the innocence and dreams of every man" (*Lyrics* 2015).

In almost all cases where a single child sings or speaks, the child narrates in the first person. Two exceptions are both in "The Poet and the Pendulum", the first being "White Lands of Empathica" and the second is Tom Williams's recitation at the end of "Dark Passion Play". In the context of the song with its "traumatic" soundscape, the third person delivery of these sections may suggest a type of out-of-body-experience where the most vulnerable and innocent side of the protagonist "sees" and "narrates" his own death.

In two cases, the child singing or speaking may have an autobiographical role. Here, the child's voice may be associated with Holopainen, based on the extremely intimate nature of the songs and his clear indications of the importance that these two songs hold for him (Nightwish 2003; Ollila 2008:112; Holopainen interviewed in Kastner 2008). "Dead Boy's Poem" may be regarded as Holopainen's "testament" at the time it was conceived (Ollila 2008:112), while "The Poet and the Pendulum" could be regarded as a type of requiem. The relevant sections or songs are the read poem in "Dead Boy's Poem" and the boy sopranos' section in "The Pacific" from "The Poet and the Pendulum".

The recitations in "The Poet and the Pendulum" contain themes (such as drowning, and rape) that one would not associate with a small child. What makes these recitations especially eerie is that a child (Williams) recites them:



Children in horror become a way of hearing other tales. Musically, “childhood” has its own story to tell – and not just “one day there was a little girl who ...”, and not just about innocence and its end. Whether silent or singing, horror’s children tell about the world outside their world, voicing things innocence cannot know (Link 2010:53).

In this context, his voice and the recitations’ content within the horror-inspired soundscape add a level of otherworldliness to the sections in which they occur.

### **6.5.3 The lyrics and Anette Olzon’s vocal costume**

The Bridge section immediately follows Heavy Verse (2) and Anette Olzon takes over from Hietala with regard to the vocal melody:

The morning dawned, upon his altar  
Remains of the dark passion play  
Performed by his friends without shame  
Spitting on his grave as they came

Olzon’s clean vocals sound “brighter” than Hietala’s rendition of the Heavy Verses which sonically mimics the idea of morning, the rising sun, and of light replacing darkness. The “replacement” of darkness with light in the lyrics is very short-lived as the humiliation of the protagonist is not over as implied by the second line. In this section, the protagonist’s friends also “perform” their own type of sinister play where they do not mourn by the songwriter’s grave, but rather celebrate his death with excretions such as spitting on and sexually climaxing (“as they came”) near his grave. The latter indicates that the so-called “friends” or trusted individuals derive immense pleasure from the protagonist’s torture, humiliation and death.

Olzon belts out the majority of Refrains (A) and (B):

Getaway, runaway, fly away  
Lead me astray to dreamer's hideaway  
I cannot cry 'cause the shoulder cries more  
I cannot die, I, a whore for the cold world

Forgive me

I have but two faces  
One for the world  
One for God  
Save me  
I cannot cry 'cause the shoulder cries more  
I cannot die, I, a whore for the cold world

The Refrains' range sounds as if it is around Olzon's voice (registral) break, giving the vocal melody and these Refrains as a whole a vulnerable, yet desperate quality as she belts out these sections. Olzon's belting also helps her reach higher notes in the passage without having to shift to "head voice" or "head register", which makes the Refrain very powerful. Different from Hietala's aural staging, Olzon is staged in the centre and "in front" of the orchestra. This staging suggests that the narrator at that point (the protagonist), is not "part" of the bigger picture or "wall of sound" as in Hietala's narration. Instead, he (protagonist's thoughts and feelings that Olzon narrates) is separated or apart from it, perhaps simulating the protagonist's loneliness, isolation and feelings of rejection as the song's lyrics describe (see section 6.4.1; section 6.4.2).

#### **6.5.4 Connotations**

Many other Nightwish songs have a protagonist that is associable with Holopainen, for example "Meadows of Heaven", "Dead Boy's Poem" and "Slaying the Dreamer". A number of the band's first phase songs are narrated in the first person such as "Beauty of the Beast", "Astral Romance", "Ever Dream" and "Wanderlust". An example of a second phase song with first person narration is "Meadows of Heaven". The only song that makes a direct reference in its lyrics to Holopainen, as the protagonist is "The Poet and the Pendulum". This direct reference occurs in Tom Williams's recitation at the end of "Dark Passion Play":

Today, in the year of our Lord 2005,  
Tuomas was called from the cares of the world.  
He stopped crying at the end of each beautiful day.  
The music he wrote had too long been without silence.

He was found naked and dead,

With a smile [on] his face, a pen and 1000 pages of erased text.

Save me

Child narrator Williams describes further details of the protagonist's demise, fittingly in the third person. Williams's recitation underlines the protagonist's connection with Holopainen in the sense that Holopainen *is* the protagonist in this scene. The protagonist is found "naked and dead", recalling the account of his execution in "The Pacific". His "nakedness" signifies that he is now "stripped" of protection, innocence, hope and a future. The "pages of erased text" is a metaphorical demolition of the poet's (protagonist's) thoughts, emotions, imagination and way of communicating with the world – a type of "second death". This image may also represent the idea of a palimpsest in the sense that it is a prolepsis of the metaphorical "new beginning" at the end of the song.

At the conclusion of Williams's recitation the choir sings "save me" followed by a final "slice" of the pendulum and a gradually slowing and ultimately ceasing heartbeat. As mentioned in section 6.4.2, the protagonist's torture scene in Roger Corman's film *The Pit and the Pendulum* also features what sounds similar to a heartbeat in its soundscape. Heartbeats connote "life", but they may also connote "anxiety" or "fear". The receiver reacts to the sounding heartbeat as it gradually slows down and ultimately stops, as humans tend to respond to stimuli such as music or sounds in terms of their bodies and their ability to produce such sounds (Cox 2001:196).<sup>125</sup>

In "The Poet and the Pendulum" the receiver is confronted with his or her own mortality as the protagonist's heartbeat gradually slows to a complete stop, causing the receiver to "experience" the protagonist's fear and anxiety. Therefore, heartbeats are a useful tool for inducing fear in a receiver or audience watching a horror film (Winters 2008:4). The sound or simulated sound of a heartbeat is a horror film stereotype that incites fear because the receiver is immediately confronted with the sounds and sensations of his/her own body and by extension, his/her own mortality (see Winters 2008:4,

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<sup>125</sup> Cox's "mimetic hypothesis" theorises that humans understand the movements and sounds of others because they relate it to their own experience of these gestures (Cox 2001:196).

12).<sup>126</sup> Examples of horror film soundscapes that feature heartbeats are *The Shining* directed by Stanley Kubrick (Donnelly 2005:36) and the so-called “birth scene” in *Alien* directed by Ridley Scott, to signify “danger” (McCartney 2002:47-48).<sup>127</sup>

The timpani effectively mimic a heartbeat which has connections to simulated heartbeats in horror film scores such as *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1932 and 1941; Winters 2008:14). As mentioned in section 6.2.2, Bernard Hermann employs a pedal point on timpani in *North by Northwest* to signify doom and build tension. The timpani features prominently at the beginning of the Gloom section of “The Pacific” (see section 6.4.2). In “The Poet and the Pendulum”, the ceasing heartbeat signifies death, but the heartbeat, reverb and echo effect at the end of “Dark Passion Play” is initially reminiscent of the sound of a baby’s in-utero heartbeat during a sonogram, thus supporting the idea of rebirth.

Marie Bonaparte likens the setting of Poe’s story to a “giant womb” where the prison’s contracting walls force the protagonist into the pit (“towards the cloacal abyss”, Bonaparte ([1933] 1949:588) in the way a foetus is pushed out of its mother’s womb during birth (Malloy 1991:86-87).<sup>128</sup> Here, the idea of “womb” is associated with fear, torture and impending death. The protagonist is saved in the end, but not by escaping through the pit as a “birth” scenario in terms of how Bonaparte’s metaphor would play out. In the story, he is about to fall into the pit when his arm is suddenly grabbed by General Lasalle (Poe [1961] 2007:454) in order to save him – all in the last paragraph of the story. Contrastingly, in the Nightwish version, specifically in the “Mother & Father” section, the womb signifies love and warmth.

Where the lyrical text of “White Lands of Empathica” is a prolepsis of the protagonist’s fate, the words “save me”, the “slice”, as well as the accompanying soundscape

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<sup>126</sup> Although Nightwish employes film score stereotypes in their songs (like the Elfman-esque Gothic horror accompaniment, Morricone-style Spaghetti Western constructs and the sound of a heartbeat in “The Poet and the Pendulum”), it is crucial to keep in mind that Nightwish’s music *is* not film music and is not intended to have the same functions as the latter.

<sup>127</sup> The heartbeats are clearly audible around timecodes 1’18”, 1’30” and 1’42” of the excerpt of the “birth scene”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JehjqlzXwIQ>.

<sup>128</sup> The translated version of Bonaparte’s study was first published in 1949, but her original French version is dated 1933 (Hayes 2002:3).

represent a flashback to the protagonist's death that was depicted in the previous section, namely "The Pacific". This flashback serves a dual purpose as it binds the plot together and emphasises the protagonist's violent ending, as he was not saved as in Poe's short story.

## 6.6 "Mother & Father": Lyrics and connotations

The opening sentence of the final section is "Be still my son, you're home", indicating both a shift in time and space. "Home" in this context does not refer to heaven, as the lyrics (which Olzon sings), indicate that the protagonist is in fact alive in the relevant section:

Be still, my son  
You're home  
Oh when did you become so cold?  
The blade will keep on descending  
All you need is to feel my love

Search for beauty, find your shore  
Try to save them all, bleed no more  
You have such oceans within  
In the end  
I will always love you

The lyrics here include parental advice ("Search for beauty, find your shore"); the setting of possible personal goals ("Try to save them all"); and comfort ("bleed no more") – all of which indicate a future that is not applicable when the individual in question is deceased. "Home" refers here to the actual home, where "mother" signifies womb, care, love, compassion and guidance. The soothing *legato* oboe melody implies warmth, love and intimacy. The rests between the *legato* lines may connote "breath", "breathing" or "coming up for air", imitating the (hypothetical) breaths of the protagonist as he surfaces from "beneath the blue" (the ocean), after water metaphorically cleanses him in "The Pacific".

The connection between "mother", "womb" and "love" stands in stark contrast to the "womb" in Poe's story. The "womb" in turn, signifies "birth" and even though the

protagonist in “The Poet and the Pendulum” was not saved from death, he is “reborn” as it were through familial support. The arpeggiated piano part, in particular, adds momentum to the section and may be a musical representation of “rebirth”.

Akin to Poe’s short story, “The Poet and the Pendulum” has a happy ending, achieved through rebirth in the latter instance. The song’s final line further underlines the protagonist’s rebirth as a child says it softly and “innocently”: “The beginning” (around timecode 12’59”). This line is the complete opposite of the first line (“The end”) which supports the idea of a rebirth from the beginning of the song to its end. The section’s key is also metaphorically significant in this regard. The song starts in D minor while the entire “Mother & Father” is in G minor. The shift from D minor to G minor constitutes a descending fifth, which, thanks to the affinity of this interval with perfect cadences in the tonal style, evokes connotations of “arriving home”. This large scale movement from D minor to G minor may also resemble a modal cadence, signifying “earlier time”, “simpler life”, “wholesomeness”, et cetera (Chapter 5.2; Chapter 5.3.1; Chapter 7.3.2).

It is interesting that both the protagonist’s death scene (“The Pacific”) and his ultimate transcendence and rebirth (“Mother & Father”) are in the same key of G minor. The soundscape of the death scene starts with blaring low brass instruments followed by very articulated, “meticulously” played string passages, while Williams almost whispers his disturbing monologue. The soundscape of “Mother & Father” is significantly different from that of the death scene. “Mother & Father” is largely built on a pedal point on G. Contrary to the pedal point in “White Lands of Empathica” that contributes to the ambiguous key and general uneasiness of that section, the pedal point in “Mother & Father” suggests rootedness and anchoring on the “home-coming” or “arriving home” pitch of G (see the previous paragraph).

The sharply articulated string passages in the death scene are replaced with soaring, “long-lined”, high-pitched string passages in “Mother & Father”. The woodwinds are clearly audible in large parts of the section, also creating a type of soaring effect and their “breathy” sound connotes “air”, “lungs” and “breathing”, sonically supporting the rebirth of the protagonist. The choir sings *legato* lines that add a peacefulness and sanctity to the section. Both “The Pacific” and “Mother & Father” suggest a connection with water. “The Pacific” connects water to drowning and death but also with cleansing,

while the “mother” element in “Mother & Father” suggests birth or rebirth with a connection to water as we are born from “the waters of our mother’s womb” (Barker 2000:101). Thematically (lyrics and soundscape), “Mother & Father” is the seeming antithesis of the death scene, but the idea that these two “scenes” share a key may suggest a continuation and connection between them: the former is the “completion” of the latter; its “cleansed”, “full-circle” or idealised version.

The last song on the *Dark Passion Play* album, “Meadows of Heaven” (see Chapter 7) has a similar theme as “Mother & Father” as it is a homage to Holopainen’s childhood home and by extension, to his family.

## 6.7 Conclusion

“The Poet and the Pendulum” contains a myriad of intertextual references and connotative links to existing literary works and other Nightwish songs from both of the band’s stylistic phases. The song also contains explicit intertextual references in the sense that it is greatly inspired and influenced by Stephen King’s *The Dark Tower* book series and Edgar Allan Poe’s novel *The Pit and the Pendulum*. In this regard, intertextuality serves as both a facilitator of interobjective comparison and a theoretical frame of reference.

The song’s soundscape has *musemes* that connote horror (such as a pedal point, semitone movement, tremolo strings, et cetera) and fantasy (such as the harp). The tonal ambiguity in “White Lands of Empathica” further underlines the uncanny quality and horror-inspired soundscape of the section. These fantasy and horror cues are sonic signposts that help to identify certain genres associated with these cues.

The numerous connotations with Danny Elfman’s scores and Tim Burton’s style of Gothic horror films are especially striking in the song. Examples are the Elfman-esque accompaniment in “White Lands of Empathica”, chord progressions similar to Wagner’s “Tarnhelm” motif, as well as the choir sound to underline “Gothicness”. Genre-associations with Gothic horror and fantasy aid my analysis of “The Poet and the Pendulum”. Genre is a “map” that guides and informs the interpretation of said sonic cues in my effort to uncover possible meanings of sections or the song as a whole.

The death of the protagonist in child form adds new depths to the horror cues in the soundscape. Here, the child is more than a child in horror, a “creepy child singing”. The child protagonist’s voice(s) connotes “child”, “inner child”, “vulnerability”, “innocence”, “purity”, “hope”, et cetera. By killing the child, the protagonist’s hope and future is obliterated.

The song has different references or connotations to water. Here, the sea is a place of calm, peace and it is used as a metaphor for death. However, water is also associated with cleansing, as well as gestation and birth. The torture scene in “The Pacific” and “Mother & Father” share the same key of G minor, suggesting a link between these sections. The protagonist longs for death by drowning, suggesting water’s “capacity” to both kill and cleanse. In “Mother & Father” the idea of dying is subverted and replaced with “rebirth”, while the cleansing properties of water can be linked to “the waters of our mother’s womb” (see Barker 2000:101), further implying and underlining the protagonist’s ultimate transcendence and healing.



## Chapter 7 – “Sailing the waves of [the] past”: Nostalgia, utopia and hope in “Meadows of Heaven”<sup>129</sup>

### 7.1 Background and theoretical framework

“Meadows of Heaven” is the twelfth and final track of Nightwish’s sixth full-length album *Dark Passion Play* (Nightwish 2007b).<sup>130</sup> As in all the songs analysed in my thesis, Tuomas Holopainen is the composer and lyricist, while Pip Williams is the arranger of the orchestra and choir parts (Nightwish 2007a:17, 20). The song is composed for solo vocals by Anette Olzon; solos on the uilleann pipes and whistles by Troy Donockley; solo violin; around 66 members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra called “The Dark Passion Play orchestra” in the album booklet (Nightwish 2007a:18); an adult choir consisting of 33 members of Metro Voices; and a gospel choir consisting of 12 members of the Metro Voices Gospel Choir (as indicated in the score; Nightwish 2007a:19). “Meadows of Heaven” is Nightwish’s first and only song to date that features a gospel choir. Furthermore, the orchestra that plays on the album is a larger orchestra than for the band’s subsequent album, *Imaginaerum* (2011). A notable cover version of “Meadows of Heaven” is that by German band, Gregorian which recorded a Gregorian chant-inspired version of the song for their 2009 album *Masters of Chant Chapter VII*.<sup>131</sup>

#### 7.1.1 Background

Holopainen describes the reasoning behind the placement of “Meadows of Heaven” on the album as follows:

And it was obvious from the very beginning that “Meadows Of Heaven” had to be the last song, because it has a perfect feeling in it and it’s the perfect ending for the album (Holopainen interviewed in Khorina 2007).

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<sup>129</sup> The phrase “meadows of heaven” appears for the first time in Nightwish’s output in the lyrics of the “Home” section in “The Poet and the Pendulum” (*Dark Passion Play*).

<sup>130</sup> Other versions include the song “Escapist” as well as a version of “Last of the Wilds” with vocal soloist Jonsu (Johanna Salomaa).

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ6KqbL1he0>

The song is about Holopainen's childhood home in Kitee, Finland, with numerous references in its lyrics to children's playthings, as well as the surrounding forests and lakes: "And then I want to do a story about my childhood home and the feelings of that; then that song ends up becoming 'Meadows of Heaven'" (Holopainen interviewed in Kastner 2008).<sup>132</sup> Nature, home and family play an integral role in Holopainen's lyrics in general and form, among other things, the central themes on which the composer bases his personal philosophies which he expresses through his songs.<sup>133</sup>

Although nature holds a special allure and fascination for the composer, it seems that the combination of this theme with childhood memories, innocence, nostalgia, the comforts of home and family crystallises even more profoundly in the song "Meadows of Heaven". Here, the soundscape and lyrics act (and interact) as a vehicle through which Holopainen shares his personal experiences. The combination of the nature-theme and childhood or children is a popular trope in Romantic literature (Horne [2011] 2016:96). Romantic poets and writers associate children and childhood with innocence, imagination; the child is the personification of the "inherent creative powers" that the "adult version" should reclaim in order to produce art (Horne [2011] 2016:95). The confluence of nature, childhood, innocence, memory, nostalgia and the comforts of home in "Meadows of Heaven" may ultimately contribute to the construction of the so-called "perfect feeling" that Holopainen attributes to the song.

In this analysis, I show how the song, at specific moments, portrays an escape to a different time and place, that certain lyrics are inherently nostalgic (the proverbial "stroll down memory lane"), but that the "escape" here is not the same as that in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" which I analysed in Chapter 5. The idea of escape in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" is fantasy-based: the song connotes a simpler, pre-industrial time through the Irish Celtic instruments and modal chord progressions indicative of traditional Irish Celtic music which, in turn, evokes certain Romantic and landscape connotations (see Chapter 5.3). The soundscape of the Spaghetti Western section in "Turn loose the

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<sup>132</sup> "Childhood games, woods and lakes, the streams of silver, toys of olden days" (*Lyrics* 2015).

<sup>133</sup> Examples of songs with references to home and family besides "Meadows of Heaven" are "White Night Fantasy" (Once); "Two for Tragedy" (Wishmaster); "The Forever Moments" (1996 demonstration recording); "The Riddler" (*Oceanborn*); "Dead Boy's Poem" (*Wishmaster*); and "The Poet and the Pendulum" (*Dark Passion Play*).

Mermaids” evokes landscape connotations and associations with violence à la Sergio Leone and Ennio Morricone (see Chapter 5.4), while the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle connotes fantasy, violence and a poetic longing for a better world through its connection with Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (see Chapter 5.5).

In contrast, the notion of “escape” in “Meadows of Heaven” is more autobiographical in nature. It is closely tied to the concepts of nostalgia and memory as they feature in the song, as well as the protagonist’s longing to return to the version of the self that is tied to those memories. The protagonist’s yearning for an escape to a different time and place is expressed through memories and nostalgia for an unreachable, better time now gone by, the landscape and the memories it evokes, as well as – crucially – a more “innocent” version of the self that cannot be returned to. The impossibility of such a return lends pathos to the song as the protagonist reminisces about his childhood, while vocalist Anette Olzon narrates his story. This protagonist is strongly associable with Tuomas Holopainen.

Akin to “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, “Meadows of Heaven” also features traditional Irish Celtic instruments – the low whistle and uilleann pipes – in certain sections of the song. In this chapter, I explore how the traditional Irish Celtic instruments and the gospel choir influence the song’s soundscape and how these features, together with the lyrics, Olzon’s performance of the lyrics and the adult choir collaborate to inform meaning in the song.

### **7.1.2 Theoretical-philosophical framework**

Traditional Irish Celtic instruments are a central feature in numerous second phase Nightwish songs (see Chapter 5.1.2.1).<sup>134</sup> In “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, these Irish Celtic instruments and modal chord progressions signify a fantasy setting, an “Elsewhere”. In this context, the Irish Celtic instruments and soundscape are a placeholder for fantasy in the receiver’s mind and have ties with exoticism (see Chapter 5.1.2.1; Chapter 5.2). However, “Meadows of Heaven’s” genesis suggests that the “elsewhere” connoted through the Irish Celtic instruments is more complex:

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<sup>134</sup> The Irish Celtic instruments are unique to Nightwish’s second stylistic phase and subsequently do not play in the band’s first phase output as I noted in Chapters 1.3 and 2.1.

the song seeks to represent the specific place and time in Holopainen's childhood (see Kastner 2008).

In this regard, the song's soundscape is not an exact or literal reflection of the geographical place, as the Irish Celtic instruments would be incongruous in this regard. Martin Stokes asserts that "music out of place" does not necessarily equate music devoid of meaning (Stokes [1994] 1997b:98). Stokes's assertion is especially applicable to "Meadows of Heaven" as it is exactly the "out of place" Celtic instruments and gospel choir that add meaning to the song. Music, and by extension all aspects of a soundscape as a whole, has the ability to mediate and transform the hierarchy of "place" and "space" (Stokes [1994] 1997a:4). Here, the Irish Celtic instruments not only "transform" space, but also imbue that place and time with fantasy characteristics, thereby emphasising that this place and time now exists only in memory.

#### 7.1.2.1 The role of place and space

The song's lyrics, which Olzon conveys, describe the protagonist's happy memories of "home". This protagonist bears an autobiographical connection with Holopainen as I explained previously. Place is understood metaphorically in the works of some Romantic writers such as Wordsworth, Faulkner and Proust who treat places and landscapes like characters in their work (Malpas 1999:6). In especially Proust's work, the relationship between people and places is of significant importance, as different characters are categorised in relation to the (specific) places and spaces with which they are associated (Malpas 1999:6).

The relationship between a person and their home, aids – through identification with that place – in establishing a relationship between that person and his/her environment (Norberg-Schulz 1987:20). It is this process of identification that gives an individual the sense that he/she belongs to a specific place (Norberg-Schulz 1987:20). The notion that a person's identity is bound to place is not unique to a specific culture or even a certain period in history (Malpas 1999:2). Gaston Bachelard ([1958] 1994:8) maintains that topoanalysis – the word he uses to denote the analysis of places – is an effective tool for discovering the self:

In the theater of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant rôles. At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability – a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in their past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to “suspend” its flight. In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for.

A topoanalysis of the protagonist's childhood home lies beyond the scope and aims of this chapter and my thesis in general. However, Bachelard's argument about the purpose of space touches on three important points that are valuable for my analysis of “Meadows of Heaven”. Firstly, people are influenced by the places in which they dwell and those places influence them in return, by playing a role in shaping the “memories, feelings and thoughts” of the individual (Malpas 1999:5). This symbiotic relationship between individuals and the spaces they inhabit brings about a merging of the individual's feelings and memories (inner space) and the individual's dwelling (outer space): “inner space is externalised and outer space brought within” (Malpas 1999:5).

Secondly, if the places and spaces human beings dwell in have an influence on thoughts, emotions and memories, it would follow that spaces also have an influence on what we produce such as music or art. Holopainen describes the role of nature and the influence(s) that his physical surroundings have on his song writing process as follows:

I think that everything you see and experience in life affects your songwriting on a subconscious level. But the fact that I've been living in the middle of nowhere in the woods all of the thirty two years of my life, that has certainly affected what I am as a person and that way to my songwriting. I'd like to think that the songs I do are quite organic. I take alot [sic] of inspiration from the beauty of the world, the beauty and the purity of nature which I have witnessed my whole life. If I was a city slicker I think I would be doing something like industrial metal. I think that there is a strong connection with nature in everything we do (Holopainen interviewed in *Interviews: Nightwish* 2009).

Our surroundings influence what we produce such as music and in turn, “music informs our sense of place” (Stokes [1994] 1997a:3). Music has the ability to “mirror” landscapes and spaces with regard to contour or shape (melody), proportion (harmony; Botstein 2011:279) and, in my opinion, structure. “Meadows of Heaven” is about a specific place that is sacrosanct to the protagonist; a place that is identifiable on a map. As “music informs our sense of place”, it would follow to reason that the soundscape of the song should be a sonic representation of that specific, identifiable place. The lyrics do not provide specifics of the location, but suggest that the protagonist merely needs to close his eyes to travel to this place. Contrastingly, “Meadows of Heaven’s” soundscape suggests that the escape in the song to a seemingly specific time and place is not as simple as the song’s lyrics reflect: the soundscape suggests that the protagonist’s version of events does not mirror the physical place with total accuracy as it transformed. I explore how this transformation is brought about and how it influences the song’s meaning.

The Irish Celtic instruments in “Meadows of Heaven” are salient and peculiar in a song about a specific place in Finnish North Karelia (see Ollila 2008:19). In this regard, a kantele – the “national instrument” of Finland (Hillila & Hong 1997:166) – would have been more fitting. The kantele is a zither-like harp with five strings that the player plucks to produce sound (Sondrup 2004:158).<sup>135</sup> It has strong ties with Finnish nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Johnson 2003:440) and is intimately associated with Finnish culture, Karelia and the *Kalevala*.<sup>136</sup> Only one of Nightwish’s songs (“Last of the Wilds”, *Dark Passion Play*) features a kantele – an electric kantele to be exact – and the kantele sound could well have been produced on an electronic keyboard in “Meadows of Heaven”. The kantele’s sound has connotations with the beauty of Finnish nature and (by extension) nostalgia and would have been very fitting in “Meadows of Heaven”. Holopainen’s (deliberate) inclusion of Irish Celtic instruments

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<sup>135</sup> The Finnish instrument, not to be confused with *Kantele taikka Suomen Kansan sekä vanhoja että nykyisempiä runoja ja lauluja*, Lönnrot’s publication of Finnish poems and songs (Sondrup 2004:155).

<sup>136</sup> “Karelia” is meant to include all areas of the historical Karelia, now areas in both Finland and Russia. The *Kalevala* is a collection of folk poetry compiled by Elias Lönnrot after his travels through areas of both Finnish and Russian Karelia (Sondrup 2004:155 and Honko 1990:181). The kantele features prominently in the *Kalevala* and the instrument has connotations with the beauty of nature, sadness and loneliness (Hillila & Hong 1997:166).

instead suggests that their contribution in the construction of meaning in the song is symbolic, which in turn highlights the third important point from Bachelard's argument.

Bachelard notes that the individual "does not want to melt away" ([1958] 1994:8), which may mean a fear of dying and being forgotten. It is interesting that Bachelard mentions "a search of things past" directly after talking about a fear of mortality as the search for things in the past signifies nostalgia, suggesting, in other words, that nostalgia is also a product of ruin or decay.

#### 7.1.2.2 Nostalgia

Some of Nightwish's songs in both the band's first and second phase allude to nostalgia in either the song title or lyrical content. Some examples are: "Lappi: Erämaajärvi" (*Angels Fall First*) that describes "[t]he longing for the past"; the need to "[b]ecome what I once was" in "Crownless" (*Wishmaster*); "Ocean Soul" (*Century Child*); the title and content of "The Heart I Once Had" (*Dark Passion Play*); "The Islander" (*Dark Passion Play*); and the line "Oh how beautiful it used to be" in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" (*Imaginaerum*).

Nostalgia is a helpful therapeutic tool as it assists people in coping with bereavement and other losses, isolation, uncertainty, change and anxiety (Sprengler 2009:32). In a way, nostalgia is linked to the redemptive role of art (specifically music) in the Nightwish world; a notion that often appears in Holopainen's lyrics and Nightwish's oeuvre. An isolated example is an excerpt from the song "Ocean Soul" (*Century Child*):

I only wished to become something beautiful  
Through my music, through my silent devotion

The term "nostalgia" is tied to hope as it also encompasses the hopes that manifest around the experience, expression and analysis of the experience of loss (Radstone 2010:187). This hope has to do with the future. Through nostalgia, the past becomes a place of healing and renewal that offers security and confidence in order to address difficulties of the uncertain present (Pickering & Keightley 2006:921). Thus, nostalgia assumes a utopian dimension, with the potential for social commentary and critique (Pickering & Keightley 2006:921; see section 7.1.2.3). Besides being a coping

mechanism, nostalgia can also represent a protest against change (Verhoeff 2006:154), or a protest against “melt[ing] away” as in Bachelard’s ([1958] 1994:8) quotation in section 7.1.2.1.

Paul Ricoeur strongly connects the idea of “forgetting” with “remembering” as he views the former to be a prerequisite for the latter:

To memory is tied an ambition, a claim – that of being faithful to the past. In this respect the deficiencies stemming from forgetting [...] should not be treated straight away as pathological forms, as dysfunctions, but as the shadowy underside of the bright region of memory, which binds us to what has passed before we remember it (Ricoeur 2004:21).

Therefore, memory as “mourning” and “nostalgia” can productively transform into “memory as truth”, thus serving a restorative purpose. In terms of nostalgia’s (utopian) potential for social commentary and critique, memory could be regarded as “truth” and “non-truth” within Jacques Derrida’s dialectic of truth and non-truth. For Derrida, there should be latitude for the possibility that a recollection or retelling is in fact literature; in other words, influenced by various degrees of fiction or truth and non-truth (2000:30). For a retelling or recounting of past events to continue being “testimony” (whether legal testimony as in Derrida’s analogy or simply an everyday retelling) or an untainted “truth”, it must “allow itself to be haunted”:

It is a chance and a threat, a resource of both testimony and of literary fiction, law and non-law, truth and non-truth, veracity and lie, faithfulness and perjury (Derrida 2000:30).

The protagonist’s memories and retelling of his childhood (a type of “testimony”) is not only “haunted” by “discrepancies” in the soundscape (the Irish Celtic instruments and gospel choir) but the “reconstruction” of his past is contingent upon it as nostalgia “*entails* a falsification of the past” (Sprengler 2009:32). Initially, the “home” and its surroundings in “Meadows of Heaven” seem to be a type of Arcadian microcosm, but the song does not only represent a longing for something that was in the past and is now unattainable or unreachable. There are some indications in the soundscape and lyrics that there is an existing conflict between different versions of the protagonist’s “self”, which I examine in more detail, but the last section of the song generates and



instills hope, which suggests that the protagonist's idea of home has rather a utopian dimension. The protagonist reminisces about his childhood home that is now located in a memory, in a fictionalised space. Bryan Turner notes that such spaces that are "located in a lost place in a lost time [...] assum[e] a Utopian dimension" (1987:154).

### 7.1.2.3. Utopia

The word "utopia" was coined by Thomas More in 1516 to name the island – an imaginary paradise – he describes in his book of the same title (Vieira 2010:3-4). The word's meaning has changed over time since its initial use by More, as many other neologisms such as "dystopia" and "heterotopia" have been derived from it (Vieira 2010:3). These neologisms are descriptive and have aided in gradually shaping the definition and meaning of the word "utopia" (Vieira 2010:3). More's use of the word "utopia" is generally seen to refer to "imaginary paradisiacal places", but the name he initially chose for the island was "Nusquama" – a Latin word meaning "in no place" or "nowhere" (Vieira 2010:4).

Some later definitions of utopia that are in accordance with More's initial idea of utopia to mean "nowhere" or "in no place" are those by French philosophers Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Ricoeur maintains that the word "utopia" denotes a "nowhere" and that it is both an escape from reality, as well as a new, alternative reality (Taylor 2006:96). Foucault states that utopias are "sites with no real place" (in other words, nowhere) and that they are fictitious spaces (Foucault & Miskowiec 1986:24).

Since utopias are not geographically specific places but imaginary ones, they can take a plethora of different forms, creating room for social commentary on and critique of existing places, states, governments, or policies. In utopian literature, a traveller from another country visits the utopian country or place and upon returning to the country of origin, tells of other and more effective ways of organising society (Vieira 2010:7). Utopias are more than just the reverse image of the "real" world and social criticism through utopias go deeper than merely critiquing the way things work in the present state; instead, they present opportunities for real changes that future generations could and should effect (Vieira 2010:8).

In this regard, Bryan Turner describes how nostalgia can act as a vehicle for critique: “By converting the past into a Utopian homestead, nostalgia may lay the foundations for a radical critique of the modern as a departure from authenticity” (Turner 1987:154). I aim to show how nostalgia acts as a vehicle of critique in “Meadows of Heaven”. I further aspire to demonstrate how the song – with a utopian “message” – may serve as a type of “social intervention”.

#### 7.1.2.4. The gospel choir and the heavenly

The song title already refers to the heavenly, but the soundscape further connotes it through instruments such as the harp and bell-type instruments, as well as the gospel choir. In gospel and blues music, the word “home” often signifies “heaven” (see, for example, Boone 2002:82).<sup>137</sup> In “Meadows of Heaven”, the gospel choir’s singing style has similarities with gospel singing, specifically with black gospel.<sup>138</sup> Especially the song’s Epilogue (see Table 7.1) contains a lot of improvisation by soloists from the gospel choir and Anette Olzon.

Improvisation is a key element of black gospel as songs (and song sections) are not performed the same way in subsequent performances: it is exceedingly individualistic and all the voice parts are very rarely notated (Cusic 2002:54). The songs are improvisational and the singing style is characterised by embellishments, glissandi, melismas, et cetera (Jungr 2002:104). Barb Jungr notes that gospel singing specifically includes two of the “vocal parameters” that Josephine Estill’s model (see Steinhauer, McDonald Klimek & Estill 2017) proposes, namely “belt” and “twang” (Jungr 2002:107).<sup>139</sup> Two of these styles are audible in “Meadows of Heaven”, namely “belt” and possibly also “twang”.

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<sup>137</sup> Gospel music originated in (North) America and in line with the country’s political policies during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, gospel developed as two segregated, idiosyncratic strands, namely black gospel and white gospel (Cusic 2002:54).

<sup>138</sup> Black gospel was born within African American oral traditions (Moore 2002:1) and it sounds uniquely different from other gospel music, as black gospel shares similarities with jazz in terms of rhythm and blues style singing (Moore 2002:53).

<sup>139</sup> “Twang” is the singing style or timbre heard in country-western music and the “speech of Texans” (Steinhauer, McDonald Klimek & Estill 2017).

The gospel choir's sound in "Meadows of Heaven" readily connotes black gospel and has some similarities with the latter style, yet the gospel choir in the Nightwish song does not entirely sing in a manner that is typically associated with gospel music and the cultural and religious dimensions that it implies. Gospel music and gospel singing is readily associated with African American culture and Christian worship practices (Harrison 2012:2). Black gospel is an "expression of the contemporary black religious experience", while the lyrics communicate personal interpretations of what black survival in America means (Robinson-Martin 2017:2). As blues represents the interpretations of and communal reactions to experiences within the secular realm, black gospel music represents the same in terms of the sacred realm (Moore 2002:1, 5).

I explore the connotations that the gospel choir in "Meadows of Heaven" evokes as well as their possible meanings in section 7.4.2.

### **7.1.3 Key questions that govern the analysis of "Meadows of Heaven"**

The following questions underpin my analysis of "Meadows of Heaven":

- What purpose does the Irish Celtic soundscape and instruments serve?
- How do the connotations evoked by these instruments in "Meadows of Heaven" compare to those in "Turn Loose the Mermaids"?
- What insights can Tagg's *hypothetical substitution* (Tagg [2012] 2013:254) yield in terms of Holopainen's choice to include traditional Irish Celtic instruments?
- In what ways do the lyrics and Anette Olzon's vocal costume (Tagg [2012] 2013:360-375) aid in the construction of meaning in the song?
- What is the so-called "perfect feeling" that Holopainen (Khorina 2007) refers to?
- How is this "perfect feeling" constructed in the song and in which way(s) is it communicated to the receiver?
- What does the inclusion of the gospel choir signify and how does it contribute to the reception and overall meaning of the song?
- How does the aural staging (Tagg [2012] 2013:299-303) of Olzon's vocals and other sonic gestures within the song's textural space inform the reception and meaning of the relevant sections and ultimately, the entire song? and

- In what ways do studio effects such as delay (in terms of Moore’s *soundbox*; Moore 2012:31) inform the meaning of the song?

### 7.1.4 The form structure of “Meadows of Heaven”

A very short summary of the form structure, main sections, time signature, key and key changes, as well as the tempo of “Meadows of Heaven” would look as follows:

**Table 7.1: The form structure of “Meadows of Heaven”**

Section	Sub-section <sup>140</sup>	Phrases	Time	Key	Tempo
Introduction	(Intro, b1-2)	1x2 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
	Violin Solo (b3-14) (0’00”-0’55.8”)	3x4 bars			
A	Verse (1) (0’56.3”-1’28”)	2x4 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
B	Refrain (1) (1’28.3”-1’43.9”)	1x4 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
A	Verse (2) (1’44.2”-2’15.9”)	2x4 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
B	Refrain (2) (2’16.2”-2’47.8”)	2x4 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
Interlude	Pipes/Low Whistle Solo (2’48.3”-3’31.7”)	3x4 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
	Bridge (3’32.2”-4’07.7”)	2x4 + 2 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
	Guitar Solo (4’08.1”-4’40”)	2x4 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	¼ = 60
A	Verse (3) (4’40.3”-5’11.9”)	2x4 bars	4/4	G min	¼ = 60
B	Refrain (3) (5’12.2”-5’43.6”)	2x4 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	¼ = 60
Epilogue	Outro (1) (5’44.2”-5’59.8”)	1x4 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	¼ = 60
	Outro (2) (6’00.2”-6’15.8”)	1x4 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	¼ = 60
	Guitar Outro (6’16.3”-6’31.8”)	1x4 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	¼ = 60
	Ending (6’32.3”-7’10”)	2x4 bars	4/4	B $\flat$ min	¼ = 60

<sup>140</sup> Sub-sections as indicated and titled in the score, except my replacement of the term “chorus” with “refrain” in the table as well as naming the first two bars the “intro”.

As shown in Table 7.1, the superordinate form structure of “Meadows of Heaven” comprises: an Introduction; two alterations between Verse and Refrain sections; an Interlude consisting of three sub-sections; one alteration between Verse and Refrain sections; and ultimately, an Epilogue comprising four sub-sections. The form structure is an extension of the verse-refrain structure in the sense that the standard verse-refrain structure is expanded by a substantive Introduction, Interlude and Epilogue.

## 7.2 The lyrics and Anette Olzon’s vocal costume

The song starts with two introductory bars and the solo cello plays a low E-flat followed by a B-flat a perfect fifth higher, which the violas play. The divided tutti celli join in, in the next bar, doubling this perfect fifth on E-flat and B-flat. The song’s key is initially ambiguous as there is an oscillation between E-flat major and G minor chords which could suggest either I-iii in E-flat major or VI-i in G minor. The ambiguous key in the introductory sections of the song is similar to the ambiguity of the key in “White Lands of Empathica” in the (Nightwish) song “The Poet and the Pendulum” (see Chapter 6.2.2).

However, the relationship between E-flat major and G minor in “Meadows of Heaven” is tonally closer than the one between F-sharp minor and D minor in “White Lands of Empathica” (a PL transformation), as it is an L-transformation in the neo-Riemannian system (see Capuzzo 2004:178). In this way, the shifts between E-flat major and G minor combined with the tonal relationship between these keys suggest the idea of “close to home, yet ambiguous”.

The solo violin (with its pastoral connotations; see Dolp 2008:206), plays repetitions with small alterations of the expressive thematic motif in two different registers:<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> The solo violin also connotes the pastoral in film scores such as *Legends of the Fall* (towards the end of “The Ludlows”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYpMqhQt9kU>) and the violin melody and well as the violin solo in the “Shire” theme (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqKThTGi6I8>) in *The Lord of the Rings*



**Figure 7.1: The solo violin's motif on the album recording**

This motif occurs in many sections of the song as it is also the main melody of the Refrain sections. The piano is the main driving force in the Violin Solo section. The pastoral connotations that the solo violin evokes have close associations with nostalgia, as pastoral music tends to connote earlier times in history rather than the present or future (Kassabian [2001] 2002:31). The solo violin's sound may also stereotypically signify pathos (Kassabian [2001] 2002:17) – a connection that the receiver may be acutely aware of in terms of film scores that use this stereotype for the pastoral or for pathos – which, in turn, may reverberate the protagonist's longing to return to the now unreachable, "lost" version of the self of his childhood (see section 7.1.1).

The bass drum's rhythmic pattern is (a) a semiquaver followed by a semiquaver tied to what sounds like a quaver and a minim sometimes interspersed with (b) a quaver followed by a quaver tied to what sounds like a minim, evoking the sound of a heartbeat:



**Figure 7.2: The bass drum's rhythmic pattern (a) on the recording**

And:



**Figure 7.3: The bass drum's rhythmic pattern (b) on the recording**

The connoted heartbeat evokes an empathetic response in the receiver as the receiver is confronted with his/her own body and mortality (see Winters 2008; Chapter 6.4.4).

Anette Olzon enters for the first time on the upbeat to the beginning of Verse (1, timecode 0'56.3"-1'28"). The lyrics of Verse (1) are (*Lyrics* 2015):

I close my eyes  
The lantern dies  
The scent of awakening  
Wildhoney [sic] and dew  
Childhood games, woods and lakes  
Streams of silver  
Toys of olden days

This Verse's lyrics describe memories of a childhood home and its surroundings. The protagonist travels to this fantastical, magical place by closing his eyes. The texture of Verse (1) – which is in G minor – is relatively sparse, while Olzon's volume and intensity is moderately soft and understated, creating an "uncomplicated", almost transparent musical backdrop for the references to the protagonist's childhood and surroundings. Olzon sings Verse (1) in her head register, with a lighter timbre, causing the vocals of the Verse to seem lighter and higher-sounding than they actually are as the highest note is B-flat (5).

The lyrics tell of the protagonist's recollections of an idyllic early childhood with a multitude of memories around different objects, smells and sights. The "flow" of a multitude of memories is mimicked by the relatively fast harmonic rhythm which changes in every bar. In contrast, the surface rate is rather slow with chordal accompaniment in the piano part instead of arpeggio figures. The solo violin plays a countermelody in the second half of Verse (1) that is based on Olzon's vocal melody.

As with the other Refrains, the lyrics of Refrain (1) are a repetition of the title of the song:

Meadows of heaven

Refrain (1) is the shortest of all the Refrains and sees only two repetitions of the words "meadows of heaven". Olzon's delivery of the vocals is calm and relatively unembellished. Even though the texture is denser in Refrain (1) compared to that of Verse (1), Olzon's intensity and timbre is even lighter and more serene than in Verse

(1). What is interesting about the scoring of the violin parts is the clearly audible clash between F and G within the first delivery of the lyrics “Meadows of heaven”, where the clash happens after the word “heaven” is sung. The G is a suspension and the resulting clash between F and G may represent the conflict between different versions of the self (past-self and present-self).

G is also the pitch associated with the G minor key of the Verses (tonic of G minor). In this way, the descriptions of the protagonist’s childhood home and by extension, his past is connected to G minor and its tonic, G. The G-F-suspension may also suggest “holding on” to the ideas of “home”, “childhood” or “self”. In this regard, the suspension (or the “holding on”) may be a metaphor for protest against change, creating a link between the clash and nostalgia, as the latter may be regarded as a type of protest against or indignation at change (see Verhoeff 2006:154).

The re-entry of the drum kit that did not play in Verse (1) and Refrain (1), marks the beginning of Verse (2). The bass drum plays a pattern alike that shown in Figure 7.3; in other words, the “heartbeat pattern” of the Violin Solo section of the Introduction (see Table 7.1). The bass drum accentuates certain words of the lyrics, namely the underlined words in the following quotation:

The flowers of wonder  
And the hidden treasures  
In the meadow of life  
My acre of heaven  
A 5-year-old winterheart  
In a place called home  
Sailing the waves of past

Olzon sings Verse (2) with more intensity, not necessarily louder in terms of volume than Verse (1). The solo violin plays segments of Olzon’s melody and intersperses it with small deviations or variations. The lyrics further describe the protagonist’s childhood home and idyllic childhood, this time directly connecting that home to the idea of a “heaven” with the words “My acre of heaven”. The veneration or almost sanctification of his childhood home and surroundings in the Verses and Refrains perpetuate the idea of the heavenly as the central theme of the song. The “hidden



treasures” may refer to finding beauty and wonder in unexpected, fantastical places and childhood (or even childlike) curiosity. The protagonist remembers, retells or translates the beauty of nature as a five-year-old boy sees it and Olzon (the narrator), communicates these details to the receiver.

The first four lines of both verses are supported by the harmonic progression i-v- $\flat$ VII-IV $\flat$  (i.e. Gm-Dm-F-C<sup>7</sup>) in G minor; in the second verse, the D minor and C major chords are played in first inversion instead. The E-natural may be regarded as an element of mixture, being “borrowed” from G major, and its effect may be interpreted as suggesting physical, emotional or spiritual awakening in Verse (1). Here, it accompanies the text “wild honey and dew” following the line “the scent of awakening”, and a feeling of wonderment or amazement in Verse (2), where it goes with the line “my acre of heaven”.

“Sailing the waves of past” not only suggests nostalgia, but also points to the ocean; a central theme in many of Holopainen’s lyrics (see Chapter 5.2 and 5.3.2). A link is established between these lyrical themes by using an ocean-inspired metaphor for accessing childhood memories, innocence and nostalgia, as well as the Ocean Soul trope. The reoccurrence of these key themes (among others) in Holopainen’s lyrics creates a mental anchor for Nightwish fans across the globe (Karjalainen 2016:62, 66, 74), not only in terms of the *Imaginaerum* album, but also of the *Dark Passion Play* album.

Refrain (2), which has the same lyrics as Refrain (1), follows Verse (2). The drum kit plays in Refrain (2) which gives it a “heavier”, “rockier” sound than the almost acoustic, ballad-like Refrain (1) where the drum kit did not play. The texture in this Refrain is denser with the joining of the drum kit and gospel choir. Refrain (2) is a louder and more intense Refrain than the first one and Olzon adapts her vocal delivery accordingly. The three-section Interlude follows Refrain (2) where Olzon and the choir sing only in the middle section, namely the Bridge. The first and third sections are instrumental sections, namely the Pipes/Low Whistle Solo and the Guitar Solo section respectively.

The Bridge is the densest section texture-wise thus far in the song and features almost all the orchestral instruments, Olzon's main vocals, and the backing vocals by the choir in six parts. It is the climax of the Interlude and also of the entire song thus far. The choir sings almost homorhythmically in the different voice parts which creates a dramatic effect and is scored to sing *fortissimo* (as indicated in the score). Olzon sings powerfully and belts out her melody for the largest part of the Bridge section, as well as singing higher (E-flat (5)) than in any previous section of the song (B-flat (5)). Her vocal melody is similar to the motif that the low whistle plays in the Pipes/Low Whistle Solo section (see Figure 7.4). Her melody clashes with the chords of the first two bars of the Bridge, reminding the receiver of the clash between the F and the G in Refrain (1):

Ro-cking chair with out\_a\_\_ drea - mer

**Figure 7.4: Transcription of Olzon's vocal melody in the Bridge section**

Olzon's G on the first beat of the second bar of Figure 7.4 is a suspension and may be a metaphor for protest against change or conflict between the different versions of the self, akin to Refrain (1). The two main harmonies that feature in the Bridge are i (Gm) and different inversions of  $\flat$ VII (F), emphasising the pitches G and F respectively. The Bridge's lyrics describe sights associated with childhood games and the words highlight the desertedness of settings that once were and still are associated with great joy and innocence:

Rocking chair without a dreamer  
 A wooden swing without laughter  
 Sandbox without toy soldiers  
 Yuletide without the Flight  
 Dreambound for life

The lyrics paint a picture of the physical remnants of the protagonist's childhood now gone, as the child in the context of this song is now an adult. The lyrics could also be a testimony to the fleeting nature of childhood and childhood innocence, mirrored by

the “speeding up” of the resolution to the tonic of G minor in the first two phrases by means of the time signature change from 4/4 to 2/4. The clashes between Olzon’s vocal melody and the chords played in the first two bars of the first two phrases brings the underlying conflict between present and past, as well as the idea of a past self and a present self to the forefront. The almost triumphant sound of the orchestral and choir parts and the soundscape of the song in this section is a climactic celebration of a joyous childhood, while simultaneously mourning the loss of the said childhood.

The harmonic progression in the last bar is  $\sharp VII-\sharp VII^6$  in G minor, leaving the section unresolved on the word “life” from the line “Dreambound for life”. Alternatively, these harmonies (F-F/A) could be regarded as V-V<sup>6</sup> respectively of B-flat minor as the next section (the Guitar Solo section) is in B-flat minor. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 2/4 in the first two bars of the first two phrases hasten the phrases to their respective ends, shortening the resolutions to the tonic chord of G minor in both instances, but also making the last phrase that consists of only two 4/4 bars seem longer, resonating the idea of a long time period in the words “Dreambound for life”.

A short instrumental section (Guitar Solo, timecode 4’08.1”-4’40”) follows the Bridge. In Verse (3) with its transparent texture, the solo violin plays snippets of a countermelody and the piano’s arpeggiated accompaniment create a stark contrast to both the Bridge and the Guitar Solo section. The lyrics of this Verse are:

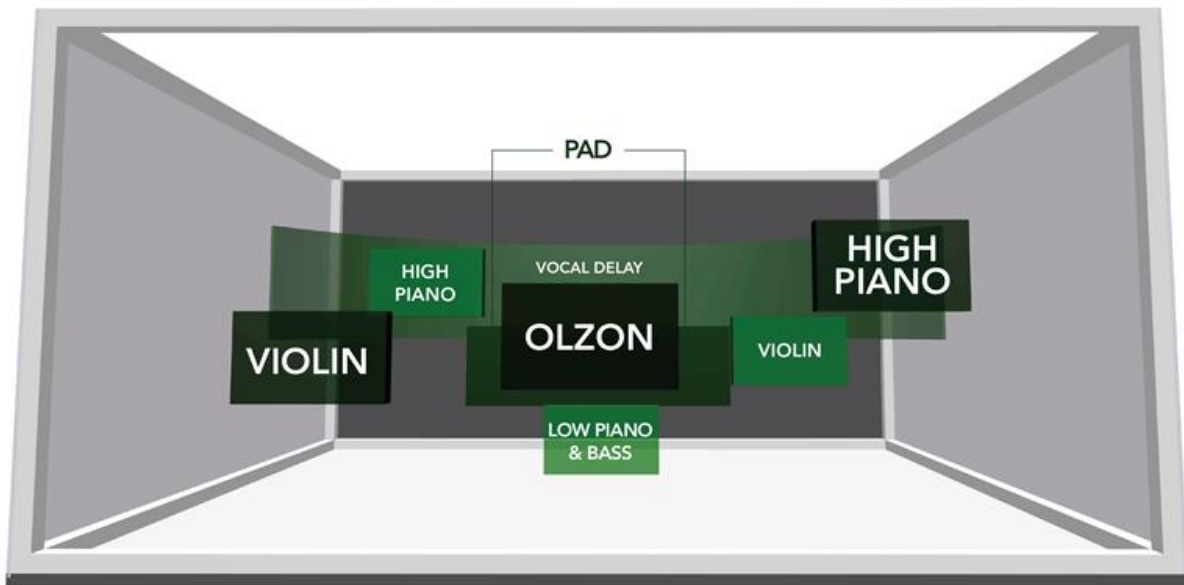
Flowers wither  
Treasures stay hidden  
Until I see  
The 1st star of fall  
I fall asleep and see it all:  
Mother's care  
And color of the kites<sup>142</sup>

Olzon’s approach to the vocals is similar to that of Verse (1), especially for the first two lines of the Verse: soothing, transparent, “uncomplicated”, almost unembellished,

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<sup>142</sup> A kite also features in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” (see Chapter 5.2) and “Storytime” (*Imaginaerum*) to represent a child and childhood which in turn signifies innocence – a central theme in both Nightwish’s first and second phase output (see Chapter 2.3).

moderately soft, light with a “bright” timbre and with little to no vibrato. Her timbre from the beginning of this Verse up to and including the words “of fall” makes her vocals seem higher in pitch than that of the violin; in reality, this is not the case (which Moore’s model allows; see Chapter 3.2.2). She is aurally staged at the front and centre of the recording’s textural space with the solo violin and high notes of the piano staged behind her:



**Figure 7.5: Soundbox diagram of the first four lines of Verse (3): Front view**

The solo violin and high piano notes have a cross delay (see Chapter 5.2) that, akin to the cross delay in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, creates the feeling that the textural space does not have limitations which, in turn, signifies “fantasy” (see Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5.2). Other than in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” with its overt fantasy references and connotations, the fantasy in “Meadows of Heaven” speaks to the protagonist’s fictionalised past. Olzon’s vocals have a very long pre-delay and this delay allows her vocals to “hover” at the back of the soundscape, similar to the delay on the low whistle in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” (see Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5.2):



**Figure 7.6: Soundbox diagram of the first four lines of Verse (3): View from above**

The vocal delay at the back of the soundscape pulls the receiver into the fiction and nostalgia as the delay on the low whistle does in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”. The solo violin has connotations of images and feelings of soaring. The four chords that correspond to the first two lines of Verse (3) are two minor chords and two major chords which create the progression  $i-v^{\flat}-\text{VII}-IV$  (Gm-Dm-F-C) in G minor – the same progression as in Verses (1) and (2). In this Verse, the minor chords sonically depict the withering flowers and hidden treasures, while the major sonorities reflect the change, hope and relief in the second line. The first two lines of the lyrics are also a subversion of the first two lines of Verse (2), indicating decay or loss:

**Table 7.2: A comparison between the first two lines of Verses (2) and (3)**

Verse (2)	Verse (3)
“The flowers of wonder And the hidden treasures”	“Flowers wither Treasures stay hidden”

Olzon’s delicate delivery of the first two lines of Verse (3) compared to those of Verse (2), the haunting violin solo interjections and minor chords create a soundscape that does not evoke feelings of sadness or despair. Instead, it underlines a fragility which, together with the “organic” arpeggiated patterns that the piano plays, sometimes turn inwards upon themselves by slightly opening up and unfurling in ascending notes in almost every second bar, connoting cycles that are associated with nature. These, for

example, are: the changing of the seasons and humans' lives such as childhood and adulthood; pain and healing; longing and acceptance; and birth and death.

The texture thickens as the bass guitar, drum kit and strings join in, in the second phrase (around timecode 4'40.3"). Here, Olzon sings louder, with more intensity and adds ornamentations, thus contrasting the fragility of the first phrase with the confidence and hopefulness of the second phrase. The low whistle replaces the solo violin and it doubles parts of Olzon's melody, adding a "breathy" sound to the melody. The female voices of the choir enter in the second phrase and sing homorhythmically on the vowel "ooh". They sing softly and sound as if they are singing from a distance, perhaps as part of a memory. Their descending lines create a soothing, calming effect which hovers softly in the textural space; a soothing, female presence that may musically depict the words "Mother's care" in the lyrics.

Refrain (3) starts around timecode 5'12.2"-5'43.6". What is interesting about Refrain (3) is that Olzon's melody starts on an upbeat as in Refrain (2), where the gospel choir also features, but where the choir echoes Olzon's "meadows of heaven" with "heaven, ah" directly after she sings the word "heaven". In Refrain (3), the gospel choir sings the word "heaven" followed first by ornaments on the vowel sound "ah", while Olzon only enters with her melody on the upbeat around timecode 5'27.2". The gospel choir plays a more central and leading role in Refrain (3) and certain members act as soloists that improvise countermelodies and ornaments freely (see section 7.4.2 for my discussion on the associations with and connotations evoked by the gospel choir and soloists' singing style), creating a type of dialogue with Olzon's melody line. In comparison to her vocals in the previous section of the song, Olzon powerfully belts out the higher-pitched notes and she inserts improvised ornaments to reflect the "freer" singing style of the gospel choir.

Refrain (3), the three Outros and the Ending section consist of a repetition of the line "meadows of heaven" and are all based on the same (repeated) harmonic progression in B-flat minor, namely VI-♯VII-I, with a modal cadence ♯VII-i at the very end of the

song.<sup>143, 144</sup> In these sections – starting with the sudden shift in tonal centre at the start of Refrain (3) – the tonal centre is somewhat unstable and reminds one of the tonal ambiguity of the Introduction. The instability of the tonal centre is a result of the second chord in the sequence, namely the A-flat major chord. This chord creates the potential for a resolution to D-flat major, but each phrase-ending is on a B-flat minor chord, therefore avoiding a V-I resolution in D-flat major and returning to B-flat minor each time.<sup>145</sup>

The VI- $\flat$ VII-i progression produces a stepwise ascending bass line on G-flat, A-flat and B-flat; in other words, a transposition of the chord progression on Refrains (1) and (2). Even though all the remaining sections have the same harmonic progression, the texture becomes denser in each new section. The harmonic rhythm is relatively slow with one harmony per bar. The electric guitar strums each chord once with distortion on the downbeat of every bar in Outro (1) and (2). For the remainder of the song, the surface rate increases, even though the harmonic rhythm stays one harmony per bar.

In Outros (1) and (2), there are two instances, one in each Outro around timecodes 5'48.2 and 6'04.2 respectively, where there is a clash between E-flat and F, akin to the clash between F and G that coincides with the first delivery of the words “meadows of heaven” in Refrain (1) and Olzon’s suspension on G in the Bridge. The clash in the Outros may have the same meaning as the clashes in Refrain (1) and the Bridge, with their ties to protest, conflict within the self and ultimately, to nostalgia. The epilogue has a rhythmic motif throughout that serves as the driving force of all four sections and

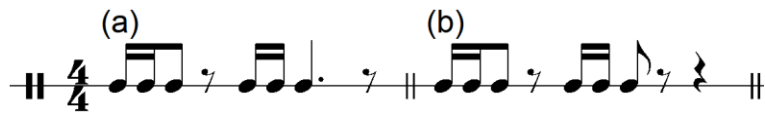
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<sup>143</sup> Outro (1), Outro (2), the Guitar Outro and the Ending combined make up the lengthy epilogue of the song.

<sup>144</sup> This is not the first key change to B-flat minor as the eight bar long Guitar Solo section (timecode 4'08.1”-4'40”) is also in the same key, but with a key change back to G minor after only six bars in B-flat minor.

<sup>145</sup> B-flat minor is a minor third above G. Key changes to or tonicisations of a key a minor third higher are found in other Nightwish songs, for example “Scaretale” and “Nemo”. In “Scaretale”, B-flat minor is tonicised which is a minor third above G minor (see Chapter 4.6.2) while “Nemo” contains a key change from D minor to F minor after the guitar solo and piano link. In both examples the tonicisation or key change creates an increase in tension. All three these third relations in “Meadows of Heaven”, “Scaretale” and “Nemo” between a key and a second key a minor third above, are PL-transformations (see Chapter 6.2.2).

gives momentum to these sections. The motif (a) and a variation thereof (b) are notated as follows in the score:



**Figure 7.7: The epilogue's rhythmic motif and variation**

The strong accents on each note of the motif add power to the epilogue's soundscape and also accentuate the stepwise ascending bassline from G-flat to B-flat. Olzon and the soloists from the gospel choir continue their belted out, improvisational dialogue throughout the epilogue, adding even more power to this bombastic section, while also creating a feeling of freedom and ecstasy through their improvised vocal segments.

### 7.3 Nostalgia

"Meadows of Heaven's" lyrics have a nostalgic tone, but the lyrics are not the only aspect of the song that conveys nostalgia. The song's soundscape also expresses nostalgia through the Irish Celtic instruments, modal chord progressions and the use of the minor key.

#### 7.3.1 Irish Celtic instruments

As I argued in sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2, the Irish Celtic instruments seem out of place. At first glance, it is possible that the Irish Celtic instruments in this song represent the childhood-fantasy connection in the song's lyrics, as they make reference to toys and childhood adventures in nature, similar to how the Irish Celtic instruments in "Turn Loose the Mermaids" connotes exoticism and serves as a placeholder for the receiver's imagination. I argue that a deeper analysis of "Meadows of Heaven" brings yet another possible reason for the Irish Celtic instruments in the soundscape to the forefront.

As inferred in section 7.1.2 of this chapter, Holopainen's inclusion of the Irish Celtic instruments and their ultimate contribution in terms of the meaning of the song is symbolic in nature. "Meadows of Heaven" is about a time (the protagonist's childhood)



and a place (his childhood home). However, the traditional Irish Celtic instruments blur the lines in terms of both time and place by intimating Ireland, the Irish landscape, “Irishness”, Celticity, fantasy, exoticism and imagination (see Chapter 5.1.2; Chapter 5.2). The Irish Celtic instruments in the song’s soundscape suggest a “falsification” of the protagonist’s past in the narrator’s retelling of a series of extracts from the protagonist’s childhood, thus creating a fictionalised past. In this way, the Irish Celtic instruments become the “carriers”, so to speak, and signifiers of nostalgia in the song; the “new”, fictionalised past becomes “truth” (see Derrida 2000:30).

The Irish Celtic instruments represent an imagined past or a fiction of the past and these instruments may also represent a version of the self and home to which there can be no return. These versions are “lost” in time and space as they belong to the self and home of the utopian realm, that is: “nowhere” (see section 7.1.2.4). The musical and symbolical “transformation” (see Stokes [1994] 1997a:4) of the protagonist’s childhood home into a “utopian homestead” creates the potential for social commentary and critique (see Turner 1987:154; section 7.1.2.3), as well as becoming “truth” (see Derrida 2000:30; section 7.1.2.2).

### **7.3.2 Modal chord progressions**

As mentioned in Chapter 5.3.1, modal chord progressions are not unique to metal or even traditional music, but the modal progressions with chords ♮VII, III and the dominant minor chord in “Meadows of Heaven”, may point to a connection with traditional Irish Celtic music. Moreover, these modal chord progressions act as a signifier of musics that have connotations with “old”, “pre-globalisation”, “pre-industrialisation”, “homely”, “earthy”, et cetera. In “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, the modal progressions signify and support the themes of exoticism and escapism (see Chapter 5.3.1).

The modal progressions in “Meadows of Heaven” suggest “old” or “past” through their connections with traditional music as “music of the past” or “sound of the past”. Examples of traditional Irish Celtic songs with modal chord progressions are:

- “My Lagan Love” (traditional, as performed by Mary Black): features I - ♮VII - I;
- “Waterbound” (traditional): i - III - ♮VII - VI - ♮VII - III - ♮VII - i in the verses; and

- “School Days Over” (traditional, as performed by Finbar Furey): features min v-i in the verses.

The re-creation and re-appropriation of a symbolic cultural artefact (the modal progressions) in “Meadows of Heaven’s” soundscape allows the receiver to metonymically experience the past. In this way, similar to a viewer’s response to seeing popular iconography (Pickering & Keightley 2006:926), the modal progressions stimulate a nostalgic response in the receiver.

### 7.3.3 The minor key

“Meadows of Heaven” is written in a minor key (G minor with a key change to B-flat minor), but the song’s lyrics and the overall atmosphere do not convey “sadness”, “heartbreak”, “suffering”, et cetera. Besides the overt nostalgic tone of the song’s lyrics, its soundscape has a perceived nostalgic, rather than “tragic” or “sad” tone. Research on music and nostalgia between 2000 and 2010 suggests that music evokes nostalgia in individuals based on how they formed associations between certain childhood events and certain types of music (see Lahdelma & Eerola 2015:246), but Imre Lahdelma and Tuomas Eerola indicate that nostalgia and longing is not only evoked by certain music, but that certain music or musical structures may in fact convey nostalgia (Lahdelma & Eerola 2015:246).

In this regard, Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida ascribe the link between minor sonorities and sadness, nostalgia, et cetera, to 19<sup>th</sup> century tonal practices in central Europe:

[T]he nineteenth-century Central European tonal system put minor modes de facto into the cultural position of archaisms. Ousted by the then ‘more modern’ major key, minor could acquire general connotations of oldness and the past and [...] lead associations [...] into nostalgia, quietude and sadness (Tagg & Clarida 2003:313).

Tagg argues that a chord progression is a structure or gesture with semiotic properties ([2012] 2013:231); in other words, chord progressions are also *musemes*. If combined, “larger” structures such as chord progressions which are single gestures, it should follow that Tagg’s idea of *musemes* could also encompass other sonic aspects of

music such as key. In following Tagg's ([2012] 2013:231) argument, the minor key or minor sonorities (Tagg & Clarida 2003) are *musemes*.

The ambiguous tonal centres, the Irish Celtic instruments and the lack of geographical specificity in the lyrics give the protagonist's home a utopian dimension and the song becomes a vehicle for social commentary and critique. Both "Meadows of Heaven" and "Turn Loose the Mermaids" are a type of "social intervention". Unlike Tolkien's work, Nightwish's output is not generally interpreted to have political undertones, but certain recurring themes can definitely be read as a critique of the current capitalist world. These themes are imagination, fantasy, a return to the "root", a return to nature, family, friends, living a simpler life, et cetera.

Holopainen is especially inspired by some of the principles in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and he particularly espouses the ideas of "simplifying" one's life and living closer to nature (Nayef 2013). Another song that underlines the importance of these principles is "The Crow, the Owl and the Dove" (*Imaginaerum*), a song written in response to a line from Thoreau's *Walden*, namely "[r]ather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth" (Nayef 2013). As Holopainen is the main songwriter and sole lyricist of the band, his personal philosophies influence and shape the Nightwish world (or mythology) in terms of the songs' lyrics or soundscapes, ultimately becoming the philosophies and messages of Nightwish.

What is interesting about the idea of fantasy, in especially Nightwish's second phase output, is *how* fantasy or fantasy elements are represented in the soundscapes of songs which, in turn, may be a possible point of critique. Songs with strong fantasy themes or references and especially songs that represent imagination and escapism, tend to include traditional instruments such as the bodhrán, uilleann pipes, low whistles, sona, et cetera. These instruments are intimately associated with particular musical and cultural traditions with unique complexities and contexts.

The band uses traditional instruments in songs such as "Turn Loose the Mermaids", "The Islander" and "Arabesque" to signify a shift from reality or a shift in time to an "elsewhere" which is very effective, as the receiver immediately infers that "something has changed", "I am somewhere else now" or "this is fantasy". On the other hand, the appropriation of the music traditions that these instruments are "borrowed" from

perpetuates the Romantic notion of exoticism, which in turn, may result in the unintentional “othering” of music cultures from outside Western Europe.

## **7.4 The heavenly**

The song contains references to heaven or the heavenly in the form of the song’s title and the Refrains which consist of a repetition of the song’s title: “Meadows of Heaven”. Besides these obvious references, the song’s soundscape connotes “heaven” or “the heavenly” in various ways; for example, through specific instruments and the gospel choir.

### **7.4.1 Instruments**

A number of instruments signify the heavenly or holy in the song. These instruments are the harp, tubular bells, bell tree and the Glockenspiel.

#### 7.4.1.1 The harp

The harp features in large parts of “Meadows of Heaven”. The instrument has connotations with the heavenly, including the sounds of heaven (for example, in Revelation 5:8, 14:2 and 15:2) and worship (for example, in the Psalms of David), as well as heavenly beings such as the angels with harps depicted in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century European art (Rensch 2017). In “Meadows of Heaven”, the harp’s sound adds an element of the heavenly to the song’s soundscape through connotative association. In this way, the song’s soundscape underlines and emphasises the song’s title and Refrain lyrics, adding a heavenly quality to the sounds, thus paying homage to the protagonist’s “acre of heaven”.

Besides the heavenly, the harp (in image or sound), also has connections with the following:

- Healing and care: Harp music is used in bedside vigils as part of therapy for dying or terminally ill patients (Ganzini, Rakoski, Cohn & Mularski 2015) and playing a harp is associated with healing in the Bible, specifically in the Book of Samuel.

- Irish mythology, the harp as a state symbol and the marketable image of Ireland: Harps feature in numerous Irish legends and mythology (Rolleston [1911] 2009). It is the national emblem of Ireland (officially the Republic of Ireland) and also the trademark of the internationally known Guinness beer.<sup>146</sup>
- Greek mythology: Orpheus plays his harp to convey feelings of longing, cures people's illnesses through well-ordered and proportioned harmonies, as well as charming animals and nature with his harp playing (Henry 1992:4, 28, 39, 46, 212).
- Nationalism: The image and sound of the harp is synonymous with nationalism in a few countries such as Paraguay, Ireland and Wales (Rigby interviewed in Wood 2015).

A few isolated examples of songs that feature a harp prominently are "Small Black Flowers That Grow in the Sky" (Manic Street Preachers); "Cosmic Love" (Florence & the Machine); "Like Someone in Love" (Björk); "No Light, No Light" (Florence & the Machine); and "Veles' Scrolls" (Nokturnal Mortum). The harp connotes "love", "angelic", "fairytale", "magical" and "fantastical" in Björk's "Like Someone in Love" and "the cosmos", "love" and "magic" in "Cosmic Love" by Florence & the Machine.

The lyrics of "Small Black Flowers That Grow in the Sky" paint a grim picture of life in the industrialised world and the harp sound's connotations with the "magical" and "fantastical" provide a stark, ironic contrast to the lyrics from the very beginning of the song:<sup>147</sup>

You have your very own number  
 They dress your cage in its nature  
 Once you roared now you just grunt lame  
 Pace around pathetic pound games

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<sup>146</sup> The Irish government made attempts to register the harp as a "state symbol under international trademark law" (Humphreys 2013).

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzR3khSdOJI>

Manic Street Preachers is a Welsh band and the harp in the grim song's soundscape may also connote "Wales", and subsequently life in the "new", industrialised Wales.

The harp provides a colourful effect at key points in black metal band Nokturnal Mortem's song "Veles' Scrolls".<sup>148</sup> I cannot provide a conclusive discussion on the harp's connotations in the song as I am unable to find or clearly hear the lyrics in order to transcribe them. However, since the band's lyrics in general, make references to folklore and pagan themes, the harp may connote an "earlier" time before globalisation, industrialisation and Christianity in previously pagan lands or it may connote "magic", which in turn, may connote Veles. Veles is the Slavic god of the underworld (Hrobat Virloget 2015:158), war and cattle (Kropej 2012:34), as well as music, art and poetry (Tomezzoli & Cudinov 2003).

One of the examples I mentioned here connotes the heavenly. In Florence & the Machine's "No Light, No Light", the harp features at key points (mostly arpeggios or glissandi) in the song as a colour or sound effect, but shares the soundscape with a pipe organ during the song's introduction section.<sup>149</sup> The song also features a boys' choir and parts of the music video are shot inside a cathedral. It is not only the visual images of the song that have connotations with the heavenly, but also the song's soundscape through the organ and boys' choir.

#### 7.4.1.2 Tubular bells, bell tree, and the Glockenspiel

The tubular bells sound in the Violin Solo, at the end of Refrain (1), in the Pipes/Low Whistle Solo section and in Verse (3). The bells' metallic sound connotes the ringing of church or cathedral bells which, by extension, imply "heaven" and "holy". The bell tree at the ends of Refrains (1) and (2) respectively, emulates the sound of bells, but may also connote the magical and fantastical, speaking to the idea of the protagonist's childhood home as a place of "wonder" and "hidden treasures", as mentioned in the song's lyrics.

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<sup>148</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM7YBc8rnzQ>

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGh-4jQZRcc>

The Glockenspiel “replaces” the tubular bells in Refrain (2, timecode 2’16.2”-2’47.8”) and the Bridge section to suggest the heavenly and in this way, support Refrain (2)’s lyrics: “Meadows of heaven”. In the Bridge, the (barely audible) Glockenspiel may also connote childhood as it is an instrument associated with childhood (music box, child’s mobile or mimic the sound of a child’s xylophone). Its placing in the Bridge section complements the lyrics that describe settings with a wooden swing and a sandbox – objects associated with children’s games.

#### 7.4.2 The gospel choir

The gospel choir, the second adult choir as titled in the score, plays an integral role in the soundscape of Refrain (2), Refrain (3) and the three Outros. The gospel choir emphasises the word “heaven” in these sections and establishes a link with the heavenly through the lyrics the voices sing – the single word “heaven”. Chords and passing notes or other simple embellishing notes on the vowels “ah” or “ooh” almost always follow the gospel choir’s homorhythmic delivery of the word “heaven”. The vowel sound patterns in the soprano line reach higher in pitch from Refrain (2), Refrain (3) to Outro (1).

The rising soprano lines help to create the heightened intensity and higher level of ecstasy with every repetition of the Refrain material from Refrain (2) and onwards. The rising line musically depicts “rising to the heavens” or “getting closer to heaven”; in this way setting the escalating, ecstatic atmosphere in motion that starts building in Outro (1) when the soloists improvise and culminates in the Ending. The rising soprano (melody) lines in the sections concerned look as follows:



**Figure 7.8: The rising soprano lines in Refrain (2), (3) and Outro (1)**

The gospel choir’s singing style and overall sound differs from that of the other adult choir in the song, in the sense that the adult choir’s sound is more “classical”, while the gospel choir exhibits a higher degree of belting, more reminiscent of the sound of gospel choirs; for example, Kirk Franklin & the Family; The Georgia Mass Choir; or

Howard University's Howard Gospel Choir. However, when the gospel choir's singing style is compared to that of (traditional) gospel music, it is apparent that this choir is neither singing in a traditional black nor white gospel style. Based on the Nightwish song's context, lyrics and the gospel choir's singing style, it is safe to argue that "Meadows of Heaven" is not meant to function as a type of worship song in a Christian context. Here, the gospel choir element is fully incorporated into the pop-rock style of the song.

Other examples of songs that have a choir with a sound suggestive of a gospel choir are "Sacrilege" (Yeah Yeah Yeahs); "There She Goes, My Beautiful World" (Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds); "O Children" (Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds); "I Believe I Can Fly" (R. Kelly); "Have a Little Faith in Me" (Joe Cocker); and "Like a Prayer" (Madonna).

In three of the examples, there are connotations with the heavenly through the addition of a gospel-sounding choir. These songs are:

- "Have a Little Faith in Me" (Joe Cocker): The gospel choir in this love song connotes "church", "faith" (supporting the lyrics and song title) and by extension, the heavenly.<sup>150</sup>
- "O Children" (Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds): The choir sings in the refrains on the words "O children, lift up your voice, rejoice" and later a slightly adapted line from John 9:25: "I once was blind, but now I see", a line which also features in the well-known song "Amazing Grace".<sup>151</sup>
- "Like a Prayer" (Madonna): The song's official music video has clear, albeit subversive, references to the church and Christianity.<sup>152</sup> The video shows burning crosses and Madonna singing large portions of the song inside a church that looks similar to the style of churches found in the American south. A choir wearing robes sings in the church, immediately suggesting a black gospel choir.

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<sup>150</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zv2R2B-jbvo>

<sup>151</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQL5zdEy-3k>

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79fzeNUqQbQ>



The song has overt sexual undertones, while the song title and elements of the music video show or connote “church”, “worship”, “Christianity” and “heavenly”.

The choirs sing in a style that connote black gospel, but the cultural associations of black gospel are stripped in these examples. “O Children” by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds may be about the elimination of the Jews during the Second World War, based on the song’s lyrics but the song could also be about slavery.

Historically, black gospel served as a type of coping strategy for black Americans living in white-dominated, oppressive societies (Moore 2002:7). Black gospel expresses the congregation’s communal response to and expressions of hopelessness in the face of reality, as well as the hopefulness inspired by thoughts about the afterlife (Moore 2002:53). Black gospel is intimately associated with Christian worship where the songs form part of religious services.

The appropriation and commodification of black gospel (as a part of African American traditional music) may be attributed to the idea that gospel music is seen as an *American* product (McDonald 2001:163), where gospel music is usurped into a broad framework, stripping it of its intimate associations with culture-specific religious practices. In this way, other music traditions are “allowed” to borrow from or appropriate black gospel (McDonald 2001:163) as Nightwish’s “Meadows of Heaven” and the popular music examples I provided previously in this section 7.4.2 show. In terms of Nightwish’s output, the gospel choir in “Meadows of Heaven” is a stereotypical appropriation of musical material from other styles or genres (like the Morricone-influenced Spaghetti Western section in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” as well as the Elfman-esque soundscape of “Scaretale” and “White Lands of Empathica” from “The Poet and the Pendulum”) or music traditions (like the neotraditional Irish Celtic soundscape in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”). These stereotypical appropriations (as part of the band and Holopainen’s compositional approach) seem to be fairly common in the band’s second phase songs.

Even though the gospel choir sections in “Meadows of Heaven” do not represent specific religious or cultural practices, this choir’s sound influences the soundscapes of the relevant sections as well as the construction of meaning in these sections. The gospel choir adds a certain measure of sanctity to the song, ultimately linking the

choir's presence and sound to the employment of heavenly connotations in the song in its entirety. The song is a tribute to the protagonist's childhood home, the surrounding landscape, family, wonderment, balance and innocence. At closer inspection it becomes clear that "Meadows of Heaven" is not simply a paean of praise to the beauty of nature or the reliving or retelling of wonderful memories of a place that is dear to the protagonist. The song serves as a vessel through which the protagonist reminisces about and expresses experiences and feelings of awe, wonderment, balance, connectedness and well-being as the narrator relays it.

The protagonist, as narrator Olzon communicates it through the lyrics, as well as the soundscape of "Meadows of Heaven", experiences these feelings, memories and connotations as pertinent and deep-seated. The protagonist's childhood home and surroundings are elevated to a boundless, fictional realm that serves as an emotional sanctuary, a place of healing, contentment, possibilities, dreams and overall well-being. In this song, the soundscape redefines the protagonist's childhood home as a place the greatness of which lies beyond physical and tangible beauty: it is profound and these experiences are "holy".

The choir's sound also connotes "countryside", "fields", et cetera, and also to an extent the idea of the "downhome". The term "downhome" refers to the root, to the place "where it all start at" (Jo Jo Williams interviewed in Titon 2002:18).<sup>153</sup> This connection is especially significant in "Meadows of Heaven" which represents a symbolic return to "where it started" for the protagonist.

Furthermore, the gospel choir's sound evokes images of ritual or ecstatic practices, especially in the improvisational Outros and Ending sections. In these sections, the gospel choir soloists and Olzon improvise freely over the basic three-chord structure (VI- $\flat$ VII-i of B-flat minor). At these points, there is a feeling of hopefulness in the song. Children, and by extension childhood, is associated with an implied futurity and hope (see Chapter 6.5.2); therefore, the hopefulness in these sections may be the result of "revisiting" the protagonist's childhood home and by implication, his childhood.

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<sup>153</sup> Williams refers here to the place where church music and the blues were born (Titon 2002:18).

The ambiguous tonal centre of the Introduction, Refrains, Outros and ending, the Irish Celtic instruments, the gospel choir and the lyrics all create a realm that is not geographically specific, signifying that the childhood home represented by the song's soundscape is a fiction; it is imaginary and utopian. The receiver is invited to witness the protagonist's "stroll down memory lane" so to speak, but is not merely a voyeur to the ecstatic, ritualistic experience. The absence of geographical specificity and the fantastical soundscape, despite the autobiographical nature of the song, also encourages the receiver to experience (personal) nostalgia, making the experience a shared and sharing experience.

In this way, the catharsis in the Outros and Ending is a sublime and communal experience, giving these sections a ritualistic edge. The song's music style pulls the receiver in to participate in the ritual through the slower tempo and the build-up of a complex texture, as well as the large scale participation of everyone on the hypothetical "stage" of the recording.

"Meadows of Heaven" is a type of analepsis to a fictionalised, utopian place that is imbued with the implied futurity and hope of childhood. It may be regarded as the musical equivalent of going "back to the root" in order to regain hope for the future, for moving on. The song represents newfound hope in the context of the band's history. *Dark Passion Play*, with a twist on the crucifixion of Christ, already immanent in the album's title, was conceptualised and produced in a time marked by uncertainty, immense pressure and devastation after Turunen was fired from the band in 2005 (see Chapter 2.1.1). "Meadows of Heaven", as the last song on this rather dark album, brings the feeling of hope (perhaps the so-called "perfect feeling" Holopainen refers to) in line with the band's biography: it is the last song on an album that reflects on the band's history and specifically Turunen's departure and in this regard, the song represents a hopeful future, both professionally and personally.

The song represents a "self-rediscovery" by "going back to the root", to "home" and family. It is a further portrayal of personal healing that is facilitated by familial bonds similar to those in "Mother & Father" (see Chapter 6.6). The "Mother & Father" section of "The Poet and the Pendulum" is characterised by the protagonist's transcendence of circumstances and pain. Here, the idea of "parents" (and by extension, "home"), is

the seat of this transcendence. Interestingly, the keys of both “Mother & Father” and the majority of “Meadows of Heaven” is in G minor, emphasising the connection between the idea of “home” and the key and also its tonic, G (also see section 7.2). Furthermore, “Meadows of Heaven” may be a thematic extension of “Mother & Father”, as in both songs transcendence is a direct product of the protagonist’s regained “rootedness”.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

“Meadows of Heaven” starts ambiguously in G minor and the Refrains’ keys are also ambiguous. The traditional Irish Celtic instruments in the song signal escapism and also blur the line between space and time in the song. The ambiguity of the key and the Irish Celtic instruments signify a utopian realm. In this case, the soundscape transforms the protagonist’s childhood home into a utopian realm. In this regard, nostalgia becomes a vehicle through which the protagonist (and ultimately, the band) can comment on modern society, calling for a return to nature, family, et cetera. Childhood represents hope and has an association with an implied futurity – another cliché that the band incorporates into the core of the Nightwish world and mythology. Instruments such as the harp and the gospel choir evoke heavenly connotations, adding a quality of “holiness” and spiritual depth to the song, while the receiver is invited to join in the nostalgic experience.

The soundscape of the first four lines of Verse (3) contains a cross delay of the solo violin and high piano notes, thereby creating the idea of limitless fantasy or fiction in the soundscape, while the vocal delay at the back of the soundscape draws the receiver into the fantasy and nostalgia.

## Conclusion

The exponentially increasing number of scholarly writings on metal over the last three decades reflects the ever growing academic interest in metal since the 1990s. Although ground-breaking and crucial research has been done on a wide range of topics, the musicological investigation and analysis of metal songs' sonic features are still largely neglected. My aim was to contribute to the musicological analysis of metal in general and Nightwish's output in particular.

My thesis aspired to provide a detailed musicological investigation of four of Nightwish's songs from the band's second stylistic phase (see Chapter 2.1.2), characterised by a sound palette reminiscent of film music (specifically that of Danny Elfman's scores for Tim Burton's Gothic horror fantasy films in "Scaretale" and "The Poet and the Pendulum" and Ennio Morricone's scores for Sergio Leone's *Dollars*-trilogy in "Turn Loose the Mermaid"), the more prominent role of the orchestra, Irish Celtic instruments in many songs such as "Turn Loose the Mermaids" and a children's choir from the *Imaginaerum* album onward. My study gave a unique perspective on these songs as it included detailed soundscape analyses, a detailed investigation of intertextual links to other songs and genres, and productive theoretical/philosophical frameworks.

The four songs that I analysed are from two of Nightwish's most recent studio albums, namely *Dark Passion Play* (2007) and *Imaginaerum* (2011). I chose two songs from each of these albums. These songs were "Scaretale" (*Imaginaerum*, Chapter 4); "Turn Loose the Mermaids" (*Imaginaerum*, Chapter 5); "The Poet and the Pendulum" (*Dark Passion Play*, Chapter 6); and "Meadows of Heaven" (*Dark Passion Play*, Chapter 7).

I analysed these four songs by means of Philip Tagg's commutative method, a method specifically developed for the analysis of popular music. Even though Tagg is not a metal scholar, his model provides a means by which to productively analyse Nightwish's highly intertextual and stylistically plural second phase output. His model is largely based on a system of *interobjective comparison* (Tagg [2012] 2013:229-261), where the analyst identifies structures with semiotic properties called *musemes* within the analysis object (AO). These *musemes* are compared to other musical material

within the same or similar genre called the *interobjective comparison material* (IOCM), in order to establish shared or similar *paramusical fields of connotation* (PMFCs). My application of Tagg's model was enriched by intertextual links with music from other genres such as circus music, film scores, songs from other metal subgenres, et cetera, which allowed me to give a rich and thick commentary on the construction of meaning in the selected Nightwish songs.

I also employed Allan Moore's (2012:30-31) idea of the *soundbox* to show how aural staging influences the meaning of "Turn Loose the Mermaids" and "Meadows of Heaven" respectively. I expanded the visual representation of the *soundbox* to include a "tilted" view from above to better demonstrate the sounds' placement within the textural space in terms of depth. This "tilt" in perspective also allowed me to show how in-studio sound effects affect the relevant soundscapes (see Chapter 5.2 and Chapter 7.2).

I expanded Tagg's commutative model by placing my analyses within a wider range of philosophical/theoretical discourses as each analysis was contextualised by a relevant theoretical/philosophical frame of reference. I employed two further expansions of Tagg's model in my analyses, namely the respective roles of intertextuality, and genre within my methodological framework. Tagg's method relies on intertextuality to locate *interobjective comparison material* (see Chapter 3.2.1) and in this regard, genre served as a guideline to identify appropriate comparison material. In my analyses, intertextuality played a key role in choosing *interobjective comparison material*, as well as serving an additional role as the theoretical framework of my analyses of "The Poet and the Pendulum" in Chapter 6. Although genre is a determining factor in selecting corresponding comparison material, I showed (à la Umberto Eco), how genre is a map that both guides and informs the interpretation of meaning in my analyses, especially in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 4, I identified *musemes* that connote horror such as the semitone clash and shuttle, the tritone, and the "creepy children trope". Instrument sounds such as the pipe organ and the harpsichord also suggested horror in the song through their association with vampire-themed films and songs, while chromatic runs connote circus music. I showed how Olzon and Hietala's vocal styles contribute to the overall

atmosphere and painted images of the song which underlined Nightwish's theatrical approach to and the band's flair for incorporating other musical styles and soundscapes.

The vocals' aural staging gave significant clues as to the role of the two characters where Olzon was part of the sideshow, and Hietala imposing and dangerous as the main figure in the Circus of Death. Similarly, the song's lyrics situated the characters within the Circus of Death. Furthermore, I showed how the subversive Circus of Death in "Scaretale" is an event where the song characters and receivers (audience) participate in communal laughter and degradation, in order to be rejuvenated and reborn in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of the mediaeval carnival (Bakhtin [1965] 1984) and Karen Halnon's "heavy metal carnival" (Halnon 2006).

I demonstrated in Chapter 5 how modal chord progressions and Irish Celtic instruments alluded to an "Elsewhere" in "Turn Loose the Mermaids", which in turn, signified exoticism, fantasy and a longing for a return or an escape to romanticised pre-industrial times. The song title and lyrics have clear references to fantasy. I showed how the song's Spaghetti Western C-section was built on a stereotyping of Ennio Morricone's iconic film scores for Sergio Leone's so-called *Dollars*-trilogy. The Hardanger fiddle in the song implied Norway, as well as the genre of fantasy film through its connotation with the Rohirrim in the films *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*.

I made the following observations: The different sections of the song are bound together by contrasting landscape connotations: Irish landscape; desert in the Spaghetti Western section; fjords in Norway or the fantasy-inspired landscape in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* where the Rohirrim fight valiantly. The sections are also linked by modal chord progressions throughout the song (signifying "elsewhere") and connotations with violence, in terms of the Leone-style Westerns and epic battle in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*.

"The Poet and the Pendulum" (Chapter 6) demonstrated explicit intertextual links to works of literature, as the song was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum* (as reflected in the song's title), and Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* book series. It was also evident that the song is littered with other intertextual references to

Nightwish songs, tropes (such as the Dead Boy and Ocean Soul) and themes, as well as film music and literature. Moreover, it had overt horror connotations through *musemes* such as the semitone clash, scale-like runs (which depict the swinging blade-like pendulum) and tritones, as well as violence through heavy distortion and Hietala's vocal costume. I found that the Elfman-esque accompaniment in "White Lands of Empathica" signified fantasy, but also Tim Burton's style of Gothic horror.

In Chapter 7, I explored how the minor key, modal chord progressions and Irish Celtic instruments acted as a vehicle for nostalgia in "Meadows of Heaven". Here, the protagonist's childhood home revealed a utopian dimension (as the new "truth"), through the ambiguous use of tonality, while the Irish Celtic instruments represented the falsification of the protagonist's past. The gospel choir added sanctity, a type of "perfection" to the song. Olzon's aural staging and the "landscape" that the delay on her vocals created were found to support the idea of a narrator telling a story about the protagonist's past.

In the paragraphs following, I present a synthesis of my observations by means of six main themes that I have identified in my analyses of the four selected Nightwish songs. These themes are: (1) fantasy, (2) horror, (3) violence, (4) escapism, (5) children and childhood, and (6) nature.

### 1. *Fantasy*

All four songs contain elements of fantasy, although fantasy is portrayed differently in each. "Scaretale" represents a subversive fantasy in the form of a nightmare, consisting of different nightmare scenarios in and around the Circus of Death. Here, fantasy is linked with classic horror, Gothic horror and implicit violence. The Irish Celtic instruments and lyrics of "Turn Loose the Mermaids" have overt ties with fantasy and exoticism. The last two of three layers (in terms of depth), within the textural space, represent fantasy in the Verses and Instrumental sections (see Chapter 5.2).

The Elfman-esque accompaniment in "Scaretale" and "The Poet and the Pendulum" connotes Tim Burton's style of Gothic fantasy-horror. "The Poet and the Pendulum's" genesis also has ties with Stephen King's *The Dark Towers* fantasy book series (see Chapter 6.1.1; *Interviews: Nightwish* 2009). In "Meadows of Heaven" the Irish Celtic



instruments suggest that the protagonist's retelling of his past and the description of his childhood home is a falsification – a fantasy or fiction. Here, the “less remote” L-transformation between keys connotes fantasy rather than horror or the uncanny. RP-transformations are more remote transformations than an L-transformation but may also signify the magical and fantastical (see Chapter 4.5.5).

Fantasy (and by extension, escapism), is an integral part of power metal lyrics and imagery; power metal being the subgenre that put Nightwish on the international map, while the band's popularity pushed power metal into the mainstream (see Dunn & McFadyen 2011). Even though Nightwish's second phase output is more reminiscent of film music and in some instances, folk music (such as “Turn Loose the Mermaids”) rather than power metal, the band retains fantasy elements in their lyrics, imagery and branding.

What is unique about Nightwish's expression of fantasy and escapism in general, is that the band has moved beyond only referencing fantasy characters, scenes and ideas from films, et cetera, and created their own Nightwish mythology with recurring characters and narratives. These recurring narratives create a mental anchor for Nightwish fans around the world and provide a space for these individuals to connect and to be part of a well-defined community (see Karjalainen 2016).

The band uses escapism and fantasy narratives to awaken a sense of wonder, enchantment and magic in the receiver. In this way, escapism and fantasy serve as postmodern frames of reference that aim to “re-enchant” the world as opposed to the disenchantment and de-spiritualisation that modernism brought about:

Above all, postmodernity can be seen as restoring to the world what modernity had so presumptuously taken away; as a *re-enchantment* of the world that modernity had tried hard to *dis-enchant* [...] The war against mystery and magic was for modernity the war of liberation leading to the declaration of reason's independence [...] At stake in the war was the right to initiative and authorship of action, the right to pronounce on meanings, to construe narratives. To win the stakes, to win all of them and to win them for good, the world had to be *de-spiritualized*, de-animated: denied the capacity of the subject [...] It is against

such a disenchanted world that the postmodern re-enchantment is aimed (Bauman 2003:x-xi).

Similarly, Patrick Curry regards Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (which is connoted and/or alluded to in some of Nightwish's songs) as an "anti-modernist text" that provides a fictional critique of modernity (Curry 2005:21). The importance of narrative in the text also provides an alternative to modernism (Curry 2005:21, 27).

Even though my study does not focus on fans' reactions to the songs I analysed, it could be argued speculatively that escapism within the postmodern frame of reference forms part of the appeal of Nightwish's music.

Furthermore, the band expands the ideas of the fantastical and the utopian in their lyrical and sonic material, as home, nature, family, hope and "wholeness" is just as magical as mermaids in the Nightwish world. The band "balances" the horror and violence connotations with connotations of fantasy and escapism.

## *2. Horror*

Aspects of the soundscapes of "Scaretale" and "The Poet and the Pendulum" connote horror such as the semitone clash, tritones; chromatic runs; scale-like runs; instruments such as the pipe organ and harpsichord in "Scaretale"; sound effects such as the terrifying "shattering glass" effect in "Scaretale" and the splicing sounds of the pendulum in "The Poet and the Pendulum", et cetera. These elements connote "classic" horror, but their combination with Elfman-esque accompaniment in both songs connotes Gothic horror in general, and Tim Burton's Gothic horror style in particular.

Nightwish's brand of horror connotes fantasy-horror. Third relations (appropriated clichés from contemporary supercultural screen music practice) constitute the ubiquitous means of signifying horror, the uncanny, the otherworldly or supernatural and fantasy in the selected Nightwish songs that I analysed. These relationships, designated LP-, PL-, PR- and RP-transformations according to the nomenclature of Neo-Riemannian theory in "Scaretale" and "The Poet and the Pendulum" show, among other things, the connections between chords and keys that are more remote than, for

example, the L-transformations in “Meadows of Heaven”. The more remote PL-, LP-, PR- or RP-transformations connote the uncanny, horror or the otherworldly.

The receiver hears these transformations in conjunction with other *musemes* and gestures which form *museme stacks*. These *museme stacks* together with intertextual connections, help to create a type of sonic context within a song. This notion suggests that the same *museme* may have a slightly different connotation and meaning in the context of another song and the *museme stacks* in that song. An example is the way in which Hietala’s growling vocals connote horror, the uncanny, death metal growling and the violence of horror, as well as death metal soundscapes and lyrics in “Scaretale”. Here, his vocals dominate the “circus music” soundscape in the Bridges and the Ghost Dances. In “The Poet and the Pendulum”, the sound of Hietala’s almost growling vocals, together with gestures such as the distorted electric guitar, et cetera, not only connote violence in “Scaretale”, but *is* violence in the “Poet and the Pendulum”.

Metal has pertinent links with horror, especially through subgenres such as death metal with its gory lyrics and gruesome album sleeve art work (see Chapter 4.1.2), and nu metal songs that often feature on horror film soundtracks (see Chapter 4.1.2). Nightwish communicates horror elements in their songs by means of *musemes* that are imbued with intertextual references to film scores. These *musemes* are, for example, the tritone, semitone shuttles and semitone clashes, reminiscent of classic horror film scores in “Scaretale”, as well as tremolos and high-pitched, bell-like oscillating keyboard accompaniment figures, indicative of Danny Elfman’s scores for Tim Burton’s fantasy-inspired Gothic horror style films. In this way, Nightwish establishes connotative links with fantasy-horror in their soundscapes.

### 3. Violence

“Turn Loose the Mermaids” and “The Poet and the Pendulum” represent different manifestations of violence. The Hardanger fiddle connotes violence and an epic battle scene from the fantasy film *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. The strong connection with Ennio Morricone’s scores in the song’s Spaghetti Western C-section, links to the violence associated with Sergio Leone’s iconic films, especially his *Dollars*-trilogy. The song’s lyrics do not include overt descriptions of violence or violent acts.

However, the lyrics of “The Poet and the Pendulum” describe the protagonist’s fears and torture. The soundscape is horrifying with splicing sounds indicating the moment of the protagonist’s demise. Sonic features such as Hietala’s vocal approach, guitar distortion, tremolo strings and semitone clashes connote horror but also violence. Thus, these soundscape elements do not only imply violence: here, the sounds and soundscape *are* violence.

The way in which sound *is* violence in “The Poet and the Pendulum” is similar to sound as violence in more extreme subgenres, especially black and death metal, as well as doom metal (see Phillipov 2011:151-152, 160; Bogue [2007] 2016:4, 46). Some of Nightwish’s songs (such as “The Poet and the Pendulum”), communicate violence through intertextual connotations, rather than pertinent expressions of violence against institutions, individuals and societies. The violence in “Scaretale” and “The Poet and the Pendulum” takes place within fantasy settings; fantasy being a hallmark of power metal. Nightwish’s expressions of violence within fantasy settings also separate the band’s brand of violence from the explicit way in which bands from extreme subgenres express violence in their songs.

#### *4. Escapism*

Three of the songs each depict different representations of escapism. The modal chord progressions and Irish Celtic instruments in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” represent an escape to an “elsewhere”, another time and place. In “The Poet and the Pendulum” the protagonist’s symbolic death and drowning represent an escape from torture and ultimately, represents cleansing and rebirth. The Irish Celtic instruments represent a fictionalisation of the protagonist’s past in “Meadows of Heaven” – this time not representing an escape to an “Elsewhere” but rather, to a specific place and time that is converted to a utopian place. In this way, the song represents not only a longing for and escape to the past but also a roadmap for emotional recovery and hope for the future, both personally and professionally.

The four selected Nightwish’s songs’ soundscapes afford the receiver the opportunity to escape to a fantasy setting (albeit subversive) in “Scaretale”, an “Elsewhere” (or a series of “Elsewheres”) in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, escapism through suffering and ultimate transcendence in “The Poet and the Pendulum”, as well as a nostalgic escape

to the past in order to regain strength to face the present and future. Recurring escapist narratives (even though nuanced in different ways in the four songs), serve as a key or “portal” by which the band’s fans and even first-time receivers can access the Nightwish world and mythology.

The notions of escapism and fantasy are central in the Nightwish world and mythology. The band’s take on escapism does not simply offer a means to merely escape the responsibilities of reality (see, for example, Frith 2007:218), but rather proposes a way of connecting with other people and to collectively experience, imagine, express and heal. As I have pointed out previously, the band’s second phase output communicates very specific recurring escapist and fantasy narratives to the receiver. The *importance* of narrative and specifically these recurring narratives as central to the Nightwish world and mythology (and as way of re-enchantment within the broader frame of postmodernism; see Bauman 2003:x-xi) is unique to Nightwish’s brand of fantasy and escapism.

These recurring narratives, together with recurring sonic cues and the imbued feeling of community as part of the Nightwish world, are deciding factors in the listening experience that the band offers its receivers.

##### *5. Children and childhood*

Children and childhood play key roles in the selected Nightwish songs. In “Scaretale” the children’s choir represents a well-known trope in horror, namely the “creepy children singing” trope. The boy sopranos’ singing and Tom Williams’s recitations in “The Poet and the Pendulum” are also linked to this trope; in both the songs the children express things “that innocence cannot know” (Link 2010:53), thus deepening the level of horror that the receiver has already experienced.

Children sing or speak in the first and third person in some of the songs. The first person narrator in “The Pacific” (whether spoken or sung) in “The Poet and the Pendulum” has an autobiographical role, as the child (the so-called “Dead Boy”) is intimately associated with Tuomas Holopainen. The Dead Boy character, which appears in a plethora of Nightwish’s songs, takes on the form of a trope and features fittingly in three of the selected songs I analysed, namely “Scaretale”, “Turn Loose the

Mermaids” and “The Poet and the Pendulum”. Akin to the Ocean Soul trope, this trope also has autobiographical roots, again making it closely associable with Tuomas Holopainen.

In two instances in “The Poet and the Pendulum”, children speak or sing in the third person. These are Guy Elliot’s solo in “White Lands of Empathica” and Tom Williams’s at the end of “Dark Passion Play”. In both these sections, the protagonist “sees” and narrates his own death.

In “Turn Loose the Mermaids” the child appears in an unexpected, unorthodox location (a graveyard); this said, the child represents hope, imagination and a belief in magic. Children and childhood represent hope, creativity and an inherent futurity in “Meadows of Heaven”.

The concept of ‘children and childhood’ is thematically linked with escapism, as it is through an escape to childhood that the protagonist (and by extension the receiver), can perhaps access forgotten dreams, qualities and goals that may have a definitive influence on the individual’s present and future.

## 6. Nature

“Turn Loose the Mermaids” and “Meadows of Heaven” express Tuomas Holopainen’s – and by extension the band’s – longing to return to nature, the root, support systems and a simpler way of living. This longing may be regarded as a type of “social intervention” and a social critique against modern capitalist society. The type of social critique that the band offers is connoted intertextually and is not explicit, like the social commentary in songs such as American band Queensryche’s “Empire” or American band Cattle Decapitation’s “Veal and the Cult of Torture”. Holopainen states that the band’s songs are not political (see Holopainen interviewed in *Tuomas Holopainen talks to Allie Jorgen and LA Metal Media* 2015) but recurring references to themes such as a return to nature, family, rootedness and a simpler way of life do imply (albeit connotatively), forms of social critique.

The ocean or water plays a central role in “Turn Loose the Mermaids” as a source of magic and fantasy, as well as cleansing and healing in “The Poet and the Pendulum”.

In “Meadows of Heaven”, it is a means by which to access childhood memories and hope through nostalgia and escapism (“sailing the waves of past”). The ocean features in numerous Nightwish songs and is connected to the so-called Ocean Soul trope. The Ocean Soul trope features or is suggested in “Turn Loose the Mermaids”, “The Poet and the Pendulum” and “Meadows of Heaven”. This trope has a very strong autobiographical link, as the song’s protagonist is closely associable with Nightwish songwriter Tuomas Holopainen.

Some of the band’s songs (such as “Meadows of Heaven”), also closely connect nature with the idea of home. Home, in turn, is allied with childhood, hope, caring, family, healing and transcendence. It is also closely associated with rootedness, awe, the magical, fantasy and escapism.

\* \* \*

Finally, it may be observed that my study offers an analytical view of how Nightwish communicates with their audience. I provided a detailed description of the band’s sonic (or musical) communication within the symphonic metal genre, which may serve as an example for a wide variety of future musicological studies of metal. My study is the first that has relied on a detailed application of Tagg’s analytical model in the analysis of metal songs. My study provides a means by which scholars can musicologically investigate the sonic features of metal songs with either large or small settings. The method demonstrated here may add depth to the analysis of performances from any metal subgenre, as a myriad of gestures can be investigated in this way.

Possible future research on Nightwish’s output could include a musicological investigation of *Imaginaerum*’s songs in terms of the band’s film with the same title or the film’s score by Petri Alanko. Expert knowledge in sound engineering may also prove valuable for further investigations of Nightwish’s soundscapes as aural staging and sound effects play an integral part in the reception and construction of meaning in their songs.

My study served as an example of the type of insights that might emerge from the use of Tagg’s model, especially how the intertextual realm in popular culture establishes meaning. Furthermore, Tagg’s semiotic approach could uncover details regarding the

way in which the emitters (bands, musicians) communicate certain messages and meanings to the receivers (audience).



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<sup>154</sup> Nightwish's *Century Child* album was initially released in 2002.