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**Literature and heavy metal music:  
a comparative analysis of literary motifs  
in lyrics of the heavy metal band  
Iron Maiden and a practical guide  
for lyricists implementing literary motifs**

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## Introduction

Heavy metal music – encompassing such subgenres as, for instance, black, dark, death, doom, thrash, and power metal, with its thunderous riffs, pounding drums, and visceral vocals – often evokes images of darkness, evil, crime, rebellion, and aggression, focusing lyrically on “dark and depressing subject matter to an extent hitherto unprecedented in any form of pop music” (Hatch, Millward, 1987, p. 167). However, beneath its loud and ‘evil-like’ exterior lies a rich tapestry of literary influences and themes. The lyrics of heavy metal bands frequently draw inspiration from various literary texts, ranging from classical literature to mythology, folklore, and even modern and postmodern literature. This symbiotic relationship between literary works and heavy metal lyrics – confirming Edward Said’s statement that any type of writing “is not free, nor is it performed uniquely by a sovereign writer who writes more or less as he or she pleases. Writing belongs to a system of utterances that has all sorts of affiliative, often constricting relationships with the world of nations” (2004, p. 24) and other branches of culture and art – not only enriches the music per se but also provides the listeners with a deeper understanding of both art forms. Therefore, it is important to perceive and appreciate this unique interconnectedness between literary texts and lyrics of the songs, as asserted by Nicholas Cook who claims that “music has an extraordinary power of ideological influence. (...) we must learn to understand the importance of music as an essential part of culture, society and ourselves” (1998, p. 138).

Heavy metal bands have long been fascinated by themes of mythology, fantasy, and the supernatural. From Black Sabbath’s exploration of occult themes to Iron Maiden’s epic tales of historical events, the genre has frequently and willingly incorporated elements of classical literature and folklore. Moreover, heavy metal lyrics often delve into existential questions, societal issues, and psychological themes reminiscent of literary works. Metal bands like Metallica and Megadeth, known for their introspective lyrics, very often explore themes of alienation, justice, human nature, and war, drawing parallels to literary classics such as George Orwell’s *1984*, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* or Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

One of the most intriguing aspects of heavy metal lyrics is their use of symbolism and imagery. Like poetry, lyrics often employ vivid imagery and metaphorical language to convey complex emotions and ideas. For instance, bands like Opeth and Tool are renowned for their lyrical depth and intricate storytelling, drawing the listeners into worlds of darkness, despair, and even redemption. Furthermore, heavy metal’s penchant for dark and Gothic themes echoes the works of literary giants such as Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft. At its core, heavy metal music is a form of artistic expression that expresses the full spectrum of human emotions and experiences. From wrath and despair to love and longing, metal lyrics often serve – reminiscent of ancient tragedies – as a cathartic outlet for both the artists and the listeners alike; even bands that belong to the subgenres of black, dark, and death metal with their lyrics “permeated with notions of evil, darkness, destruction, death, attack on Christianity, Satanism as well as a plethora of forms of perversion and highly transgressive themes” (Giza, 2022, p. 66) as asserted in one of my articles, can function as a catalyst of negative and often

destructive emotions and tendencies. Therefore, by means of their exploration of universal themes, both positive and negative ones, heavy metal bands can forge a deep emotional connection with their audience, much like the protagonists of classical literature.

The diversity of literary influences in heavy metal lyrics reflects a rapid adaptability over time of the subgenres of this form of musical expression. While early metal bands drew inspiration from mythology and folklore, modern bands tend to explore a much wider range of literary genres and styles such as, for instance, science fiction, dystopian literature or even apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction.

In the huge realm of music, the ‘marriage’ between literature and an intricate process of songwriting is a fascinating phenomenon that transcends genres and epochs. In his book entitled *Na stykach iskrzy: literackie konteksty rocka* S. Kuźnicki affirms that “there is no need to convince anyone that such literature is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for creators of rock and pop music” (2023, p. 17)<sup>1</sup>, and while confirming his theory he included a catalogue of artists and their albums whose lyrics are based upon literary content (one of the bands that appears in this list is Iron Maiden with the 1986 album “Somewhere in Time”). It is also my own conviction that the lyrics of the iconic heavy metal British band Iron Maiden confirm this remarkable intertextuality of literature and music. Renowned for their electrifying melodies, powerful vocals, and elaborate compositions, Iron Maiden has crafted a rich tapestry of songs that draw inspiration from a myriad of literary sources, ranging from classical literature to historical events, making the band “the most literate or literary of heavy metal bands [whose] lyrics and concepts continue to draw enthusiastically upon fantastic literature” (McParland, 2018, p. 104).

Steve Pilkington asserts that “the history of Iron Maiden is inextricably bound up with founder member and bassist Steve Harris. A native of Leytonstone, in East London, Harris formed the very first incarnation on Christmas Day 1975, having previously cut his teeth in bands called Gypsy’s Kiss and Smiler. He was 19 at the time” (2020, p. 5). Since the inception of the band, the Iron Maiden musicians have been celebrated for their ability to weave complex narratives and thought-provoking themes into their music. Led by the bassist and primary songwriter Stephen Percy Harris (known as Steve Harris, born on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1956), the band has consistently delved into diverse literary landscapes, transforming literary motifs and characters into epic anthems that resonate with fans around the world.

As for their style of playing heavy metal music at the beginning of their career, Christie asserts that the band “skilfully combined the sumptuous influences of Judas Priest music with the downbeat energy generated by punk rock – and it was a deadly and impressive combination” (2004, p. 59). He continues his train of thought by claiming that “Iron Maiden played ten times more notes than anyone else, and their dazzling compositional approach raised the artistic standard of heavy metal for decades” (p. 59), leaving an indelible mark on the music industry. Moreover, as asserted by Martin Popoff, “despite the instant smash impact of Iron Maiden’s self-titled debut, no one could say this band hadn’t paid their dues. With roots all the way back to 1975, Steve Harris and a rotating cast were creating a new wave of British heavy metal long before anybody thought to stick capital letters on that term” (2018, p. 8).

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<sup>1</sup> The English translation of this quote is done by Jarosław Giza.

Iron Maiden was formed in Leyton, East London, by the bassist Steve Harris, who remains the driving force and primary songwriter of the band to this day. Harris had a vision of creating a band that would combine the raw energy of punk with the musical complexity of progressive rock, as argued by David V. Moskowitz in the following affirmation: “what Harris and Murray were critical of was that the music [punk] lacked the technical sophistication of more progressive rock groups from the early 1970s, particularly bands such as Jethro Tull” (2015, p. 314). Joined by guitarists Dave Murray, and Dennis Stratton, drummer Clive Burr, and vocalist Paul Di'Anno, Iron Maiden began to carve out their sound in the gritty London music scene of the late 1970s. In 1980, Iron Maiden released their debut album, “Iron Maiden,” which showcased their distinctive blend of aggressive guitar riffs, melodic harmonies, and fantasy-inspired lyrics. The album received critical acclaim and laid the foundation for the band’s future success. Iron Maiden’s sophomore album, “Killers” (1981), further solidified their reputation as a force to be reckoned with in the heavy metal genre. However, it was their third studio album, “The Number of the Beast” released in 1982 that propelled them to an international stardom. Featuring iconic songs such as “The Number of the Beast” and “Run to the Hills,” the album topped the charts in numerous countries and established Iron Maiden as one of the leading bands of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM). Dave Artwood, while analysing Iron Maiden’s innovative musical style, describes it in such a manner: “a deeply melodic, dextrous sense of musicianship wedded to aggressive riffs straight from the Sabbath early catalogue, Iron Maiden’s early work was a blast of fresh air in the dank, stagnant atmosphere of late-70s metal, itself also under threat from the nascent punk movement” (2012, p. 4).

Throughout the 1980s, Iron Maiden released a string of critically acclaimed albums, including “Piece of Mind” (1983), “Powerslave” (1984), and “Somewhere in Time” (1986). These albums testify to the band’s gigantic evolution as musicians and songwriters who were eagerly incorporating intricate arrangements while maintaining their signature sound. In 1981, the vocalist Paul Di'Anno was replaced by Bruce Dickinson, whose powerful operatic voice and dynamic stage presence brought a new dimension to Iron Maiden’s music. With Dickinson at the helm, Iron Maiden reached new heights of success, releasing masterpieces such as “Seventh Son of a Seventh Son” (1988) and “Fear of the Dark” (1992), with the title song being played during every concert. Despite undergoing several line-up changes over the years, with guitarists Adrian Smith and Janick Gers joining the band and Bruce Dickinson’s coming back in 1999 (after six years of absence), Iron Maiden continued to release critically acclaimed albums (“Brave New World” (2000), “Dance of Death” (2003), “A Matter of Life and Death” (2006), “The Final Frontier” (2010), “The Book of Souls” (2015), and “Senjutsu” (2021)) and tour relentlessly, solidifying their reputation as one of the greatest live acts in the world.

One of the most distinctive features of Iron Maiden’s songwriting process is their penchant for drawing inspiration from a various subgenres of literature. Moskowitz acknowledges that apart from incorporating historical facts into the lyrical content of their songs, Iron Maiden “were also motivated by pieces of literature, the occult (a very popular topic in heavy metal of the early 1970s), and mythology in their lyrics, and always delivered the text in a way that captured the audience’s attention” (2015, p. 321). The band’s extensive discography (up till 2024, 17 studio albums) is replete

with references to literary masterpieces, with themes ranging from dystopian nightmares to ancient myths and legends. For instance, the epic song entitled “Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” based on Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem entitled “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” vividly captures the haunting tale of the sailor’s journey through the treacherous waters of the Antarctic, perceived as a form of punishment for shooting an albatross. Similarly, Iron Maiden’s exploration of dystopian themes and societal critique can be traced back to George Orwell’s seminal novel, *1984*. Songs such as “2 Minutes to Midnight” and “The Prisoner” offer a chilling commentary on the perils of political oppression and nuclear brinkmanship, echoing Orwell’s warnings of totalitarianism and state control. Furthermore, despite the band’s fascination with literature, Iron Maiden has been engrossed with historical events and historical figures as well, and it is apparent in songs such as “Alexander the Great” and “The Trooper,” which immortalize the exploits of legendary warriors and leaders throughout history. Drawing from historical narratives and folklore, Iron Maiden has been crafting vivid portraits of courage, heroism, and tragedy, inviting the listeners to embark on a journey through the annals of time.

Beyond their literary influences, Iron Maiden’s lyrics also reflect a deep engagement with philosophical and existential themes and songs such as “Hallowed Be Thy Name” and “The Number of the Beast” address issues of mortality, spirituality, evil, and the human condition, inviting the listeners to ponder on the mysteries of life, death, and diverse spiritual matters. Moreover, Iron Maiden’s lyrical prowess is complemented by their virtuosic musicianship and electrifying stage presence, creating a multisensory experience that captivates the audiences across generations. From the soaring vocals of Bruce Dickinson to the intricate guitar harmonies of Adrian Smith, Dave Murray and Janick Gers, the galloping bass of Steve Harris, and a refined drumming by Nicko McBrain, Iron Maiden’s music transcends the boundaries of heavy metal, inviting the listeners on an inspirational journey through sound and storytelling.

In essence, Iron Maiden’s symbiotic relationship with literary texts confirms the enduring power of music as a vehicle for storytelling and cultural expression. By drawing inspiration from the annals of literature and history, the band has been constructing a body of musical work that exceeds the confines of genre, encouraging the listeners to explore the depths of human experience and imagination. As fans continue to flock to Iron Maiden’s epic concerts and immerse themselves in the content of the band’s iconic albums, one thing remains absolutely obvious: the symbiosis between literary texts and heavy metal music is a testament to the permanent power of storytelling in all its myriad forms. Through their music, Iron Maiden has not only enriched the heavy metal genre but also ignited a passion for literature that continues to inspire the listeners around the globe.

Accordingly, believing in the intertextuality and intermediality, the conception of the academic project entitled “Literature and heavy metal music: A comparative analysis of literary motifs in lyrics of the heavy metal band Iron Maiden and a practical guide for lyricists implementing literary motifs” arose in our minds (mine and my students’: Kacper Horowski, Tomasz Kiwak, Adrian Sajewicz, Aleksandra Sajewicz, and Maksymilian Totoś, avid listeners of heavy metal music, the admirers of literature, and the students of the Faculty of Humanities at University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz). The most important objective of this team academic endeavour (in the form of



application research in the field of literary studies) is an in-depth analysis of the correlation between the lyrics of the heavy metal band Iron Maiden and the literary works on the basis of which the lyrics of the songs have been created. An equally important aim of the research work is to design – in addition to the analytical and descriptive part – a practical guide for songwriters who want to use literary motifs in their work. This guidebook will also serve as a model and a source of inspiration for students of English Philology at the Faculty of Humanities at University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz while creating the application parts of their diploma theses.

In conclusion, Iron Maiden's influence extends far beyond the realm of heavy metal music. With their distinctive sound, elaborate stage productions, and iconic imagery they have not only inspired countless bands and artists across multiple genres, they have also encouraged their listeners to immerse themselves in the immense ocean of literature from which the band has been fishing out a plethora of literary content in order to transform it into the intricate and sophisticated masterpieces of heavy metal music. The symbiosis of literary texts and heavy metal lyrics is, therefore, a testament to the complexity of both art forms. Through their exploration of mythology, symbolism, literary motifs and a plethora of human experiences and emotions, heavy metal bands create music that transcends mere entertainment, offering their listeners a powerful insight into the human psyche and the world of literature, as well. As the subgenres continue to evolve, so will their relationship with literature, ensuring that the legacy of heavy metal music remains intertwined with the timeless themes of classical literature for generations to come.

## **An overview of subgenres of heavy metal appreciated by lyricists implementing literary content into their metal music lyrics** (Jarosław Giza<sup>1</sup>)

### **Subgenres of heavy metal**

Heavy metal music is renowned for its intense energy, powerful riffs, and evocative lyrics. Combining the raw power of metal with the depth of literary themes can create a unique and captivating musical experience. In this part of the book we wish to present an overview of subgenres of heavy metal music and subgenres of literature that seem to be especially admired and valued by lyricists who construct heavy metal lyrics based upon literary output. Our objective has been partly stimulated by both the assertion made by Andrew L. Cope who claims in the Introduction to the book entitled *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music* that “for many years popular music studies has been dominated by texts which fail to address the unique combination of musical sounds, timbres and structures that distinguishes heavy metal from hard rock” (2010, xi) and the thought expressed by Daniel Ekeroth in his *Swedish Death Metal* that “the main problem in dealing with a teenage-driven underground phenomenon like death metal is the unreliable sources. The few existing books on extreme metal generally just scratch the surface, making vague approximations” (2009, p. 1). Therefore, the given work can be regarded as one of the sources of information upon heavy metal music as a significant section of culture and art. Moreover, at the end of this section we are going to present a few clues, in the form of a guidebook directed towards aspiring lyricists, helping them craft compelling heavy metal lyrics inspired by literature. We are sure that by blending immense realms of music and literature, one can create songs that can resonate with depth, emotion, and intensity.

Before delving into the intricate process of writing heavy metal lyrics, it is crucial to understand the essence of heavy metal music, the sort of musical expression characterized by an aggressive sound, distorted guitar riffs, and often dark, sinister and intense themes, the type of music that “adopted not only the musical virtuosity of British blues but also maintained the occult themes that had been carried over from American blues” (Bayer, 2016, p. 7). It is a musical genre that allows for emotional expression and exploration of profound subjects.

Heavy metal music emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, primarily in the United Kingdom, influenced by elements of blues rock, psychedelic rock, and hard rock. As asserted by Deena Weinstein, “in the 1970s the heavy metal subculture was, for the most part, geographically restricted. It originated in Britain, in part because it was British bands that pioneered many features of the genre. In addition, during the last half of the twentieth century, British youth have been more involved in distinctive subcultures than the youth of other countries” (2000, p. 117). Over time, heavy metal has evolved into numerous subgenres, each with its own distinct sound and characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz.

But although, as argued by Keith Kahn-Harris, “metal has fragmented and does not generally attract the notoriety and controversy that it once did, metal remains an important and recognizable form of popular music” (2007, p. 2). Below there are some significant elements that define heavy metal music:

- Instrumentation: heavy metal is known for its use of heavily distorted electric guitars, powerful drumming, and often intricate bass lines. The guitar riffs in heavy metal music are typically fast-paced and aggressive, often featuring techniques such as palm muting, power chords, and guitar solos. Double bass drumming is common in many subgenres of this sort of music, contributing to its intense and energetic sound,
- Vocals: vocals in heavy metal music vary widely depending on the subgenre. They can range from clean singing to harsh, guttural growls (e.g. in death metal) or even screams (e.g. in black metal). Many heavy metal vocalists employ techniques such as falsetto, vibrato, and vocal distortion to convey emotion and intensity in their performances,
- Lyrics: heavy metal lyrics often explore themes such as rebellion, angst, fantasy, mythology, horror, crime, evil, and the occult, to name only the most significant ones. While some bands incorporate socially or politically charged lyrics into their music, others focus on more abstract or fantasy-based themes. The lyrical content of heavy metal songs can be dark, introspective, and sometimes controversial, reflecting the diverse interests and perspectives of the musicians and their audience. Nevertheless, it is important to argue that the recent years witness the shift in lyrical content of heavy metal songs. The lyricists, apart from dark matters, more and more take into account issues that are significant to the listeners today, such as ecology. For instance, environmental protection is the main lyrical theme of the French band Gojira<sup>2</sup>, whose status in contemporary popular culture is evidenced by the fact that they were the first “metal-heads” in history to take part in the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Paris.

Weinstein emphasizes that “to call heavy metal a genre means to acknowledge it as something more than a marketing category. It has a distinctive sound. It also has a stock of visual and verbal meanings that have been attached to it by the artists, audience members, and mediators who construct it” (2000, p. 7). Significantly, she adds that “heavy metal has persisted far longer than most genres of rock music. It has also broadened. At heavy metal’s peripheries, offshoots have appeared that are not yet independent enough to be called separate genres, and are therefore best called subgenres” (p. 7). And, as claimed by Fletcher and Umurhan, “despite continued predictions of metal’s demise, the music continues to adapt and thrive” (2020, p. 10). Hence, as observed, heavy metal encompasses a wide range of subgenres, each with its own unique characteristics and influences. Some of the most prominent subgenres are presented below.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gojira-music.com/>.

1. **Traditional heavy metal:** characterized by its melodic guitar solos, catchy hooks, and anthemic choruses, traditional heavy metal bands such as Iron Maiden<sup>3</sup>, Judas Priest<sup>4</sup>, and Black Sabbath<sup>5</sup> laid the groundwork for the subgenre. It is a subgenre of rock music that “erupted in the early 1970s from the wider cultural complex of rock music, which, in turn, had grown out of the rock and roll of the 1950s” (Weinstein, 2000, p. 11) and became particularly prominent in the 1970s and 1980s. It is characterized by its powerful guitar riffs, melodic vocals, and often fantastical or mythological lyrical themes. Traditional heavy metal laid the groundwork for many subgenres of metal that followed, including thrash metal, power metal, and progressive metal. Below some key elements and characteristics of traditional heavy metal are shown:
  - **Guitar-driven music:** traditional heavy metal is defined by its heavy use of electric guitars, which often feature distorted tones and powerful riffs. The guitar solos are also a prominent feature of this sort of heavy metal, with guitarists often showcasing their technical skill and creativity through extended solos,
  - **Melodic vocals:** unlike some subgenres of metal that feature harsh or growling vocals, traditional heavy metal typically incorporates clean, melodic singing. Vocalists in traditional heavy metal bands often have powerful voices that can convey potent emotions and intensity,
  - **Emphasis on melody and harmony:** traditional heavy metal places a strong emphasis on melody and harmony, with catchy hooks and memorable choruses being common features of this subgenre. This focus on melody sets traditional heavy metal apart from some of the more abrasive and dissonant styles of metal,
  - **Lyrical themes:** traditional heavy metal often features lyrical themes that draw inspiration from mythology, fantasy, science fiction or even dystopian literature. Many traditional heavy metal bands incorporate imagery of epic battles, heroic quests, and supernatural forces into their lyrics, creating a sense of escapism and adventure for the listeners,
  - **Influence of blues and rock and roll:** traditional heavy metal has its roots in the blues and rock and roll music of the 1950s. Many early heavy metal bands were influenced by blues artists such as Led Zeppelin<sup>6</sup> incorporating elements of blues-based guitar playing and song structure into their music,
  - **Visual aesthetic:** traditional heavy metal is often associated with a distinctive visual aesthetic, including elaborate album artwork, stage costumes, and imagery inspired by fantasy and science fiction. Many traditional heavy metal bands cultivate a larger-than-life image that reflects the grandiosity and theatricality of their music, as practised for example by the British band Iron Maiden whose concerts are a magnificent blend of music, theatricality and lights,
  - **Iconic bands:** some of the most iconic and influential bands in the history of traditional heavy metal include Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Dio<sup>7</sup>, and Motorhead<sup>8</sup>, among others. These bands helped to define the sound and style of traditional heavy metal and continue to be revered by fans of the genre to this day.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ironmaiden.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.judaspriestinvincibleshield.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.blacksabbath.com/>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://merch.ledzeppelin.com/?ref=https://en.wikipedia.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://ronniejamesdio.com/>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://imotorhead.com/>.

2. **Thrash metal:** known for its aggressive tempo, complex guitar riffs, and rapid-fire drumming, thrash metal “is characterized by music that is harder, faster and angrier. It emerged in California between 1981 and 1983, fusing elements of the NWOBHM<sup>9</sup> from bands such as Iron Maiden with 1970s and 1980s punk rock (...) British band Venom’s 1981 release *Welcome to Hell* was a forerunner of early thrash metal” (Bayer, 2016, p. 82). This subgenre of music surfaced in the early 1980s with bands like Slayer, Megadeth, and Metallica whose members “were innovators of the genre, paving the way for significant subsequent developments” (p. 82). As far as lyrics are concerned, thrash metal is often associated with rebellion, anger, and social commentary; and it played a significant role in the development of extreme forms of metal music. Below some key elements and characteristics of trash metal are presented:

- Fast tempo of music: thrash metal is known for its fast-paced tempo, typically ranging from 120 to 200 beats per minute,
- Complex guitar riffs: thrash metal guitarists employ intricate riffs, often featuring rapid palm-muted picking, fast alternate picking, and complex chord progressions,
- Aggressive vocals: thrash metal vocalists usually deliver aggressive vocals, including shouting, screaming, or growling, to convey intensity of their emotions,
- Double bass drumming: drummers in thrash metal bands often use double bass drumming techniques to create a relentless and powerful rhythm section,
- Lyrical themes: many thrash metal bands incorporate themes of social and political injustice, war, corruption, and societal issues into their lyrics. Thrash metal lyrics often express a sense of rebellion against authority, conformity, and societal norms,
- Personal struggles: some thrash metal songs delve into personal struggles, inner turmoil, and existential themes,
- Origins and influences: Thrash metal emerged in the early 1980s, primarily in the United States, with bands like Metallica, Slayer, Megadeth, and Anthrax<sup>10</sup> pioneering the genre. Influences from punk rock, hardcore punk, and traditional heavy metal can be heard in the music of thrash metal bands. Bands like Venom, Motorhead, and Iron Maiden were influential precursors to thrash metal,
- Impact and evolution: thrash metal has had a significant impact on the wider heavy metal scene, influencing the development of subgenres such as power metal, death metal, and black metal,
- The popularity of thrash metal peaked in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but it has maintained a dedicated fanbase and continued to evolve over the years,

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<sup>9</sup> “The New Wave of British Heavy Metal (commonly abbreviated as NWOBHM) was a nationwide musical movement that started in England in the mid-1970s and achieved international attention by the early 1980s. Editor Alan Lewis coined the term for an article by Geoff Barton in a May 1979 issue of the British music newspaper *Sounds* to describe the emergence of new heavy metal bands in the mid to late 1970s, during the period of punk rock’s decline and the dominance of new wave music. Although encompassing diverse styles inherited from rock music, the music of the NWOBHM is best remembered for drawing on the heavy metal of the 1970s and infusing it with the intensity of punk rock to produce fast and aggressive songs. The DIY attitude of the new metal bands led to the spread of raw-sounding, self-produced recordings and a proliferation of independent record labels. Song lyrics were usually about escapist themes, such as mythology, fantasy, horror and the rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle” (Internet source 1).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.anthrax.com/>.

- Notable bands: Metallica, Slayer, Megadeth, and Anthrax, collectively known as the “Big Four” of thrash metal, are among the most influential and commercially successful bands in the genre. Other notable thrash metal bands include Testament<sup>11</sup>, Exodus<sup>12</sup>, Overkill<sup>13</sup>, Kreator<sup>14</sup>, and Sepultura<sup>15</sup> among others.
3. **Death metal:** featuring growled or guttural vocals, intricate guitar work, and often dark and brutal lyrical themes, death metal bands like American Death<sup>16</sup>, Cannibal Corpse<sup>17</sup>, Morbid Angel<sup>18</sup>, Obituary<sup>19</sup> or the Polish band Vader<sup>20</sup> have been pushing the boundaries of musical aggression and intensity. Matthew Harvey, while referring to death metal, asserts that it is mostly defined by the concept of musical brutality that he perceives as “a general lack of overtly melodic elements in the music; guttural, deep Death Metal vocals; chunky, rhythmic guitar riffs ideal for moshing; and frequent use of high speed, double-bass drumbeats” (qtd. by Purcell, 2003, p. 16). Death metal is a subgenre of heavy metal music that emerged in the early 1980s, primarily in the United States and Europe. It is characterized by its aggressive and extreme sound, featuring fast tempos, heavily distorted guitars, deep growling vocals, and often complex song structures. Lyrically Death metal is known for its dark themes that “range from unbelievably vile depictions of gore and torture, bizarre and unpleasant takes on mysticism, vast futuristic landscapes, and dense complex hammer blows of sociopolitical theory,” as asserted by Coles (2023, p. 2). Below some key elements and characteristics of death metal are shown:
- Vocals: one of the most distinctive features of death metal is its vocal style. Instead of traditional singing or screaming, death metal vocalists use a technique called “death growling” or “death grunting”. This involves producing low-pitched, guttural sounds that often sound inhuman or demonic. The lyrics typically focus on dark and morbid subjects, such as violence, horror, evil, crime, and the occult,
  - Instrumentation: death metal is characterized by its fast and aggressive instrumentation. Guitars are heavily distorted, with a thick, chunky tone that emphasizes power and intensity. Guitar riffs are often fast-paced and complex, featuring rapid palm-muted picking and intricate harmonies. Drumming is also prominent in death metal, with fast double bass drum patterns, blast beats, and syncopated rhythms adding to the genre’s intense sound,
  - Lyrics and themes: death metal lyrics often explore themes related to death, violence, horror, and the supernatural. Many death metal bands draw inspiration from horror movies, literature, and mythology, crafting lyrics that are dark, graphic, and often disconcerting. While some bands use these themes purely for shock value, others explore deeper philosophical and existential questions through their music,

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.testamentlegions.com/site/>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://exodusattack.com/site/>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://wreckingcrew.com/Ironbound/>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.kreator-terrorzone.de/>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.sepultura.com.br/>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.spirit-of-metal.com/pl/band/Death>.

<sup>17</sup> <http://cannibalcorpse.net/>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.morbidangel.com/>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.obituary.cc/>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://vader-store.com/>.

- Technicality and complexity: death metal is known for its technical prowess and complex song structures. Many death metal musicians are highly skilled instrumentalists who incorporate intricate melodies, harmonies, and rhythms into their music. Some subgenres of death metal, such as technical death metal and progressive death metal, place a strong emphasis on musical complexity and virtuosity, with musicians pushing the boundaries of their instruments and pushing the limits of what is musically possible,
  - Subgenres: over the years, death metal has evolved into several subgenres, each with its own unique characteristics and influences. Some of the most notable subgenres include:
    - ✓ Melodic death metal: this subgenre combines the aggression and intensity of death metal with melodic guitar lines and harmonies,
    - ✓ Technical death metal: it is a subgenre known for its complex song structures, virtuosic musicianship, and intricate arrangements,
    - ✓ Brutal death metal: characterized by its extreme aggression, fast tempos, and guttural vocals. Lyrics often focus on graphic violence, murder, and gore,
    - ✓ Progressive death metal: this style combines the aggression of death metal with the complex song structures and the characteristic elements of progressive rock and metal,
    - ✓ Deathgrind: a fusion of death metal and grindcore, known for its short, intense songs and chaotic sound.
4. **Black metal:** characterized by its raw production quality, tremolo-picked guitar riffs, and shrieked vocals, black metal often explores themes of anti-religion, Satanism, nature, and mysticism. Norwegian bands like Mayhem<sup>21</sup>, Burzum<sup>22</sup>, Emperor<sup>23</sup>, Dark Throne<sup>24</sup>, and Dark Funeral<sup>25</sup> are influential figures in the black metal scene. Black metal is a subgenre of heavy metal music that originated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily in Norway, with bands such as Venom, Bathory<sup>26</sup>, and Celtic Frost<sup>27</sup> contributing to its development. While analysing the beginning of this subgenre of music, Patterson in *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, refers to the band Venom in such a manner: “loud, aggressive, and not afraid to offend, Venom were not only pivotal in the creation and development of ‘extreme metal,’ they were also arguably the first band for whom such a description could be considered accurate. In that context the music may seem relatively tame by today’s standards, but for a time, Venom were arguably the heaviest, nosiest and the most unpleasant metal band on the planet” (2013, p. 6). Black metal is known for its distinctive sound characterized by high-pitched shrieking vocals, fast tempos, heavily distorted guitars, and often lo-fi production quality. Black metal has evolved over the years, branching into various subgenres and regional scenes around the world. While Norway remains one of the most influential hubs for black metal, the genre has also gained popularity in countries such as Sweden, Finland, other parts of Europe and even in the United

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.thetruemayhem.com/>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://burzum.org/>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://brutalland.pl/viewtopic.php?t=1779>.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.metal-archives.com/bands/darkthrone/146>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.darkfuneral.se/>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.spirit-of-metal.com/pl/band/Bathory>.

<sup>27</sup> <http://celticfrost.com/>.

States. Despite its underground roots, black metal has garnered mainstream attention and controversy due to its provocative themes, extreme aesthetics, and occasional ties to criminal activity, including instances of arson of churches (e.g. Fantoft Stave Church in Bergen, Norway burnt on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1992), violence, and murder within the black metal community (e.g. Øystein Aarseth known as Euronymous, the guitarist of the Norwegian black metal band Mayhem was killed by Kristian Vikernes (known as Varg Vikernes from the band Burzum on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1993)). However, it is important to note that these incidents are not representative of the entire genre or its fanbase. Many black metal artists and fans are dedicated to the music and the artistic expression it represents, rather than the controversial actions of a few individuals. While the musical characteristics of black metal vary, there are certain elements that are commonly found within the genre:

- Vocals: black metal vocals typically feature high-pitched screams, shrieks, or growls,
  - Guitar riffs: black metal guitar riffs are often fast-paced, tremolo-picked melodies, creating a sense of aggression and intensity. The guitar tone is usually heavily distorted, and the melodies can range from dissonant and chaotic to atmospheric and melodic,
  - Drums: black metal drumming is characterized by fast blast beats, double bass drumming, and rapid fills. Blast beats, in particular, are a defining feature of the genre, contributing to its aggressive and chaotic sound,
  - Lyrics and themes: black metal lyrics often delve into dark and controversial themes, including Satanism, paganism, anti-Christianity, existentialism, and nihilism. Many black metal bands draw inspiration from Norse mythology, folklore, nature, as well as, from literature, philosophy, and occultism,
  - Atmosphere and aesthetics: black metal places a strong emphasis on creating a dark, atmospheric ambiance. This is often achieved through lo-fi production techniques, including raw and minimalistic recording methods. Some bands incorporate elements of ambient music, acoustic passages, and symphonic elements to enhance the atmospheric quality of their music,
  - Image and iconography: black metal bands often cultivate a distinctive visual aesthetic, characterized by corpse paint (elaborate face paint resembling skulls or corpses), spiked leather attire, and symbols associated with darkness and occultism. This imagery is intended to evoke a sense of mystique and rebellion against Christianity and societal norms.
5. **Power metal:** known for its fast-paced tempo, soaring vocal melodies, and epic lyrical themes inspired by fantasy, mythology, and folklore, power metal bands such as Blind Guardian<sup>28</sup>, Helloween<sup>29</sup>, and DragonForce<sup>30</sup> create an atmosphere of adventure and heroism in their music. Power metal is a subgenre of heavy metal music that is characterized by its emphasis on melody, technical proficiency, and epic themes. It emerged in the 1980s alongside other subgenres of metal such as thrash metal and speed metal. Power metal is known for its uplifting and anthemic sound, often featuring fast-paced guitar riffs, soaring vocals, intricate harmonies, and symphonic elements. Below there are some key characteristics of power metal:

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.blind-guardian.com/>.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.helloween.org/>.

<sup>30</sup> <https://dragonforce.com/>.



- Melodic guitar riffs: power metal often features fast and melodic guitar riffs, typically played using techniques like alternate picking and sweep picking. These riffs contribute to the energetic and uplifting sound of the genre,
  - Double bass drumming: power metal drummers frequently employ double bass drumming, where bass drums are played rapidly and simultaneously. This adds to the speed and intensity of the music,
  - Symphonic elements: many power metal bands incorporate symphonic elements into their music, such as orchestral arrangements, synthesizers, and choirs. These elements enhance the epic and grandiose feel of the music,
  - Virtuoso instrumentation: power metal musicians are often highly skilled and technically proficient, with guitar solos, keyboard flourishes, and intricate bass lines being common features of the genre,
  - Epic lyrics: power metal lyrics often revolve around themes of heroism, fantasy, mythology, and epic battles. The lyrics are typically positive and uplifting, focusing on themes of triumph over adversity and the pursuit of glory. One of many examples could be the lyrics by the British bands DragonForce or Gloryhammer<sup>31</sup>,
  - Vocal style: power metal vocalists often employ a wide vocal range, with soaring high notes and powerful, operatic vocals being common. Vocal harmonies and layered vocal arrangements are also frequently used to create a larger-than-life sound,
  - Themes and imagery: power metal lyrics often draw inspiration from fantasy literature, mythology, history, and folklore. Themes of knights, dragons, magic, and epic quests are common, creating a sense of escapism and adventure for the listeners. Imagery associated with power metal often includes fantastical artwork featuring dragons, warriors, castles, and other elements of fantasy and mythology,
  - Subgenres and variations: while power metal has a distinct sound and aesthetic, there are several subgenres and variations within the genre. These include symphonic power metal, progressive power metal, and folk-inspired power metal, each of which incorporates different musical elements and influences. Bands like Helloween, Blind Guardian, Stratovarius<sup>32</sup>, Leaves' Eyes<sup>33</sup>, and DragonForce are among the most influential and well-known within the power metal genre.
6. **Doom metal:** it is a subgenre of heavy metal music that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, drawing influences from various sources including traditional heavy metal, hard rock, psychedelic rock, and other subgenres like progressive rock and even classical music. As asserted by Hagen, doom metal evades “the fast tempos and displays of ensemble and individual virtuosity that other extreme metal genres like death metal, black metal, and grindcore have cultivated. In doom metal particularly, the tempos may be incredibly slow, with almost minimalistic drumming and guitar parts emphasizing long and drawn-out melodies and sustained power chords. The guitars are typically down-tuned, as in many other extreme metal genres” (2020, p. 549). The lyrical themes of doom metal often explore topics such as despair, depression, death, and occultism. Below the key characteristics of doom metal are described.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gloryhammer.com/>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://stratovarius.com/>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.leaveseyes.de/>.

- Slow tempo: one of the defining features of doom metal is its slow tempo. The music often moves at a lumbering pace, with a heavy emphasis on slow, plodding rhythms. This deliberate pacing helps create a sense of heaviness and melancholy,
- Heavy guitar riffs: doom metal is known for its massive, downtuned guitar riffs. These riffs are typically played with a thick, distorted tone, and often rely on simple, repetitive patterns. The guitars in doom metal are tuned lower than in other metal genres, which contributes to the genre's distinctive sound,
- Gloomy atmosphere: doom metal is often characterized by its dark and depressing atmosphere. The music tends to evoke feelings of despair, sadness, and existential dread. This mood is achieved through a combination of the slow tempo, heavy instrumentation, and often haunting vocal melodies,
- Vocal style: the vocal style in doom metal varies depending on the subgenre and specific band, but it often features deep, guttural singing or haunting, melodic vocals. Some bands employ a mix of clean and harsh vocals, while others stick to one style exclusively. The lyrics often delve into themes of death, despondency, and the supernatural.
- Variations and subgenres: over the years, doom metal has evolved and branched out into several subgenres, each with its own unique characteristics. Some of the prominent subgenres include:
  - ✓ Traditional doom metal: this style stays true to the roots of doom metal, drawing heavily from the sound of bands like Black Sabbath. Candlemass<sup>34</sup> and Saint Vitus<sup>35</sup> are among the pioneering bands in this subgenre,
  - ✓ Funeral doom metal: it takes the slow, atmospheric elements of traditional doom metal to an extreme. The tempo is often even slower, and the music is characterized by its crushing heaviness and bleak atmosphere. Bands like Skepticism<sup>36</sup> and Evoken<sup>37</sup> are notable examples of this subgenre,
  - ✓ Stoner doom metal: this subgenre incorporates elements of psychedelic rock and blues into the doom metal sound. The music tends to have a more groove-oriented feel, with fuzzed-out guitars and laid-back rhythms. Sleep<sup>38</sup> and Electric Wizard<sup>39</sup> are key bands in this subgenre,
  - ✓ Drone doom metal: This style of music emphasizes repetition and minimalism, with extended, droning passages that create a hypnotic effect. Sunn O)))<sup>40</sup> is the most well-known band associated with this style.
- Instrumentation and production: in addition to guitars, bass, and drums, doom metal often incorporates other instruments such as keyboards and synthesizers to enhance the atmospheric qualities of the music. Production techniques also play a significant role in shaping the sound of doom metal, with bands often opting for a raw, unpolished sound to capture the genre's primal energy.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.candlemass.se/>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.saintvitusband.com/>.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.skepticism.fi/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://brutalland.pl/viewtopic.php?t=2657>.

<sup>38</sup> <https://weedian.com/>.

<sup>39</sup> <https://riseaboverecords.com/artists/riseaboveartists/electricwizard/>.

<sup>40</sup> <https://sunn.southernlord.com/>.

7. **Gothic metal** is a subgenre of heavy metal music that emerged in the early 1990s, combining elements of gothic rock with the heaviness and aggression of metal music. In line with Isabella van Elferen, gothic metal is based on “moderate tempi, repetitions, minor keys, reverbed voices and instruments” (2012, p. 25). This subgenre is characterized by its dark and atmospheric sound, which often incorporates elements of classical music, symphonic arrangements, and gothic imagery. As claimed by Matthew J. Heilman, “in regard to popular music, the adjective ‘Gothic’ was first regularly applied to post-punk bands like Siouxsie and the Banshees, Bauhaus, and the Sisters of Mercy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These bands combined punk aggression with art rock experimentation, introspective lyrics, and macabre theatricality. Generally, the term ‘gothic metal’ has been used by fans and journalists to describe metal bands inspired by gothic rock” (2018, p. 216). Below there are the key components and characteristics of gothic metal:
- **Musical style:** gothic metal typically features heavy guitar riffs, distorted guitar tones, and prominent bass lines, which are common elements of traditional heavy metal music. However, gothic metal often incorporates slower tempos, melodic passages, and atmospheric textures reminiscent of gothic rock,
  - **Vocals:** the vocals in gothic metal can vary widely, but they often include a combination of clean singing, operatic vocals, and harsh growls or screams. Clean vocals are often used for melodic passages and choruses, while harsh vocals add intensity and aggression to the music,
  - **Lyrics:** lyrics in gothic metal often explore dark and introspective themes, including love, loss, death, despair, and the supernatural. Gothic imagery and romanticism are common themes in gothic metal lyrics, drawing inspiration from Gothic literature, mythology, and folklore,
  - **Atmosphere:** atmosphere plays a crucial role in gothic metal music, with bands often incorporating symphonic elements, keyboards, and atmospheric effects to create a dark and haunting ambiance. Symphonic arrangements, choirs, and orchestral instruments such as strings and pianos are frequently used to enhance the atmospheric quality of the music,
  - **Influences:** gothic metal is influenced by a variety of musical genres, including gothic rock, heavy metal, classical music, and industrial music. Bands such as Paradise Lost<sup>41</sup>, Type O Negative<sup>42</sup>, and Tiamat<sup>43</sup> are considered pioneers of the genre, blending elements of doom metal, gothic rock, and death metal to create a unique sound,
  - **Visual aesthetic:** the visual aesthetic of gothic metal is often characterized by dark, brooding imagery, Gothic fashion, and theatrical stage performances. Band members may dress in black clothing, leather, and Victorian-inspired attire, creating a dramatic and theatrical presence on stage,
  - **Subgenres:** over time, gothic metal has diversified into several subgenres, including symphonic gothic metal, industrial gothic metal, and melodic gothic metal. Each subgenre incorporates different elements and influences while maintaining the dark and atmospheric sound of gothic metal.

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<sup>41</sup> <https://paradiselost.co.uk/>.

<sup>42</sup> <https://typeonegative.net/>.

<sup>43</sup> <https://alternation.pl/tiamat,id,1597,artysci.html>.

8. **Nu metal** (sometimes spelled as “**new metal**”) is a subgenre of heavy metal known for blending traditional heavy metal with other genres such as hip-hop, alternative rock, funk, and industrial music, creating a unique fusion of aggressive sounds, rap-influenced vocals, and heavy, downtuned guitars. Nu metal songs very often departs from classic metal’s more rigid formulas, embracing experimentation and a youthful, rebellious attitude. Keith Kahn-Harris argues that nu metal, perceived as an offshoot of heavy metal “began to constitute itself in the latter half of the 1990s with the success of bands such as Korn<sup>44</sup> and Limp Bizkit<sup>45</sup>. Such bands built on the early funk metal work of bands such as Faith No More<sup>46</sup> by combining metal with rap and dance music. Nu metal also built on grunge and punk by lyrically emphasizing pain and personal alienation” (2007, p. 34). Below there are the key components and characteristics of nu metal:
- Powerful riffs: nu metal bands often play guitars in *drop tunings* (like drop D or lower), giving the music a heavier and more percussive feel. The emphasis is often on groove and rhythm rather than complex solos or technical guitar work,
  - Minimal or no guitar solos: unlike traditional metal, which often featured intricate guitar solos, nu metal downplay or outright omit them, focusing more on catchy, rhythmic riffs,
  - Rap and hip-hop influence: many nu metal bands incorporate rap or spoken-word elements into their vocal delivery. Vocalists would often switch between rapping, singing, and screaming in the same song. This vocal versatility became a hallmark of the genre of music,
  - Aggressive and melodic variability: alongside the rapping, nu metal vocalists often used aggressive growls, shouts, and screams, but also clean, melodic singing in choruses, giving songs emotional contrasts,
  - Groovy, bass-driven rhythms: nu metal is highly rhythmic and often places a strong emphasis on groove. Slap bass or funk-influenced bass-lines are common in many nu metal bands, adding a bounce or danceable quality to the music. The bass is often prominent in the mix, giving it a different sound from the traditionally guitar-centric metal,
  - Electronic and DJ elements: nu metal frequently uses turntables, samples, and electronic effects inspired by hip-hop and industrial music. DJs or samples were incorporated into the sound to add atmospheric or rhythmic layers, as seen in bands like Linkin Park<sup>47</sup> or Limp Bizkit. Synthesizers, programmed drums, and ambient soundscapes are often included in production, giving the music a more contemporary or experimental edge,
  - Percussive drumming: the drumming in nu metal tends to be straightforward and powerful, often incorporating industrial or hip-hop-inspired beats alongside standard metal drumming techniques like double-kick pedals. The rhythms are typically punchy and syncopated, emphasizing groove and rhythm over speed or technicality,

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<sup>44</sup> <https://kornofficial.com/>.

<sup>45</sup> <https://limpbizkit.com/>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.fnm.com/>.

<sup>47</sup> <https://fromzero.linkinpark.com/>.

- Emotional and personal content: lyrically, nu metal often deals with themes of alienation, frustration, and emotional pain. This is a departure from traditional metal's focus on fantasy, mythology, or socio-political themes. Topics like mental health, trauma, self-loathing, and relationships are common, reflecting the angst and struggles of youth culture during the late 1990s and early 2000s.
9. **Djent** is a subgenre of progressive metal characterized by its use of heavily syncopated, rhythmic, and palm-muted guitar riffs, often played with precise timing and a distinct percussive tone. The term “djent” itself is an onomatopoeic term that mimics the sound produced by this particular style of guitar riffing: a short, sharp, and metallic “chug” sound made by heavily palm-muting the guitar strings and playing with a staccato, tight rhythm. The genre gained prominence in the late 2000s and early 2010s, primarily due to the rise of internet-based music communities and self-produced artists. While analysing the beginning of this genre of music Mark Marrington claims that “djent began to crystallise as a recognisable genre of music around 2011, by which point the term was being used to describe the work of a wide range of artist (...): Periphery, Vildhjarta, Animals as Leaders, Elitist, Of Legends, After the Burial, Born of Osiris, Skyharbor, Chimp Spanner and Mnemic” (2023, p. 270). Nevertheless, Djent's foundations can be traced back to progressive metal bands like Meshuggah,<sup>48</sup> whose technical, complex rhythms and polyrhythmic patterns played a major role in inspiring the djent sound. While Meshuggah is often cited as the “godfather” of djent, the band itself doesn't fully embrace the label. They helped set the groundwork by pushing rhythmic complexity and unconventional song structures to the forefront of metal. Below there are the key components and characteristics of djent:
- Polyrhythms and syncopation: djent is defined by its intricate, syncopated rhythms. Guitarists often play in odd time signatures, polyrhythms (multiple rhythms layered together), or alternating meter patterns that create a disjointed, off-kilter feel. This rhythmic complexity is one of the genre's trademarks and appeals to fans of technical metal,
  - Extended-range guitars: djent bands commonly use 7-string, 8-string, or even 9-string guitars to achieve extremely low tunings, which provide a deep, rumbling low end to their music. These extended-range guitars enable musicians to explore lower frequencies that give the music its heavy, dense feel. Lower tunings like drop A, G, or F are common, which creates the growling, bass-heavy tone associated with djent,
  - Precise, modern production: djent emphasizes a clean, polished, and highly produced sound. Guitar tones are often processed with digital amp simulators or high-quality amp modeling software to achieve a tight, compressed sound that minimizes noise and maximizes clarity. Drum programming or meticulously recorded and edited drum tracks are also typical in djent, with a focus on tightness and rhythmic accuracy. The bass, guitar, and drums are often mixed in a way that emphasizes percussiveness over melodic or harmonic content,

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<sup>48</sup> <https://brutalland.pl/viewtopic.php?t=500>.

- Progressive elements: djent often incorporates elements of progressive metal, such as long song structures, instrumental sections, and experimental approaches to melody and harmony. While the rhythmic patterns are complex, the genre also leans heavily on the atmospheric and experimental, blending in electronic music, clean ambient sections, and intricate instrumental work. Dynamic shifts between aggressive, heavy sections and softer, melodic or atmospheric passages are common.

## **An overview of subgenres of literature appreciated by lyricists implementing literary content into their metal music lyrics** (*Jarosław Giza*<sup>1</sup>)

Literature, perceived as an immense reservoir of texts, constitutes a vast treasure trove of inspiration for heavy metal music lyrics. From classic novels to epic poems, from crime fiction to dystopian literature, the world of literature is permeated with themes, motifs, vivid imagery, and complex characters, concepts that are abundantly used by lyricists of heavy metal songs.

In line with Klarer (2004), the term “litteratura” has its roots in Latin “littera” (letter), the smallest written unit of language. This leads to the conclusion that literature can be simply defined as everything that was ever written or printed. Diniejko (2008) argues that literary texts possess unique qualities that distinguish them from non-literary texts, and this concept is known as “literariness”. Literature is a particular form of communication that stands out from other forms of expression, like everyday conversation or scientific writing. What sets literature apart, however, is the content and structure of the words used. Literature often uses connotations, which can be difficult to comprehend, while scientific writing tends to utilise denotations, which are clear and unambiguous, avoiding any obscurity or confusion. According to Culler (1997), it is not to suggest that all texts are of the same importance – some are deemed to be more powerful, influential, exemplary, thought-provoking, or vital for a specific purpose. In line with Diniejko (2008), literature should be considered as imaginative writing. Robert Frost, the renowned American poet, saw “literature as a performance in words” (qtd. by Barnet, 1961, p. 1), distinct from other forms of writing, such as scientific, business, or documentary writing, due to its unique use of language. People are attracted to literature for its ability to both entertain and inform. Literature also has a great capacity to stimulate the imagination of people.

As asserted by Klarer (1999), the longing to leave an indelible mark for next generations was always significant for people. This can be seen in prehistoric cave paintings which contain data in the form of pictures. Literature has been significantly impacted by this visual factor, although it is not always as noticeable in particular eras. Writing is a form of communication that is deeply rooted in the spoken word. The alphabet is an essential part of literature, providing a way of translating spoken words into symbols and prior to the development of writing systems such as pictographs or alphabets, stories and other texts were transmitted orally. It means that the need to express through imaginative thought has been with people since the time immemorial, but it was not written down as prehistoric people were not able to do this yet. This way of literary expression, which was called “oral poetry”, had the same features as literature, and it was mostly stories and tales that were memorised by a bard or minstrel and could be recited upon request. It is widely accepted that the majority of ancient

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<sup>1</sup> University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz.

classical and Old English epics (e.g. *Beowulf*) were first created and transmitted orally before being recorded in writing. In recent years, the idea of talking instead of writing has been revived due to the emergence of radio, audio recordings, and other sound-based technologies.

Wellek and Warren (1942) state that stories, poems, and plays are unique in their ability to help us go beyond conceptual notions and explore deeper realms. Rather than simply talking about things, they provide tangible examples and depictions of life, thus, allowing us to experience it accurately. This is powerful because it engages people's feelings, thoughts, and all senses, not only just intelligence. Literature can include fiction and non-fiction works as well as pieces of that are not imaginary or creative. Non-fiction texts – written accounts that are not based on made-up characters or events – are also included in the limits of the definition of literature. However, generally, the readers tend to associate literature with pieces of writing that spur imagination. Below there is a short presentation of subgenres of literature that have been especially targeted by the lyricists who construct heavy metal music lyrics based upon literary content.

1. **Gothic fiction:** Gothic fiction is a subgenre of literature that emerged in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (*The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole published in 1764 is regarded as the first Gothic novel), reaching its peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and continues to influence literature, film, and other forms of media today. According to Drabble and Stringer, Gothic fiction incorporates novels full of “the macabre, fantastic, and supernatural, usually set amid haunted castles, graveyards, ruins, and wild picturesque landscapes” (1990, p. 232). While employing the concept of the sublime proposed by Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* published in 1757, according to whom the sublime is produced by mysteriousness of nature, vastness, solitude, infinity, emptiness, delightful horror, terror, darkness, and danger, Gothic fiction, in line Sanders, takes recourse to “crag and chasms, torture and terror, to necromancy, necrophilia, (...) hauntings, sudden death, dungeons, dreams, diablerie, phantasms, and prophecies” (1994, p. 341). Therefore, it is not difficult to comprehend why this subgenre of fiction that, “against the classicist tendencies towards harmony and beauty [finding] delight in the macabre (...) corpses and skeletons (...) and loathing” (Sikorska, 2007, p. 299), has been one of the most widely used by those constructing metal music lyrics. Below, there is a detailed presentation of the key components and characteristics of Gothic fiction:
  - **Atmosphere and setting:** Gothic fiction often takes place in gloomy, remote, and atmospheric places such as ancient castles, decaying mansions, crumbling monasteries, crypts, or other isolated locations that evoke the powerful emotions associated with terror, trepidation, and isolation. In line with Sikorska, “the gothic novel presents an important stage in the development of the Romantic novel. It takes the fantastic, macabre, and supernatural as the background for events, which are usually set in haunted castles, graveyards, ruins and wild, picturesque landscapes” (2007, p. 298). The setting of the Gothic novels is typically described in great detail to create an eerie and foreboding atmosphere, with elements such as dark corridors, secret passages, misty moors, and howling winds contributing to the sense of dread. The architecture of buildings and landscapes in Gothic fiction reflects decay, ruin, and grandeur.



Dilapidated structures with crumbling facades and overgrown gardens symbolize the passage of time and, very often, the decline of aristocratic power, and, as asserted by Claire Lamont, “these buildings are the settings for extreme manifestations and physical power and moral outrage. Their dark and ‘irrational’ architecture and labyrinthine passages have been taken as analogues of what Coleridge called ‘The unfathomable hell within’” (1990, p. 313).

- Themes and motifs: themes of Gothic fiction, often analysing the intricacies associated with “the supernatural, sublime, mysterious, unknown and fearful” (Sikorska, 2007, p. 299), include the exploration of human psychology, the nature and manifestation of evil, the struggle between good and wickedness, and the consequences of tampering with the natural order. Moreover, common motifs in Gothic fiction incorporate doubles or doppelgangers, ancestral curses, madness, imprisonment, the uncanny, and the grotesque. Gothic novels frequently explore themes of romanticism, highlighting the beauty in the grotesque and the sublime in the horrific,
- Characters: protagonists of Gothic fiction are often young, innocent, and virtuous individuals who find themselves thrust into unfamiliar and terrifying circumstances. Antagonists may include evil villains, tyrants, murderers, and satanic monks who are morally ambiguous, mysterious, or supernaturally endowed with powers. Other recurring character types include the mad scientist, the *femme fatale*, the persecuted heroine, and the Byronic hero, who is brooding, enigmatic, and morally conflicted,
- Mood and tone: mood and tone of Gothic fiction are characterized by a sense of foreboding, dread, and uncertainty. The atmosphere is often tense, with a feeling of impending doom lurking just beneath the surface. Gothic literature relies heavily on suspense, using cliffhangers, unexpected plot twists, and macabre imagery to keep readers engaged and on edge,
- Supernatural elements: Andrew Sanders asserts that Gothic fiction incorporates “a number of anomalous texts which allow both for a convergence and for a conflict of the natural and the supernatural” (1994, p. 345), featuring supernatural elements such as ghosts, vampires, werewolves, demons, and other supernatural beings. In line with Jerrold E. Hogle, those elements “can take many forms, but they frequently assume the features of ghosts, spectres, or monsters (mixing features from different realms of being, often life and death) that rise from within the antiquated space, or sometimes invade it from alien realms, to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view” (2015, p. 2). These paranormal elements serve to heighten the atmosphere of apprehension and insecurity, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy and challenging readers’ perceptions of what is possible.

Gothic fiction, in which, in line with Lamont, “the world of nightmare [has been] institutionalized” with “novels set in a vague ‘medieval’ world [that] explore the more lurid emotions of terror, guilt, and horror” (1990, p. 313), is a rich and diverse genre that explores the darker aspects of human nature and the mysteries of the unknown. Through its vivid imagery, atmospheric settings, and compelling narratives, gothic literature continues to captivate and inspire readers and creators of metal music lyrics around the world.

2. **Mythology:** mythologies constitute significant cultural and literary elements of ancient cultures, serving as vessels for the transmission of beliefs, values, history, and elements of cultural identity and celebrating “in the form of a continuous narrative of the achievements of one or more heroic personages of history or tradition”, as asserted by Drabble and Stringer (1990, p. 183). Mythology refers to a collection of myths, legends, stories, and beliefs that have been passed down orally or through written texts within a culture or society and they often involve supernatural beings, gods, heroes, and symbolic narratives that explain natural phenomena, human behavior, and the origins of the world and humanity. Below, there is a detailed presentation of the key components and characteristics of mythologies:
  - Mythical beings and characters: mythologies typically feature gods, goddesses, demigods, heroes, monsters, and other supernatural entities. These characters often possess extraordinary powers and abilities and serve as archetypes representing various aspects of human experience,
  - Cosmogony and cosmology: myths, which in line with Diniejko “embody the sacred stories and traditions of a people as regards their origins, gods, early history, etc., which explain natural or historical events” (2008, p. 29), offer explanations for the creation of the universe, the earth, and humanity. They describe the origins of natural phenomena such as the sun, moon, stars, seasons, and natural disasters,
  - Moral and cultural lessons: myths frequently convey moral, ethical, and cultural lessons that reflect the values, beliefs, and norms of the society that created them. They address themes such as heroism, love, betrayal, loyalty, sacrifice, justice, and the consequences of human actions,
  - Cultural identity and rituals: mythologies play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and informing religious beliefs and rituals. They provide a shared narrative framework that helps communities understand their place in the world and establish rituals and ceremonies to honor gods, commemorate events, and mark life transitions,
  - Adaptation and evolution: myths have been evolving over time through an oral tradition, cultural exchanges, and literary reinterpretations. They may undergo changes to reflect shifting societal values, political ideologies, and religious beliefs while retaining their fundamental themes and motifs.
3. **Epic poetry:** An epic poem, in line with Diniejko, “is a long narrative in high style recounting the deeds of a legendary or historical hero [with action that] has a grand scale” (2008, p. 54). These poems often embody the cultural ideals and values of the society in which they originate and serve as foundational texts of literature. While drawing inspiration from ancient myths, legends, and other epic poems such as, for instance, *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad* or *Beowulf*, these timeless tales are filled with epic battles, heroic deeds, and larger-than-life characters that lend themselves well to the epic sound and imagery of heavy metal music lyrics, especially those belonging to speed and power metal subgenres. Below, there is a detailed presentation of the key components and characteristics of the epic poetry:

- Heroic protagonist: epic poems typically revolve around a heroic protagonist who embarks on a grand quest or journey to achieve greatness, fulfil destiny, overcome formidable challenges, protect people, and, very often, fight an evil character who, in line with Rosati, “serves as an antagonist of forces for good (...) and embodies a series of negative values that set him in opposition to his context, in a conflict that further constitutes a clash between the forces of civilization and those of a hostile, savage, even primordial world” (2020, p. 284). A heroic protagonist possesses extraordinary qualities of courage, strength, intelligence, and resourcefulness,
- Elevated language and style: epic poetry employs a formal and elevated style of language characterized by elaborate descriptions, rhythmic patterns, and poetic devices such as similes, metaphors, and epithets,
- Scope and scale: While referring to settings in the epic poetry, Gregory Robinson asserts that “they address the veracity and authority of historical representations (...) they span vast geographical areas and large expanses of time, and they deal with the birth and growth of nations and religions as well as the experience of whole communities of people” (qtd. by Albertazzi, 2018, p. 56). Epics incorporate themes such as warfare, honour, loyalty, fate, and the struggle between good and evil,
- Oral tradition and performance: many epic poems originated in oral tradition, where skilled bards, scops or poets recited or sang the verses to audiences in communal gatherings, festivals, and religious ceremonies. The oral performance aspect of epic poetry allowed for improvisation, variation, and audience participation,
- Cultural significance: epic poems serve as repositories of cultural memory and collective identity, preserving historical events, legendary figures, and cultural values for future generations. They often reflect the social, political, and religious beliefs of the societies that produced them and contribute to the formation of national or cultural literary canons,
- Relationship between mythology and epic poetry: mythology and epic poetry are closely intertwined, as epic poems frequently draw upon mythological themes, characters, and narratives as their foundational material. Epic poets often rework and reinterpret myths to create epic narratives that celebrate heroic achievements, explore moral dilemmas, and reflect on the human condition. For example, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* draw heavily from Greek mythology, featuring gods, goddesses, and heroes from the pantheon of Greek deities. These epics retell the legendary events of the Trojan War and the perilous journey of Odysseus, weaving together elements of myth, history, and heroic legend to create timeless works of literature.

Mythologies and epic poetry are essential components of human cultural expression, offering insights into the beliefs, values, and aspirations of ancient civilizations while continuing to resonate with contemporary audiences worldwide. Through their enduring narratives and universal themes, mythologies and epic poetry transcend time and place, enriching our understanding of the human experience across diverse cultures and epochs, offering the lyricists a plethora of motifs and images that can easily be incorporated into the heavy metal music lyrics.

4. **Fantasy and science fiction:** Fantasy and science fiction are two distinct subgenres within the realm of speculative fiction, characterized by their imaginative elements and departure from reality. While they share some similarities, they also have distinct features that set them apart. In line with Sikorska, “although the term can denote any number of works, which are not a realistic representation of the world, like dream vision, fable, fairy tale or romance, contemporary fantasy literature is frequently concerned with alternative worlds in which magic is part of life” (2007, p. 576). Fantasy is therefore a subgenre of literature that typically involves elements of magic, mythical creatures, and supernatural phenomena. It often takes place in imaginary worlds that may resemble medieval settings as created by the author’s imagination (e.g. *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien). Below, there is a presentation of the key components and characteristics of fantasy:

- Magic: magic is a central element of many fantasy stories. It can be used by characters to perform extraordinary feats, cast spells, or manipulate the world around them,
- Mythical creatures: fantasy often features creatures such as dragons, elves, dwarves, or other mythical beings that do not exist in the real world,
- Quests and adventures: many fantasy stories revolve around epic quests, journeys, or adventures undertaken by heroes to achieve a specific goal, such as defeating a dark lord, rescuing a princess, or retrieving a powerful artefact,
- Medieval settings: fantasy worlds often draw inspiration from medieval Europe, featuring knights, castles, feudal societies, and elements of chivalry.
- Struggle of good vs. evil: fantasy frequently explores themes of good versus evil, light versus darkness, and the struggle between opposing forces.

According to Cuddon, science fiction stories “are about an amazing variety of things, topics, ideas. They include trips to other worlds, quests, the exploration of space, visits to other planets and interplanetary warfare. Some SF stories are concerned with utopias and utopist visions, and also with dystopia. Others are set in the future but are not utopian. Still others are set in the past” (1999, p. 791). Fantasy and science fiction are subgenres of literature that explore speculative concepts based on scientific principles, often set in the future or in alternative realities and, as asserted by Brian Aldiss, “science fiction is the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science) and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode” (qtd. by Wasson, Alder, 2011, p. 3). Below, there is a presentation of the key components and characteristics of science fiction:

- Technological advancements: science fiction often explores the implications of advanced technology, including robots, Artificial Intelligence, space travel, genetic engineering, futuristic inventions as well as “social, climatic, geological and ecological change” (Cuddon, 1999, p. 791),
- Exploration of space and time: many science fiction stories are set in outer space or involve journeys to distant planets, galaxies, or alternate dimensions. Time travel is also a common theme explored here,
- Speculative societies: science fiction often imagines future societies shaped by scientific and technological advancements, exploring themes such as utopia, dystopia, social inequality, and the consequences of scientific progress,

- Hard vs. soft science fiction: science fiction can be categorized into “hard” science fiction, which emphasizes scientific accuracy and explores plausible scientific concepts, and “soft” science fiction, which focuses more on speculative ideas and storytelling without strict adherence to scientific principles,
- Exploration of humanity: science fiction often explores what it means to be human in a technologically advanced world, examining themes of identity, consciousness, ethics, and the nature of existence.

It is important to accentuate the fact that while both fantasy and science fiction can involve speculative elements and imaginative storytelling, fantasy tends to focus on magical realms, mythical creatures, and epic quests, while science fiction explores scientific concepts, technological advancements, and futuristic societies. However, there can be overlappings between the two subgenres, and some stories may incorporate elements of both fantasy and science fiction. Importantly, those two subgenres of literature are highly valued by lyricists who specialize in construction of lyrics for speed or power metal bands.

5. **Crime fiction:** Although, as mentioned by Jesper Gulddal and Stewart King (in *The Routledge Companion to Crime Fiction*) or Charles Rzepka (in *A Companion to Crime Fiction*), the question what is crime fiction and what does it really comprise of “often elicits sophisticated answers that acknowledge the tension between the conventionality and innovation inherent in crime fiction” (Gulddal, King, 2020, p. 14) and “challenges posed by [its] hybrid and transnational [character]” (p. 20) and, in Rzepka’s words, “to say that crime fiction is fiction about crime is not only tautological, it also raises a host of problems” (2010, p. 1). Nevertheless, the most obvious answer to this question is that crime fiction is a literary subgenre that revolves around the investigation of crimes, typically murders, and the pursuit of criminals by protagonists such as detectives, private investigators, amateur sleuths, or even ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances. Cuddon adds that crime fiction, generally, focuses upon “the commission and detection of crime, with the motives, actions, arraignment, judgment, and punishment of a criminal” (1999, p. 192). Therefore, one can observe that this subgenre of literature is characterized by its spotlight on crime, the intricacies of the criminal mind, and the process of solving mystery associated with catching the instigator(s) of crime(s). Below there are some key elements that define crime fiction:

- Crime as central theme: crime fiction, as the name suggests, places crime at the heart of its narrative. The story often begins with the commission of a crime, usually murder, but it can also involve other illegal activities such as theft, fraud, espionage, rape, etc.,
- Investigation and detection: the plot of crime fiction typically revolves around the investigation and detection of the crime. The protagonist, often a detective or an investigator, works to uncover clues, analyze evidence, and ultimately solve the mystery behind the crime. The process of investigation is usually a central focus of the story, showcasing the protagonist’s intelligence, intuition, and deductive reasoning skills,

- **Complex characters:** crime fiction often features a diverse range of characters, including both protagonists and antagonists. The protagonist is usually a detective or investigator who possesses unique qualities such as intelligence, wit, and a strong moral compass. Antagonists, on the other hand, can range from cunning criminals to masterminds who challenge the protagonist at every turn,
- **Mystery and suspense:** crime fiction is known for its suspenseful and mysterious atmosphere. Authors often employ plot twists, red herrings, and unexpected developments to keep readers engaged and guessing until the very end. The sense of mystery and anticipation is a key element of this subgenre, driving the narrative forward and heightening the tension,
- **Social commentary:** many works of crime fiction explore social issues, such as corruption, injustice, and inequality. Through the investigation of crimes and the portrayal of characters from different walks of life, crime fiction often offers insights into society and human behaviour, reflecting the concerns and values of the time in which it is written.
- **Multiple subgenres:** crime fiction encompasses a wide range of subgenres, including classic detective fiction, hardboiled detective fiction, police procedurals, legal thrillers, espionage novels, and cosy mysteries, among others. Each subgenre has its own conventions, tropes, and thematic elements, catering to diverse tastes and preferences within the genre,
- **Sense of resolution:** One of the defining features of crime fiction is the resolution of the mystery. By the end of the story, the protagonist typically uncovers the truth behind the crime and brings the perpetrator to justice, restoring order and giving closure to the narrative.

Crime fiction is a versatile and popular genre that continues to captivate readers with its intriguing mysteries, compelling characters, and exploration of the darker aspects of human nature. From classic whodunits to gritty Noir thrillers, crime fiction offers a wealth of ideas, topics and images that are eagerly implemented into the lyrical structure of metal songs.

6. **Horror fiction:** Gina Wisker, while defining the horror fiction, asserts that it is the form of “entertainment of shock and repulsion [offering one] the enjoyment of being terrified” (2005, p. 1). She continues her train of thought by acknowledging that “horror, nurtured in the fears we have of pain and death, and in our dark fears of the unknown, is a taste acquired by those with sufficient imagination to see beyond, beneath, and through what we take for granted as normal and familiar (p. 2). A similar definition is offered by Cuddon who claims that a horror story is “a fictional narrative (usually in prose) of variable length (...) which shocks or even frightens the reader, and/or perhaps induces a feeling of repulsion and loathing” (1999, p. 388). It often delves into the darker aspects of the human psyche, exploring themes such as mortality, the unknown, and the supernatural. Horror fiction employs various elements and techniques to create an atmosphere of unease and tension, aiming to elicit emotional and psychological responses from its audience. Below there are some key characteristics and elements of horror fiction.

- Fear and dread: The primary goal of horror fiction is to instill fear and dread in the audience. This can be achieved through elements such as suspense, surprise, and the unknown. The fear evoked in horror fiction can be related to tangible threats, such as monsters or killers, or more abstract fears, such as the fear of the unknown or the supernatural,
- Atmosphere and setting: atmosphere and setting play crucial roles in horror fiction. Dark and foreboding settings, such as haunted houses, desolate forests, or abandoned asylums, help create a sense of unease and isolation. The atmosphere is often enhanced through descriptive language, imagery, and sensory details that immerse the audience in the eerie world of the story,
- Characters: horror fiction typically features a diverse cast of characters, including protagonists who face terrifying threats and antagonists who embody evil or supernatural forces. These characters may confront their own fears and vulnerabilities as they navigate the horrors around them, adding depth to the narrative and allowing readers to empathize with their struggles,
- Themes: horror fiction explores a wide range of themes, including mortality, the nature of evil, the limits of human understanding, and the consequences of tampering with the unknown. These themes often reflect societal anxieties and explore the darker aspects of human nature, challenging readers to confront their own fears and beliefs,
- Tropes and conventions: horror fiction is characterized by a variety of tropes and conventions that are commonly used to evoke fear and suspense. These may include elements such as grotesque imagery, and the presence of supernatural beings or paranormal phenomena. While some tropes may become clichéd over time, skilled writers can subvert or reinvent them to create fresh and engaging narratives,
- Subgenres: horror fiction encompasses a wide range of subgenres, each with its own unique themes and conventions. These may include supernatural horror, psychological horror, cosmic horror, gothic horror, and many more. Each subgenre explores different aspects of trepidation and terror, offering diverse experiences for readers and viewers.

“Apart from being about murder, suicide, torture, fear and madness, horror stories are also concerned with ghosts, vampires, *doppelgängers*, succubi, incubi, poltergeists, demonic pacts, diabolic possession and exorcism, witch-craft, spiritualism, voodoo, lycanthropy” (Cuddon, 1999, p. 388), horror fiction serves as a means of exploring the darker aspects of human experience and confronting the unknown. By evoking fear and terror, horror stories can provoke intense emotional and psychological responses, inviting audiences to confront their deepest fears and explore the boundaries of human existence. Significantly, the horror stories can offer a wealth of themes, images and motifs for writers of metal music lyrics, especially those constructed within boundaries of death metal and black metal subgenres.

## A practical guidebook for people who would like to compose heavy metal lyrics based upon literary content (*Jarosław Giza*<sup>1</sup>)

Heavy metal music is not only known for its powerful instrumentation but also for its rich and often profound lyrical content. Composing heavy metal lyrics that resonate with literary depth requires a combination of creativity, storytelling prowess, and an understanding of various literary devices. Creating song lyrics inspired by books can be a fulfilling creative endeavour that merges the huge domains of literature and music. Below there are some clues and suggestions offered for lyricists who are eager to write their metal music lyrics that implement literary content. In this guide, the steps and techniques involved in constructing heavy metal lyrics infused with literary content are going to be explored.

### • **Selecting the appropriate literary source**

The first step should be an appropriate choice of a book that resonates with you emotionally, intellectually, and personally. It could be a Gothic novel, a horror story or even a dystopian novel. Your emotional connection to the source material will enhance the authenticity and depth of your lyrics. It is of crucial importance to ensure that the book that you have chosen has themes, tropes, characters, and convey emotions that you can translate effectively into metal song lyrics. While selecting the appropriate literary sources you ought to consider the following issues:

- ✓ Understanding literary sources:
  - a. Classical literature: focus upon the works of classic authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Mary Shelley, or William Shakespeare, to name only the most significant ones. This timeless literary output is rich with themes of horror, madness, and the supernatural, perfect for evoking a dark and mysterious atmosphere in your lyrics,
  - b. Mythology and folklore: explore the mythologies of various cultures, including Norse, Greek, Celtic, or Egyptian. These ancient tales are brimming with epic battles, gods, monsters, and heroic deeds, providing ample inspiration for crafting mythic and grandiose lyrics,
  - c. Philosophical texts: delve into the works of existentialist philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche or Jean-Paul Sartre for profound insights into the human condition, existential angst, and the search for meaning amidst chaos. While incorporating philosophical themes you can add intellectual depth to your lyrics,
  - d. Poetry: explore the works of a variety of poets while looking for lyrical inspiration. Poetry often captures intense emotions, vivid imagery, and complex themes, making it a valuable source for crafting evocative and expressive lyrics.

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- ✓ Selecting appropriate literary themes:
  - a. Darkness and despair: draw inspiration from Gothic literature or dark poetry to convey themes of despair, madness, or existential dread; explore imagery of haunted landscapes, crumbling castles, or tormented souls to create a chilling atmosphere in your lyrics,
  - b. Rebellion and revolution: channel the spirit of insurgence found in classical literature or revolutionary poetry to express themes of defiance, anarchy, or social upheaval; use imagery of revolutionaries, insurrection, or dystopian landscapes to fuel the fiery energy of your lyrics,
  - c. Mythic epics: embrace the grandeur of mythological tales to craft epic and fantastical lyrics; explore themes of heroism, destiny, and cosmic battles between gods and monsters; utilize vivid imagery of mythical creatures, epic quests, and divine interventions to transport listeners to otherworldly realms,
  - d. Existential angst: delve into existentialist philosophy or introspective poetry to explore themes of alienation, isolation, and the search for meaning in a chaotic world; use introspective lyrics to evoke a sense of existential anxiety and inner turmoil, grappling with the complexities of existence.
- ✓ Techniques for incorporating literary content;
  - a. Intertextuality: reference particular literary works, characters, or quotes within your lyrics to include profundity and nuance; pay homage to classical literature by weaving its themes and imagery into your own lyrics,
  - b. Symbolism and allegory: utilize symbolism and allegory to convey deeper meanings and layers of interpretation in your lyrics; employ metaphorical imagery drawn from literary sources to evoke powerful emotions and provoke thought,
  - c. Narrative storytelling: tell a cohesive story inspired by literary works, whether it is a Gothic tale of horror, a mythic saga of gods and heroes, or an existential journey of self-discovery; employ vivid imagery and descriptive language to immerse listeners in the narrative world of your lyrics,
  - d. Emotive language: harness the emotive power of language found in literature to convey intense emotions and evoke visceral reactions from listeners; experiment with poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, and alliteration to create lyrical imagery that resonates with your audience.
- ✓ Crafting authentic and original lyrics:
  - a. Personal interpretation: put your own unique spin on literary themes and motifs, infusing them with your personal perspective and experiences; use literary sources as a springboard for creative exploration rather than simply imitating existing works,
  - b. Experimentation: do not be afraid to push the boundaries of conventional songwriting and explore innovative ways of incorporating literary content into your lyrics; experiment with different literary genres, styles, and techniques to find what resonates most with your artistic vision,
  - c. Authenticity: stay true to your artistic voice and vision while drawing inspiration from literary sources. Incorporate elements of your own identity, beliefs, and experiences into your lyrics to ensure authenticity and emotional resonance,

- d. Revision and refinement: continuously modify and improve your lyrics to ensure they effectively convey your intended themes and emotions; solicit feedback from peers, collaborators, or trusted listeners to gain perspective and make improvements where necessary.

- **Exploring various subgenres and themes**

Consider exploring various subgenres, themes and tropes within literature. Whether it is science-fiction, utopian, crime or Gothic fiction, each subgenre offers unique perspectives and narrative styles that can inspire diverse lyrical motifs. It is significant for you to look for books that show and explore themes that are often employed in the process of construction of metal music lyrics such as evil, crime, darkness, atrocity, and sadness, to name only the most significant ones. Stories that delve into the sinister complexities of the human condition can provide a rich material for crafting meaningful and relatable lyrics.

- **Choosing appropriate themes**

Heavy metal music often explores dark, sinister, evil, introspective, and sometimes fantastical and horror themes. While constructing your own metal music lyrics it is advisable to consider the following issues:

- ✓ Understanding literary themes:

- a. Mythology and folklore: analyse ancient myths, legends, and folklore from various cultures. Themes, tropes, and characters taken from Norse mythology (e.g., gods, monsters, Ragnarok), Greek mythology (e.g., gods, heroes, Titans), or Celtic folklore (e.g., faeries, druids, battles against supernatural forces) can add depth and mystique to your lyrics,
- b. Gothic and Romanticism: embrace the dark, romantic, and macabre themes of Gothic literature; explore elements like mortality, the supernatural, doomed love, and existential despair, drawing inspiration from a variety of Gothic authors,
- c. Science fiction and fantasy: transport your listeners to distant realms and futuristic worlds through themes of science fiction and fantasy; explore dystopian societies, cosmic horror, epic quests, and interstellar warfare, inspired by authors who focus upon those themes,
- d. Existentialism and philosophy: delve into the depths of the human psyche and existential angst; explore themes of nihilism, alienation, existential dread, and the search for meaning in a chaotic universe, drawing from diverse philosophical works.

- ✓ Developing themes into lyrics:

- a. Emotive language: draw on vivid and evocative language to convey the emotional intensity of your chosen themes; employ powerful imagery, metaphor, and symbolism to paint a rich tapestry of visuals and sensations,
- b. Narrative structure: craft a compelling narrative arc that unfolds across the lyrics, engaging the listeners' imagination and empathy; build tension, climax, and resolution, weaving a coherent storyline that resonates with the thematic motifs,

- c. Poetic devices: experiment with various poetic devices such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and assonance to enhance the lyrical flow and musicality. Play with meter and cadence to create dynamic vocal patterns that complement the instrumental arrangement,
- d. Authenticity and honesty: stay true to your artistic vision and voice, infusing your lyrics with authenticity and honesty; draw from genuine emotions and experiences, avoiding clichés and superficiality in favour of raw, unfiltered expression.

- **Looking for inspiration in quotes and passages from literary works**

While selecting literary works for inspiration before diving into the lyric-writing process, it is essential to curate a collection of literary works that resonate with the themes and atmosphere you wish to convey in your heavy metal lyrics. Consider exploring works of fiction, poetry, philosophy, and mythology that align with the dark, morbid and intense aesthetic of heavy metal music. Some sources of inspiration may include:

- ✓ Classical literature: works by authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, Mary Shelley, and William Blake often explore themes of horror, despair, and the macabre,
- ✓ Mythology and folklore: Ancient myths and legends from various cultures offer rich imagery and symbolism that can be adapted to fit heavy metal themes,
- ✓ Existential philosophy: philosophical writings by thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus delve into the human condition, nihilism, and existential dread,
- ✓ Modern literature: Contemporary authors who explore dark and existential themes such as Cormac McCarthy, Chuck Palahniuk, and Neil Gaiman, can also provide valuable inspiration,

Once you have compiled a selection of literary works, immerse yourself in their content, paying close attention to passages, quotes, and themes that resonate with you on a visceral level. Take notes on imagery, symbolism, and language that evoke the intense emotions and imagery characteristic of heavy metal music. In this context consider the following strategies:

- ✓ Highlight passages that contain vivid descriptions, powerful metaphors, and evocative language,
- ✓ Analyze the themes and motifs present in the literature such as death, madness, darkness, rebellion, evil, and the struggle against oppressive force,
- ✓ Identify quotes that encapsulate profound existential insights, philosophical musings, sinister visualizations or intense emotional states,
- ✓ Look for imagery and symbols that lend themselves to the visual and auditory elements of heavy metal music such as fire, blood, darkness, chains, and epic battles.

Being acquainted with a wealth of literary material at your disposal, begin brainstorming ideas for your heavy metal lyrics, drawing inspiration from the quotes and passages you have collected. Allow your imagination to roam freely as you explore different concepts, narratives, and emotional landscapes. Consider the following techniques:

- ✓ Freewriting: write passages taking recourse of automatic writing inspired by the themes and imagery present in the literary works, allowing your ideas to flow organically without self-censorship,
- ✓ Concept mapping: create visual diagrams or mind maps that connect key themes, quotes, and images from literature to potential song concepts and lyrical motifs,
- ✓ Mood boards: compile visual collages or Pinterest boards featuring images, artwork, and photographs that evoke the atmosphere and themes of your lyrical concepts.

Eventually, you are prepared to start crafting your heavy metal lyrics with a focus on incorporating literary content. Keep the following principles in mind as you write your lyrics:

- ✓ Embrace poetic language: utilize vivid imagery, metaphors, and symbolism to evoke intense emotions and create immersive sonic landscapes,
- ✓ Experiment with structure and form: explore different rhyme schemes, verse-chorus patterns, and narrative structures to enhance the dramatic impact of your lyrics,
- ✓ Incorporate quotes and references: integrate excerpts from the literary works that inspired you directly into your lyrics, either as standalone lines or as thematic motifs woven throughout the song,
- ✓ Explore multiple perspectives: experiment with shifting narrative perspectives, voices, and speakers to add depth and complexity to your lyrical themes,
- ✓ Maintain authenticity: stay true to your own voice and artistic vision while drawing inspiration from literary sources, ensuring that your lyrics resonate with sincerity and emotional honesty,
- ✓ Use creative writing techniques such as sophisticated character development allowing you to construct three-dimensional characters in your lyrics. You are also encouraged to use elements of figurative language such as similes, metaphors, personification, pathetic fallacy, and alliteration. It is likewise advisable to implement elements of emotive language that can evoke particular emotions in your listeners. Moreover, it is a proper solution to make use of tension and twists that can astonish people who listen to your lyrics.

### • Structuring your lyrics

While heavy metal lyrics do not necessarily adhere to a strict structure, it is helpful to organize your ideas in a coherent manner. While constructing your lyrics, try to consider the following design:

- ✓ Verse: introduce the main themes or narrative of your song,
- ✓ Chorus: provide a central message or refrain that ties the song together,
- ✓ Bridge: offer a change in perspective or additional insight into the theme,
- ✓ Outro: conclude the song with a powerful statement or resolution.

Importantly, creating heavy metal lyrics with a focus on literary content requires a careful balance between the thematic depth of literature and the raw power of the metal genre. While doing that try to consider the following issues:

✓ Developing a concept:

Decide on the story or concept you want to explore throughout the song; create characters that embody the themes you want to explore. They can be heroes, anti-heroes, villains, or mythical beings; build tension and conflict within the narrative, leading to a powerful resolution or climax.

✓ Crafting the lyrics:

Start with a captivating title that hints at the theme of your song, the title should be catchy and memorable; follow a traditional verse-chorus-verse-chorus structure or experiment with non-linear narratives; use vivid imagery and metaphorical language to evoke powerful emotions and create visual scenes; employ these literary devices to enhance the rhythm and flow of your lyrics; decide on a rhyme scheme that suits the mood of your song. It can be strict or more free-form depending on your preference; experiment with different meters and rhythms to create intensity and drive in your lyrics; use repetitions strategically to emphasize key themes or motifs throughout the song; choose words that are evocative and impactful, fitting the tone and atmosphere of heavy metal music.

✓ Incorporating literary devices:

Employ irony and paradox to add depth and complexity to your lyrics; drop hints or foreshadow events to build anticipation and intrigue; infuse your lyrics with symbolic meaning, using objects, animals, or natural elements to represent deeper ideas; bring inanimate objects or abstract concepts to life by attributing human characteristics to them; paint grandiose and epic scenes that transport the listeners to otherworldly realms or evoke a sense of awe and wonder.

In summary, it is important to assert that crafting heavy metal lyrics that incorporate literary content requires creativity, skill, and a deep understanding of both music and literature. By mastering literary devices, choosing compelling themes, crafting powerful imagery, and refining your lyrics through revision, you can create heavy metal songs that resonate with audiences on both a visceral and intellectual level. Therefore, you are advised to embrace the darkness and mystery that permeate the fabric of literary works and unleash the power of your imagination to craft heavy metal lyrics that leave a lasting impression on listeners far and wide.

## The alphabetical list of Iron Maiden's songs that have been based upon or influenced by literary works

| The title of the song                        | The literary influence                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "Brave New World"                            | <i>Brave New World</i> by Aldous Huxley                                                                                |
| "Bring Your Daughter... to the Slaughter"    | <i>To His Coy Mistress</i> by Andrew Marvell (a loose interpretation)                                                  |
| "Children of the Damned"                     | <i>Children of the Damned</i> by John Wyndham                                                                          |
| "Flight of Icarus"                           | The myth of Icarus in Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>                                                                      |
| "Ghost of the Navigator"                     | <i>The Odyssey</i> by Homer                                                                                            |
| "Lord of Light"                              | <i>Paradise Lost</i> by John Milton                                                                                    |
| "Lord of the Flies"                          | <i>Lord of the Flies</i> by William Golding                                                                            |
| "Moonchild"                                  | <i>Moonchild</i> by Aleister Crowley                                                                                   |
| "Murders in the Rue Morgue"                  | <i>The Murders in the Rue Morgue</i> by Edgar Allan Poe                                                                |
| "New Frontier"                               | <i>Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus</i> by Mary Shelley                                                          |
| "Out of the Silent Planet"                   | <i>Out of the Silent Planet</i> by Clive Staples Lewis                                                                 |
| "Phantom of the Opera"                       | <i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> by Gaston Leroux                                                                       |
| "Prodigal Son"                               | Bible, Luke 15: 11-32 (a loose interpretation);<br><i>Lamia</i> by John Keats                                          |
| "Quest for Fire"                             | <i>Quest for Fire</i> by J. H. Rosny-Aine                                                                              |
| "Revelations"                                | <i>A Hymn: O God of Earth and Altar</i> by Gilbert Keith Chesterton;<br><i>The Collected Works</i> by Aleister Crowley |
| "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"                | <i>The Rime of the Ancient Mariner</i> by Samuel Taylor Coleridge                                                      |
| "Run Silent Run Deep"                        | <i>Run Silent, Run Deep</i> by Edward Latimer Beach Jr.                                                                |
| "Seventh Son of a Seventh Son"               | <i>Seventh Son</i> by Orson Scott Card                                                                                 |
| "Sign of the Cross"                          | <i>The Name of the Rose</i> by Umberto Eco                                                                             |
| "Still Life"                                 | <i>The Inhabitant of the Lake</i> by Ramsey Campbell                                                                   |
| "Sun and Steel"                              | <i>Sun and Steel: Art, Action and Ritual Death</i> by Yukio Mishima                                                    |
| "The Clansman"                               | <i>Braveheart</i> by Randall Wallace                                                                                   |
| "The Duellists"                              | <i>The Duel</i> by Joseph Conrad                                                                                       |
| "The Edge of Darkness"                       | <i>Heart of Darkness</i> by Joseph Conrad                                                                              |
| "The Evil That Men Do"                       | <i>Julius Caesar</i> by William Shakespeare                                                                            |
| "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner" | <i>The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner</i> by Alan Sillitoe                                                     |
| "The Longest Day"                            | <i>The Longest Day: June 6, 1944</i> by Cornelius Ryan                                                                 |
| "The Number of the Beast"                    | Bible, Revelation 13: 15-18;<br><i>Tom o' Shanter</i> by Robert Burns                                                  |
| "The Time Machine"                           | <i>The Time Machine</i> by Herbert George Wells<br>(a loose interpretation)                                            |
| "The Trooper"                                | <i>The Charge of the Light Brigade</i> by Alfred, Lord Tennyson                                                        |
| "To Tame a Land"                             | <i>Dune</i> by Frank Herbert                                                                                           |
| "When the Wild Wind Blows"                   | <i>When the Wind Blows</i> by Raymond Briggs                                                                           |
| "When Two Worlds Collide"                    | <i>When Worlds Collide</i> by Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer                                                            |
| "Where Eagles Dare"                          | <i>Where Eagles Dare</i> by Alistair MacLean                                                                           |

## Iron Maiden's "Phantom of the Opera" and Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* (Jarosław Giza<sup>1</sup>)

Gaston Leroux was a French author, best known for his timeless and iconic novel *The Phantom of the Opera*. He was born on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1868, in Paris, France, and passed away on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1927. Leroux's life was marked by a prolific career as a journalist, playwright, and novelist, and his works have left an enduring legacy in the world of literature. In his introduction to Leroux's *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, Otto Penzler argues that "employing his extensive experiences as a crime reporter and war correspondent, Gaston Leroux produced some of the most popular crime and detective novels and plays ever written by a French author" (2008, p. 3). Leroux began his career as a lawyer, but his true passion lay in writing. He transitioned to journalism, working for various newspapers and covering high-profile criminal cases. His experience as a crime reporter provided him with a wealth of material that would later influence his mystery and suspense novels. Leroux's writing style was marked by a keen sense of suspense and an ability to create a haunting atmosphere. His background in journalism and his fascination with crime and mystery greatly influenced his storytelling, making his works both captivating and thrilling. In addition to *The Phantom of the Opera*, he authored other successful novels, including the 1907 *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* and the 1908 *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*. Gaston Leroux's contributions to literature, particularly in the realm of mystery and suspense, have had a lasting impact on the genre. His ability to blend elements of horror, romance, and intrigue has solidified his place as a respected and beloved author, parallel in importance to both Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe. His works continue to be celebrated, adapted, and enjoyed by readers and audiences worldwide, ensuring that his legacy endures for generations to come.

*The Phantom of the Opera* was published as in a series in *Le Gaulois* from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1909 to 8<sup>th</sup> January 1910 and released in volume form in late March 1910. This Gothic mystery novel has captivated readers for over a century with its intriguing blend of romance, mystery, and tragedy. At the heart of the story there is the enigmatic character known as the Opera Ghost, who haunts the catacombs beneath the Opera in Paris. As asserted by Sollars, "the brilliance of this novel rests in its visual creations, in part the reason it has remained a successful film and musical. From the cellars to the roof, the opera house is a vivid and haunting setting in which this melodramatic love story plays out" (2008, pp. 618-619).

Set in the enchanting and opulent Opera Garnier in Paris, the story revolves around a series of mysterious events that plague this magnificent building and the people who work there. As the story unfolds, the readers are introduced to Christine Daaé, a beautiful and talented young soprano, and Raoul de Chagny, the handsome and courageous young nobleman who falls in love with her. Christine becomes the obsession of the Phantom, who manipulates her career, guiding her to success while demanding her love and loyalty in return. The novel delves into the complex dynamics of love, obsession, and the pursuit of artistry.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz.

Leroux's storytelling is masterful as he weaves a narrative that explores the themes of hidden identity, unrequited love, and the destructive power of jealousy. The Phantom's haunting presence in the cellars of the Opera house adds an eerie and suspenseful element to the story, creating a sense of both horror and sympathy for this tortured character that, as asserted by Jerrold E. Hogle, "like Frankenstein's creature hides even as he plays out much of what his creator experienced, lost, felt, feared, and wanted" (2002, p. 63). He is portrayed as a disfigured, highly skilled musician, and an architect who exerts a malevolent influence over the Opera house workers. A similar portrayal is offered by Jessica Sternfeld who argues that the Phantom is "a powerful and magical man who terrifies (...) [while] living in the underground lair and controlling the opera's productions through threats and tricks" (2016, p. 799). Significantly, despite his talents, his actions often verge on the criminal, as he resorts to acts of sabotage and intimidation to maintain control over the Opera management and Christine Daaé.

The Opera Ghost's evil deeds, while driven by his obsessions and desires, create an atmosphere of fear and intrigue throughout the novel. His ability to influence and terrorize the Opera employees and performers alike is a central element of the story, keeping the readers on edge as they navigate the dark and labyrinthine world beneath the Paris Opera House. Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* masterfully presents the Opera Ghost as a complex character whose blend of evil, artistry, cunning, and vulnerability makes for a captivating and enduring exploration of the human psyche.

The novel has been adapted into numerous stage and film productions, most notably Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic musical. It was likewise a powerful influence for one of Iron Maiden's songs entitled "Phantom of the Opera". The novel's enduring popularity can be attributed to its compelling characters, its exploration of the depths of the human psyche, and its ability to evoke a sense of mystery and passion. It remains a timeless classic, appealing to readers who enjoy a blend of romance, mystery, and the darker aspects of human nature.

There are a few similarities between Leroux's novel and Iron Maiden's lyrics that mark, as claimed by Pilkington, "the first indication of Steve Harris' prog-rock leanings and love of literary and historical lyrical influences" (2020, p. 11). One of the most significant resemblance lies in the presentation of the central figure, the protagonist called the Phantom of the Opera who, in both the novel (to a much greater extent than in the lyrics) and the song, is referred to by means of a few distinctive terms, testifying to his complex and at times ambiguous personality. As far as Iron Maiden's lyrics are concerned, this mysterious figure is invariably presented in a negative light, as the pure embodiment of evil. Here he is called both "the Phantom of the Opera" or simply "the devil" (Harris, 1980) and it is important to acknowledge that such a presentation is slightly different from the portrayal of the Phantom created by Leroux who delineates him rather as a complicated character who is capable of both good and evil. Hence, the narrative offers us more varied terminology associated with this mysterious character. He is "the Opera ghost" (Leroux, 1995, p. 2), "the ghost" (p. 3), "the Angel of Music" (p. 52), "some mysterious and unscrupulous person (p. 82), "Red Death" (p. 91), "the



voice”<sup>2</sup> (p. 96), “a living dead man” (p. 111), “Erik” (p. 122), “a madman” (p. 125), “an immense night-bird” (p. 131), “the ‘trap-door lover’” (p. 185), “a real monster” (p. 204), “prince of conjurers” (p. 211), “the god of thunder” (p. 221), and “the greatest ventriloquist that ever lived” (p. 226). However, despite the discrepancy between the number of monikers used in the book and the lyrics, the readers of both texts are stimulated to treat this mysterious character negatively. Nevertheless, the intention of the lyricist of Iron Maiden’s song seems to be the construction of the impression that the Opera Ghost is utterly evil, incapable of any good, which appears to be in line with the general mood permeating other Iron Maiden’s songs on their first album, where fans can listen, for instance, to the story of the wicked prowler.

References to his personality, conduct and appearance constitute another considerable section of the similarities between the Phantom presented in the Leroux’s novel and the Ghost presented in the lyrics of Iron Maiden; in both texts he is presented as an authoritative character exerting a powerful influence upon the people he encounters. In one part of the song Paul di’Anno<sup>3</sup> portrays the Phantom of the Opera in such a manner:

Standing in the wings there,  
you wait for the curtain to fall  
Knowing the terror and holding  
you have on us all (Harris, 1980).

And this depiction is analogous to that of Leroux’s who many a time accentuates the shattering power and influence of the mystifying Ghost upon different people who are associated with the Opera. The first reference to his power is unfolded at the beginning of the story where the readers encounter a young terrified girl, Giry, who has supposedly met the Opera Ghost:

This reticence exasperated the curiosity of the young ladies, who crowded round little Giry, begging her to explain herself. They were there, side by side, leaning forward simultaneously in one movement of entreaty and fear, communicating their terror to one another, taking a keen pleasure in feeling their blood freeze in their veins (Leroux, 1995, p. 13).

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<sup>2</sup> The frequent references to the Opera Ghost as “the voice” testify not only to his exceptional prowess of singing and being – as a ventriloquist – an expert at imitating a variety of different sounds, it also places him in line with other literary characters whose powerful influence upon other people has been exerted by means of speaking, for example Joseph Conrad’s Kurtz who is, likewise, many a time referred to as being endowed with a powerful voice or even being a voice himself. In Leroux’s narrative, Christine Daaé asserts that “I had heard him for three months without seeing him. The first time I heard it, I thought, as you did, that that adorable voice was singing in another room. I went out and looked everywhere; [...] and I could not find the voice outside my room, whereas it went on steadily inside” (1995, p. 115) and in Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” one can encounter a similar presentation of Kurtz made by Marlow prior to his physical encounter with the agent. For instance, Marlow asserts that “I made the strange discovery that I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing” (Conrad, 1928, p. 113) and later he adds that “[t]he point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words—the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness” (pp. 113-114).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Andrews (known as Paul di’Anno) was Iron Maiden vocalist between 1978 and 1981.

Importantly, the young girls working at the Opera are not the only ones that are subject to the terror exerted by the Opera Ghost. The managers are likewise thrown into utter subjugation while dealing with this mysterious character, as it is evidenced in the following quotation:

Well, from that evening, no one tried to take the ghost's private box from him. The manager gave orders that he was to have it at each performance. And whenever he came, he asked me for a footstool (Leroux, 1995, p. 45).

However, the person who is under the most vehement influence of the Opera Ghost is the beautiful Swedish singer Christine Daaé with whom both Raoul de Chagny and the Ghost fall madly in love. One of a few of many references to the influence of the Ghost upon the singer could be as follows:

But what he had seen at Perros, what he had heard behind the dressing-room door, his conversation with Christine at the edge of the moor made him suspect some machination which, devilish though it might be, was none the less human. [...] all this seemed to him to constitute a moral ground only too favourable for the malevolent designs of some mysterious and unscrupulous person. Of whom was Christine Daaé the victim? (Leroux, 1995, pp. 82-83).

It is significant to assert that such an overwhelming influence is the attribute of the character who, in both texts, is associated with demonical powers. However, it is important to add here that there is a slight difference between the content of the novel and the lyrics as far as the scope of the mysterious character's influence is concerned. In Iron Maiden's song, due to the restrictions associated with the impossibility of presenting many facts in the song that is rather a short piece of writing, we do not have any names of the people who are under the power of the Ghost. Therefore, we can surmise that the objective of the lyricist was the creation of the certainty that all people can be under the powerful influence of evil in their lives, wickedness that is represented by the figure of the Ghost, the embodiment of iniquity who, according to Mary Ellen Snodgrass, functions as "an enigmatic, monster-man, Erik, the insane, yet pitiable stalker of an opera star" whose presentation in the novel "little changed from villains of the previous century" (2005, p. 351). What is more, this conviction that everyone can be under the influence of evil is enhanced by the use of a direct appeal or even an order channelled to everybody ("keep your distance, walk away / Don't take his bait, don't you stray / Don't fade away, watch your step" (Harris, 1980). Possibly, the lyricist wanted to go beyond the constraints created in the novel where the powerful influence of Opera Ghost touches only a small group of people.

In the next section of Iron Maiden's song we have the following assertion:

You're the Phantom of the Opera  
you're the devil you're just out to scare  
You damaged my mind and my soul  
It just floats through the air  
You haunt me, you taunt me, you torture me  
back at your lair (Harris, 1980).

And this affirmation is comparable to a plethora of portrayals of the demonic Ghost and his destructive actions in the novel. One of those could be that one uttered by Raoul:

As I did not let go of the cloak, the shadow turned round; and I saw a terrible death's head, which darted a look at me from a pair of scorching eyes. I felt as if I were face to face with Satan; and, in the presence of this unearthly apparition, my heart gave way, my courage failed me (Leroux, 1995, p. 63),

and by Christine:

'He is a demon!' And she shivered and nestled in his arms with a moan. 'I am afraid now of going back to live with him... in the ground!' (Leroux, 1995, p. 114).

Such references to demonic appearance and actions conducted by the Opera Ghost are in abundance in the book. They all testify not only to the power of this outlandish character endowed with a "mesmerising cat call" (Harris, 1980) but also to his "living so long in hiding (...) behind that false mask" (Harris, 1980) in the dungeons of the Opera House, the shadowy place that appears in both texts. Undeniably, the portrayal of this murky building and its intricate construction is presented in more detail in the book. However, the lyrics of Iron Maiden's song offer us a reference to it, focusing on its obscure construction:

Watch your step, he's out to get you  
Come what may  
Don't you stray, from the narrow way (Harris, 1980).

This "narrow way" (Harris, 1980) is therefore a direct reference to "ill-lit passages and staircases" (Leroux, 1995, p. 16) of the Opera House with "a narrow circular gallery, probably running all around the Opera, which is immense, underground" (p. 120). The infernal cellars are so huge that, in line with Raoul, they are "large enough to hold a town" (p. 120) and they comprise the infernal kingdom of the Opera Ghost. Nevertheless, it is important to assert here that Iron Maiden's lyrics include only the reference to the narrow paths and passages one can find in this gloomy edifice, making its portrayal less exhaustive and less appealing for the listeners. And it is likewise significant to add here that, figuratively, the vision of the narrow way in the lyrics can symbolize the impossibility of making any choices in one's life. A person who is forced to go the narrow path does not really have any possibilities and seems to be conditioned to follow only that one way. Hence, if the person is the wicked one from the beginning, it is likely that one will never change and stay iniquitous forever, as the Opera Ghost in the lyrics of the song who is constantly presented as the Devil.

Moreover, one of the similarities between the presentations of the Ghost made by both Leroux and Steve Harris in the lyrics is associated with the symbol of mask worn by the Opera Ghost. In Iron Maiden's song we find such a phrase:

You've been living so long in hiding,  
Hiding behind that false mask (Harris, 1980).

and that is a direct reference to Raoul's assertion in the novel:

he, the man who hides behind the hideous mask of death! (Leroux, 1995, p. 93),

and that of Christine's as well:

Erik's black mask made me think of the natural mask of the Moor of Venice. He was Othello himself. Suddenly, I felt a need to see beneath the mask. I wanted to know the *face* of the voice, and, with a movement which I was utterly unable to control, swiftly my fingers tore away the mask. Oh, horror, horror, horror! (Leroux, 1995, p. 127).

However, as with other aforementioned elements of the analysis, there seems to be a minor difference as far as the usage of the mask is concerned. In the original story the Opera Ghost tends to wear the mask all the time in order to hide his physical repulsiveness, especially while spending time with Christine. He is forced to do that because he is sure that Christine will not accept and love him on account of his hideousness, despite having a good and sensitive heart. In the lyrics of the song, on the other hand, the Phantom puts on his mask to hide his evil intentions that are visible on his face and thanks to the mask he can continue committing atrocities. It is a significant and substantial difference because, despite the fact that the Opera Ghost delineated by Leroux and the one presented in Iron Maiden's lyrics appear to be very similar, both being hideous and wearing masks, they are, in truth, strikingly different. The narrative, therefore, does not only offer the readers the powerful image of the complex figure of the Opera Ghost, comprising of a mixture of benevolence and malevolence, it also transmits the significant message that the appearance can be misleading.

In conclusion, while the song "Phantom of the Opera" by Iron Maiden draws inspiration from the novel by Gaston Leroux, it simplifies and condenses the narrative to fit within the constraints of a rock song, functioning as the adaptation that emphasizes the darker aspects of the story. The novel offers a much more detailed and nuanced exploration of the characters and their motivations; it provides a more comprehensive and intricate exploration of the characters and their relationships within the grand Opera House setting. However, it is significant to assert that lyricist of Iron Maiden's song placed a slightly different focus upon the presentation of a few aspects of the original story. One of the most important appears to be the fact that, by the means of not including any names in the song, Steve Harris successfully spreads the message that everybody is in fact prone to commit evil, which testifies to our fallible human nature and this point is compatible not only with the general mood of the songs in the first Iron Maiden album, songs that focus upon killing, crime, and prostitution. It is also attuned to one of the tenets of Christian theology, according to which all people, due to the original sin, are more likely to commit evil than good, as asserted by St. Paul in his letter to Romans (7: 9): "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing". Nevertheless, it is of great importance to add here that, as asserted by Michael J. Gilmour, "whether drawing on Leroux, Coleridge, or John the Seer, the fantasies created by adapting old stories free audiences from the mundane and invite the exercise of imagination" (2012, p. 335).

## Iron Maiden's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (Adrian Sajewicz, Aleksandra Sajewicz)<sup>1</sup>

Edgar Allan Poe, born on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1809, in Boston, Massachusetts, was an American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic. His life was marked by tragedy, mystery, and a deep exploration of the human psyche, which greatly influenced his literary works. Poe's father abandoned the family early in his life, and his mother passed away when he was only three years old. He was subsequently taken in by John Allan, a wealthy tobacco merchant, but their relationship was strained, and Poe was never fully accepted into Allan's family. Poe attended the University of Virginia for a brief period of time but had to leave due to financial difficulties. He then enlisted in the United States Army under a false name and eventually received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. However, his focus on writing and a growing disdain for his superiors led to his dismissal from the academy.

After leaving West Point, Poe began his literary career in earnest and, as asserted by Gray, Poe "worked as an editor for various journals, (...) and he was an indefatigable essayist and reviewer (2011, p. 55). In 1835, he entered a contest with his short story "MS. Found in a Bottle", which won him recognition and launched his career as a writer and this "short story was followed by more and more tales appealing to the contemporary taste for violent humour and macabre incident" (Gray, 2011, p. 55). Throughout his life, Poe struggled with poverty and faced numerous personal tragedies, including the death of his wife, Virginia Eliza Clemm, from tuberculosis at the age of 24. Poe's literary output is characterized by its macabre themes, psychological depth, and mastery of language. He is best known for his tales of mystery and the supernatural, including *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, and *The Pit and the Pendulum*. These stories often explore the darker aspects of human nature, delving into themes of madness, guilt, and the irrational.

In addition to his short stories, Poe was also a prolific poet, known for his evocative verse and musical language. His most famous poem, *The Raven* was first published in 1845 and remains one of the most widely read and studied poems in the American literature. The poem showcases Poe's skilful use of rhyme, rhythm, and repetition to create a haunting atmosphere and explore themes of grief, loss, and the inevitability of death. Poe's contributions to the development of the detective fiction genre are also significant. His literary sleuth C. Auguste Dupin, who, according to Sikorska, "always confronted mysteries providing solutions for the reader" (2007, p. 472), introduced in the stories *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, and *The Purloined Letter*, laid the groundwork for later fictional detectives such as Sherlock Holmes.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz.

Despite his literary achievements, Poe's personal life was marked by tragedy and instability, and he struggled with alcoholism and depression throughout his life. He passed away under mysterious circumstances on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1849, at the age of 40. The exact cause of his death remains uncertain, with theories ranging from alcohol poisoning to murder. Poe's legacy as a writer and poet is enduring, and his influence can be seen in the works of countless authors who followed him. His exploration of the human psyche, his mastery of the macabre, and his innovative approach to storytelling continue to captivate readers and inspire writers to this day.

*The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is a pioneering work of detective fiction published in 1841. It features the character C. Auguste Dupin, who is considered one of the first fictional detectives in literature, "the brilliant amateur who solves a crime that seems beyond the talents of the professionals" (Grey, 2011, p. 56) and, as asserted by the author of the narrative, "young gentleman (...) of an excellent, (...) an illustrious family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such a poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes" (Poe, 1994, p. 77). He is a brilliant sleuth whose "mental dexterity has been emulated and rewritten in characters like Holmes (who explicitly insults his forerunner's supposed genius in *A Study in Scarlet*), Poirot, Dostoevsky's Petrovich, and Borges's Lönnrot, and has been revived across various media" (Sandberg, 2018, pp. 55-56).

The story begins with the narrator recounting the circumstances surrounding the murders. In the Rue Morgue, a bustling Parisian thoroughfare, a series of violent killings take place within an old, dilapidated building. The victims, Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, are discovered in their locked room on the fourth floor of the building. Their bodies are brutally mutilated, and the room is in disarray. The police are baffled by the case, as there seems to be no motive for those horrid murders, and the method of entry and escape from the locked room is utterly indistinguishable. Dupin takes an interest in the case and begins his investigation. He carefully examines the evidence, including witness testimonies and physical clues obtained from the crime scene. Through his keen powers of observation and deductive reasoning, Dupin is able to reconstruct the sequence of events and uncover the truth behind the murders, discovering that the murderer was in fact the orangutan that had escaped from his owner, a sailor. Dupin explains how the seemingly impossible feat of escaping from a locked room was achieved through careful planning and manipulation of the evidence.

*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, the "detective story" that, as asserted by Grey, was created "as a tale of ratiocination, a mystery that was gradually unravelled and solved" (2011, p. 56), explores several themes that are characteristic of Poe's literary output, including the limits of rationality, the nature of truth, and the duality of human nature. The story juxtaposes the rational methods of Dupin with the irrational violence of the murderer. While the police rely on conventional methods of investigation and fail to solve the case, Dupin demonstrates the power of logical reasoning and intuition in unravelling the mystery. However, it is significant to assert that Poe does not rigoristically claim that science is the territory of rationality alone. Therefore, as argued by Christopher John Murray, "while his detective C. Auguste Dupin finds solution through his apparently rigorous rational method, he is also capable of dramatic imaginative leaps and is well-versed in poetry, philosophy, and the arts". And he adds that "Dupin is the blueprint

for poet-mathematician detectives such as Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, whose rigorous deductive sense is balanced with more bohemian and mysterious tendencies" (2004, p. 1124). In the narrative Poe highlights the fallibility of human perception and memory through the conflicting witness testimonies in the story. Dupin emphasizes the importance of careful observation and critical thinking in discerning the truth from falsehood. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is a masterful example of Poe's skill in crafting suspenseful narratives and intricate plots. Importantly, the story laid the foundation for the detective fiction genre and remains a seminal work in the history of literature.

Since the time immemorial there has been crime in the world. One of the explanations why transgression and evil are so ubiquitous is offered by the Bible where, in the Book of Genesis, we are provided with the story about Adam and Eve who disobeyed God's order, the disobedience that was initiated by the wicked character and the embodiment of evil, the Devil. A consequence of that was the spreading of iniquity among people with the perfect example of Cain who, while being jealous that God has preferred his brother's offering, killed his brother Abel and, on account of this fact, the whole humankind seems to be tinged with tendencies towards crime and even sometimes murder. In consequence, we sometimes demonize those who are innocent. Even great minds like Socrates or Galileo were victims of a bad judgment. So what chance does an ordinary person have, especially, when they are accused of a crime so hideous? And this is exactly the vision which Steve Harris depicts for us in the song of Iron Maiden which "takes the murder of two women overheard by the central character as the springboard for him being mistakenly accused of the crime and pursued throughout France" (Pilkington, 2020, p. 19). The listeners are presented with the sinister portrayal of the horrid event at night during which everything turns to such a gigantic misunderstanding and confusion; the moment when people, quick to judge, turn the life of an unlucky and guiltless person into hell, just because he was the first to discover the murders at the Rue Morgue. The first stanza of the song is as follows:

I remember it as plain as day  
Although it happened in the dark of the night  
I was strollin' through the streets of Paris  
And it was cold it was starting to rain  
And then I heard a piercing scream  
And I rushed to the scene of the crime  
But all I found was the butchered remains  
Of two girls lay side by side  
Murders in the Rue Morgue (Harris, 1981).

And this stanza is replete with a few layers of similarities between the lyrics of the song and the narrative of the story.

The first parallel between the song and the novella is brought to the fore in the reference to the concepts of darkness and night. The speaker voice in the song declares: "I remember it as plain as day / Although it happened in the dark of the night" (Harris, 1981). In the narrative the readers are likewise presented with the morbid scenery of Paris at night, the city shrouded in gloom and obscurity, as, for instance, presented in the following quote:

we then busied our souls in dreams – reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of the true Darkness. Then we sallied forth into the streets, arm in arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking, amid the wild [...] shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford (Poe, 1994, p. 78).

It is therefore straightforward for the readers to indulge themselves in the creeping impression that the crime scene is enshrined with darkness, reminiscent of evil not only in the world, but also in the human heart of somebody capable of committing a horrible murder.

And during this sinister night the speaker voice's experience is presented in such a manner: "I was strollin' through the streets of Paris / And it was cold it was starting to rain / And then I heard a piercing scream / And I rushed to the scene of the crime" (Harris, 1981). At that point we have to admit that the person is simply innocently walking around in the Parisian abandoned streets and upon hearing a painful yell of horror, they rush to find out what has happened. Significantly, this presentation in the lyrics of the song is similar to the depiction offered in the narrative. The readers are offered a variety of illustrations, as if in the sequence of short visions or images, of this agonizing situation, as shown in the following quotes:

EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS. – This morning, about three o'clock, the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch were roused from sleep by a succession of terrific shrieks, issuing, apparently, from the fourth story of a house in the Rue Morgue (Poe, 1994, p. 80).

The shrieks were continued until the gate was forced – and then suddenly ceased. They seemed to be screams of some person (or persons) in great agony – were loud and drawn out, not short and quick (Poe, 1994, p. 82).

Upon entering the crime scene, the unidentified narrator observes the mangled bodies of two women: "But all I found was the butchered remains / Of two girls lay side by side" (Harris, 1981). And, like other similarities between the lyrics of the song and the narrative, this horrid visualization of massacred bodies is akin to that one offered by Poe, as shown in the following quote:

On a chair lay a razor, besmeared with blood. On the hearth were two or three long and thick tresses of grey human hair, also dabbled with blood, and seeming to have been pulled out of the roots [...]. Of Madame L'Espanaye no traces were here seen; but an unusual quantity of soot being observed in the fire-place, a search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom. [...] Upon the face were many severe scratches, and, upon the throat, dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger nails, as if the deceased had been throttled to death, [...] [there also] lay the corpse of the old lady, with her throat so entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off. The body, as well as the head, was fearfully mutilated – the former so much so as scarcely to retain any semblance of humanity (Poe, 1994, p. 81).



The truth is that at the beginning of the story the mystery associated with the murders seems unsolvable and even supernatural and, logically, gendarmes are doing whatever they possibly can to look for anyone to be blamed for this revolting crime. However, despite their efforts, they cannot solve the mystery on account of the fact that they do not possess a great analytic mind and deduction skills similar to those possessed by Auguste Dupin, the young gentleman who has actually unearthed the veil of mystery shrouding the murders of the Rue Morgue. What is also significant here is the fact that Harris, while giving his listeners a slightly different story from the original one, takes recourse of the police officers' confusion in order to create a side account to Poe's narrative. The lyricist, who reveals great creativity while employing Poe's story and generating at the same time different perspectives, constructs a tale of an innocent person who is accused of committing murders, just because someone needs to be, just because gendarmes desperately want to have a scapegoat, as presented in the next section of the song:

There's some people coming down the street  
At last, there's someone heard my call  
Can't understand why they're pointing at me  
I never done nothin' at all  
But I got some blood on my hands  
Because everyone's shouting at me  
I can't speak French so I couldn't explain  
And like a fool I started runnin' away (Harris, 1981).

It therefore appears that the seemingly blameless protagonist of the Iron Maiden song is just in the wrong place at the wrong time. He is simply the first to reach the crime scene and because of that he is believed to have been guilty of those murders. We can surmise that it is a wretched moment for him to observe the scene of the horrendous murders and be immediately accused of those crimes, murders committed with a vicious brutality. He is obviously traumatized and terrified, and in a moment he is on the run, running for his life, a life that could have been taken away from him for murders he has not committed, the murders of the Rue Morgue. Hence, he runs away and with trepidation asks himself a lot of questions:

Am I ever gonna be free?  
And now I've gotta get away from the arms of the law  
All France is lookin' for me  
I've gotta find my way across the border for sure  
Down the south to Italy (Harris, 1981).

Surprisingly enough, little does he know that the actual murderer is in the exactly same situation. But who is the murderer one might ask. It turns out to be a wild orangutan, brought to France by a sailor swinging near Borneo. The animal was captured and imprisoned against its will, and therefore completely innocent. Consequently, at the first occasion, orangutan runs away from captivity and, unfortunately, while running away in fear, he encounters two women alone in the small flat. When they start screaming trying to scare it off, the poor animal simply defends itself, not meaning to slaughter women, and after having done that, he feels bad about it. Accordingly, it tries to cover

its crime by trying to annihilate their bodies completely and hiding the body of the daughter in the chimney. The whole sequence of those terrible events is discovered by Dupin who has been implementing his exceptional logical reasoning and a meticulous observation. This process of reasoning makes him voice the truth about the animal being a real killer:

The description of the digits [...] is in exact accordance with this drawing. I see that no animal but an Ourang-Outang, of the species here mentioned, could have impressed the indentations as you have traced. This tuft of tawny hair, too, is identical in character with that of the beast of Cuvier (Poe, 1994, p. 94).

As far as the subsequent sections of Iron Maiden's song is concerned, a petrified person accused of murders has to run and he flees until he drops from exhaustion; then he is forced to sprint some more, all the way to Italy. And this fact is a major diversion from the original story where the readers of the story do not have such information whatsoever. Nevertheless, the mention about Italy as the place abroad where the innocent fugitive is forced to flee is significant here since it creates the impression that one cannot run away if one is stigmatized with the suspicion of committing such horrendous murders. Hence, the truth is that he will probably never be free and he will probably never feel blameless again. In his mind he will remain guilty of those horrible murders of the Rue Morgue, as presented in the next stanza of the song:

I'm never going home  
Well, I made it to the border at last  
But I can't erase the scene from my mind  
Anytime somebody stares at me, well  
I just start runnin' blind  
Well, I'm moving through the shadows at night  
Away from the staring eyes  
Any day they'll be lookin' for me  
'Cause I know I show the signs of  
Murders in the Rue Morgue (Harris, 1981).

One of the most significant aspects of Iron Maiden's lyrics is the fact that at the end of the song the listeners get a glimpse of the mind of the runaway who regrets his decision of running away, realizing how irrational it really was. He wonders what could have been, if he had just stayed put. Hence, at the end of the song the listeners can listen to a shattering confession of the fugitive – bearing more than a passing resemblance to that one uttered by the prisoner in another Iron Maiden song “Hallowed By Thy Name” – that, in truth, testifies to a fertile imagination of the lyricist Harris:

Am I ever gonna be free?  
It took so long and I'm getting so tired  
I'm runnin' out of places to hide  
Should I return to the scene of the crime?  
Where the two young victims died  
If I could go to somebody for help

To get me out of trouble for sure  
But I know that it's on my mind  
That my doctor said I've done it before  
Murders in the Rue Morgue  
They're never gonna find me  
Murders in the Rue Morgue  
I'm never going home (Harris, 1981).

At the end of the analysis it is important to acknowledge that the lyricist masterfully creates and leaves his lyrics open to interpretation, while actually making it consistent with the beginning, the middle and the end of Poe's narrative, as advised by Aristotle who, while analysing the concept of plot of the tragedy as a whole and unity in his *Poetics*, asserts that:

Now, according to our definition, Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles (2013, p. 23).

This is a great example of how to reinterpret the original text. Poe is a master at crafting captivating mystery stories, and Harris is a master at crafting captivating stories within Iron Maiden songs.

## Iron Maiden's "Children of the Damned" and John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* (Jarosław Giza<sup>1</sup>)

John Wyndham was the pen name of John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris, a British writer renowned for his science fiction works. He was born on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1903, in Dorridge, Warwickshire, England. Wyndham's early life was marked by the upheaval of World War I, during which he experienced the impact of conflict and social change. After completing his education, Wyndham undertook a variety of occupations, including farming, advertising, and law, before finally pursuing his passion for writing. His diverse experiences provided him with insights into human nature and societal dynamics, which became evident in his later literary works.

Wyndham, whose writing career "started," as claimed by Zgorzelski, "with a number of scientific romances in the twenties, publishing them in American pulp magazines," (2008, p. 323) gained a widespread recognition in the 1950s with the publication of catastrophic novels, including *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), *The Kraken Wakes* (1953), *The Chrysalids* (1955), and *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), to name only the most significant ones. These novels exemplify his skill in blending speculative science fiction with social commentary, exploring themes such as environmental catastrophe, alien invasion, genetic mutation, and the nature of humanity. While referring to Wyndham as one of many practitioners of science-fiction subgenre, Sikorska asserts that he belongs to those writers who display "considerable interest in in the consequences of global disaster and the subsequent prospects for reconstruction or rebirth" (2007, p. 716). However, she also adds that his books "show the world after society, as we know it, has been completely destroyed," analysing at the same time conduct "of a small group of people trying to stay alive when most of the world has been destroyed" (p. 716).

Nevertheless, despite his success as a science-fiction writer, Wyndham, whose works "are distinguished by the contrast between a comfortable English background and the sudden invasion of catastrophe, usually of a fantastic or metaphysical nature," as asserted by Drabble and Stringer, (1991, p. 626) remained relatively unknown, preferring to let his works speak for themselves. His ability to create plausible dystopian worlds and compelling characters contributed to his enduring popularity among readers and critics alike. John Wyndham passed away on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1969, leaving behind a legacy of thought-provoking science fiction that continues to captivate audiences and inspire writers to this day.

*The Midwich Cuckoos* is a science fiction novel published in 1957. The story is set in the small English village of Midwich where one day, an unusual phenomenon occurs. The entire village falls unconscious for an entire day and, as analysed by Bradford Lyau, this "quiet English village has its women mysteriously impregnated and their children products of xenogenesis (reproduction of offspring entirely different from parents)" (2011, p. 102). As the Children<sup>2</sup> are born, it becomes apparent that they are not ordinary

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<sup>1</sup> University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz.

<sup>2</sup> The term "Children" always starts with the capital letter in the novel.

human babies. They all share striking similarities in appearance, especially piercing golden eyes; they also grow and mature much quicker than average children. As argued by Adam Roberts, the Children “grow rapidly, evidencing strange powers of telepathy, and a group-mind sensibility. Ostracised and attacked for their oddness, they respond by telepathically compelling villagers to commit suicide, or to turn upon one another” (2016, p. 310).

The novel explores themes of alien invasion, evolution, and the fear of the unknown. The Children, referred to as the ‘cuckoos,’ represent an outside force that threatens the established order of human community. Their telepathic abilities allow them to exert control over the villagers, raising questions about their autonomy, free will, and the nature of humanity. Throughout the story, tensions rise as the villagers grapple with the presence of the cuckoos and the surmounting implications of their existence in their village. Some characters advocate for understanding and cooperation with the Children, while others opt for more drastic measures to protect the entire community from the perceived threats posed by them.

As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that the ‘cuckoos’ have a sinister agenda of their own. They view and regard people as inferior beings and seek to establish, in the long run, dominance over them. The conflict between the villagers and the powerful Children escalates, leading to a dramatic and tragic conclusion. One of the central themes of *The Midwich Cuckoos* is the fear of the unknown and the inherent tension between humans and the aliens or other unfamiliar, extraterrestrial creatures. Wyndham explores how society can or/and should react when confronted with the uncanny and how trepidation and prejudice can bring about conflicts and destruction. The novel is a thought-provoking exploration of human nature, societal norms, and the consequences of encountering the unknown. Through its compelling narrative and well-drawn characters, the story continues to captivate readers and provoke discussion about the nature of humanity and our place in the universe.

There are a few similarities between John Wyndham’s novel and Iron Maiden’s lyrics of the song concerning “children born with psychic powers who end up being destroyed by a combination of terror and fear” (Pilkington, 2020, p. 27) that was incorporated into the third album entitled “The Number of the Beast” released on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1982. The first of those is associated with the Children’s appearance, mostly their mesmerizing golden eyes<sup>3</sup>. This aspect of the Children’s extraordinary appearance

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<sup>3</sup> As far as the concept of mesmerizing eyes is concerned, it is important to add here that Wyndham’s novel is not the only one example of the book that accentuates this aspect of a person’s face. The most striking example could be the poem written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge entitled “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” that, surprisingly, is yet another example of the symbiosis between the literary text and Iron Maiden’s lyrics on account of the fact that the text of Coleridge’s masterpiece has also been shaped into the band’s lyrics of the song on its fifth album entitled “Powerslave”. Coleridge’s epic many a time accentuates the mesmerizing power of the mariner’s eye, attracting attention of the wedding guest and forcing him to listen to the sailor’s story. The example of references to the sailor’s eye and its magical power of influence in Coleridge’s masterpieces could be as follows:

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
‘By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stoppst thou me? (Nawrocki, 1999, p. 262).

and

He holds him with his glittering eye –  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years child;  
The Mariner hath his will (p. 263).

seems to be of considerable significance for the narrative structure of the novel and the lyrics as well since the mention of it appears just at the beginning of the song, in the first stanza:

He's walking like a small child  
But watch his eyes burn you away  
Black holes in his golden stare (Harris, 1982).

And the particular expressions used here are of great importance. On the one hand, one can detect the gripping power of the Children's stare that can literally annihilate people, like fire. On the other, there is a reference to black holes that can – it is a known astronomical fact – powerfully suck everything that comes to their proximity, completely destroying anything that is forced inside those powerful cosmic entities. Therefore, one can observe that the lyricist Harry not only takes recourse of the image of the powerful eyes of the Children one can find in the novel, he also transforms this image by considerably augmenting their destructive power while juxtaposing them with the force of a black hole. Due to this fact the Children in Iron Maiden's song appear to be more forceful than the Children from the original story. Moreover, the image of black holes in the Children's eyes can also evoke another impression; they can be associated with darkness and evil that lurks in their eyes. Therefore, seen from this perspective, the Children in the lyrics of the song can be regarded not only as the potential threat to humanity; they can also be followers or disciples of dark powers.

Significantly, many a time when the readers encounter references to the Children's golden, bewitching eyes, such instances are often enhanced by a subtle indication to their power, control, influence, enmity, and even strangeness, as signified by the following quote: “‘Who *are* these children? There's something about the way they look at one with those curious eyes. They are – strangers, you know’” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 93). The eyes are so outlandish that they are subject to constant scrutiny by the villagers and one of them describes them in such a manner:

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Interestingly enough, lyrics of another song that appeared on the same album, “The Number of the Beast” are likewise famous for its reference to the power of eyes and gazing, as indicted in this part of the song:

This can't go on, I must inform the law  
Can this still be real, or just some crazy dream?  
But I feel drawn towards the chanting hordes  
Seem to mesmerize, can't avoid their eyes (Harris, 1982).

Another example of the juxtaposition of the eye(s) or the manner of staring with the person's personality could be taken from Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novel *The Italian* in which the readers can read such a passage referring to the English tourists in Italy who, upon entering the church of the Santa Maria del Pianto, a church belonging to the convent of the order of the Black Penitents, observe a tall figure who has “an eye, which, as if looked up from the cloke that muffled the lower part of his countenance, seemed expressive of uncommon ferocity” (2008, p. 1). Moreover, one of the protagonists, Schedoni, the title Italian, the monk is likewise endowed with a powerful manner of staring at people with eyes that “were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice” (p. 35).

Moreover, to this list of texts that incorporate the vision of the eye(s) and their power over the characters could be added Edgar Allan Poe's short story entitled “The Tell-Tale Heart”. In the narrative the readers encounter the madman who discloses his murderous thought and crime. Although he admits that his victim, the old man, did not do him any wrong, the madman asserts “I think it was his eye!, yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture – a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees – very gradually – I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever [...] I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye” (Poe, 1994, p. 244).

‘Most striking are the eyes. These appear to be quite normal in structure; the iris, however, is, to the best of my knowledge, unique in its colouring, being of a bright, almost fluorescent-looking gold, and is the same shade of gold in all (Wyndham, 2008, p. 96).

Interestingly enough, the similar portrayal of their golden eyes is offered by the policeman interrogating one of the Children at the end of the book, testifying to their unending magnetism:

The eyes, however, were even more remarkable than he had been led to expect. He had been told of the curious golden colour of their irises, but no one had succeeded in conveying to him their striking lambency, their strange effect of being softly lit from within (Wyndham, 2008, p. 180).

Moreover, it is the detail that is noticeable from the very beginning by the Children’s surrogate mothers and, significantly, it inescapably determines the offspring’s foreignness and outlandishness, as confirmed by the following assertion:

when any of these women concerned is isolated from the rest with her own baby, it is bound to become more strongly borne in upon her that her golden-eyed baby is not, in relation to the other babies she sees, quite normal (Wyndham, 2008, p. 98).

Apart from their uniqueness distinguishing their appearance, the Children’s golden eyes and their very manner of staring is likewise associated with prevailing influence upon the villagers, power that is often destructive. One of the references to this aspect the readers encounter in the second part of the story, in the chapter entitled “Now we are nine”. As the narrative is unfolded, one is informed about the serious accident that occurred to the driver who, under duress, injured one of the Children while trying to avoid hitting one:

The car’s driver did his best. He pulled hard over to the right in an attempt to avoid them, and all but succeeded. Another two inches, and he would have missed them entirely. But he could not make the extra inches. The tip of his left wing caught the outermost boy on the hip, and flung him across the road against the fence of a cottage garden. [...] The car sprang forward. The driver changed up, and put his foot down again, keeping straight ahead. He made no attempt whatsoever to take the corner to the left. The car was still accelerating when it hit the churchyard wall. It smashed to smithereens, and hurled the driver headlong against the wall. [...] They [...] were staring at the wreck, a similar tense expression on each face (Wyndham, 2008, p. 139).

It is indeed the manner of staring that, as asserted by one of the villagers, was “hard, and bright” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 149) and he adds that “I felt as if a sudden gust of confusion and weakness were sweeping through me” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 149), confirming the absolute influence of the Children upon more and more terrified inhabitants of Midwich.

While continuing the song, Bruce Dickinson sings the following words that constitute the logical continuation of the Children's growing control over the villagers. After the chorus: "Children of the damned" (Harris, 1982), repeated four times, the singer sings:

He's walkin' like a dead man  
If he had lived, he would have crucified us all  
Now he's standing on his last step  
He thought oblivion, well, it beckons us all (Harris, 1982).

The words in this stanza seem to be of crucial importance because they unmistakably confirm the sinister and hostile intentions held by the Children towards the villagers, and, more globally, towards the entire human race. If they could, they would have crucified us all and the vision of crucifixion does not leave any illusions as to their genuine objectives. What is more, the image of one of the Children standing on his last step can prove the assumption that they are almost prepared to take an absolute control over the villagers. Therefore, the subsequent comparison between the novel and the lyrics of the song lies in their reference to a constant threat posed by the Children.

The novel offers the readers a lot of hints about the Children being an indisputable menace towards people and one of those is associated with the above-mentioned car accident during which one of the Children got slightly hurt. As the accident is analysed by the on-lookers, they assert that "there's no blame attached to that poor boy. He tried his very best to avoid hitting any of them, but he couldn't – And in a flare of anger and revenge they killed him for it" (Wyndham, 2008, p. 144). And, significantly, from this accident onwards, the Children start revealing their authentic objectives and posing more and more threats towards the villagers, at time initiating their private revenge upon those who want to hurt them. At the end of the novel the readers are informed that the Children "present not just a national danger, wherever they exist, but a racial danger of the most urgent kind" (Wyndham, 2008, p. 191). The train of thought is continued by assertion that "it calls upon all governments everywhere to 'naturalize' any such known groups with the least possible delay" (Wyndham, 2008, p. 191) on account of the fact that "these Children are a threat to the whole human race" (Wyndham, 2008, p. 192).

It is something that is eventually accomplished: the extermination of the Children at the end of the novel, and this brutal fact constitutes the subsequent comparison between the content of the book and the lyrics of the song. In the next section of the song Dickinson sings such words:

Now it's burning his hands  
He's turning to laugh  
Smiles as the flame sears his flesh  
Melting his face, screamin' in pain  
Peeling the skin from his eyes  
Watch him die according to plan  
He's dust on the ground, what did we learn? (Harris, 1982).

The concept of burning, reminiscent of the form of death to which witches were subject from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries or Jews in the German extermination camps during the WWII, is significant here since it is something that is hinted in the novel a few



times in the context of the villagers trying to control and punish the Children: “They want to burn the Children. Oh, hurry. Please, Please hurry” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 159), shouts one of the mothers. And this incident is analysed not only by policemen examining the matter, as indicated in this question: ““you told my people that a crowd was marching on the Grange with the intention of setting fire to it” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 163), but also by one of the Children being interrogated: “you say some of them came intending to burn the place (...) Yes, agreed the boy” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 181).

Significantly, those ineffective attempts end with the successful one that is presented in the last chapter of the novel entitled “Zellaby of Macedon” where the readers encounter Zellaby, the protector of the Children, the one who from the very beginning tried to strike a form of friendship with them. However, in the last section of the novel one observes him bringing a bomb into the meeting with the Children who, being accustomed to his friendliness towards them, did not manage, despite their outstanding telepathic abilities, to detect any hostile intention in his decorum. The narrator describes the moment in such a manner: “the last of the cases was lifted out of the car. I remembered that it had been in the car already when we loaded the rest. It was evidently heavy, because two of the boys carried it between them. Zellaby watched them up the steps a little anxiously, and then turned to me” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 216). The final moment of destruction is presented in such a manner: “I broke off, interrupted by a bright flash, like lightning, and a sharp tremor that shook the house” (Wyndham, 2008, p. 218) and the Children along with their school start to burn as indicated in the last stanza of the song:

You’re burning in the night  
You’re children of the damned  
Like candles, watch them burn  
Burning in the light  
You’ll burn again tonight (Harris, 1982).

In conclusion, Iron Maiden’s song and John Wyndham’s novel in which, as argued by Roberts, “Wyndham does not recruit our sympathy for the children [but rather asks] under what circumstances would it be not only possible but necessary and even heroic to murder a group of fifty-eight children” (2016, p. 310) may seem worlds apart in terms of artistic expression, but upon a closer examination, they reveal intriguing parallels and, at times, slightly different perspectives. In the song the vocalist Bruce Dickinson tells the story of the Children born with supernatural abilities, shunned by society due to their perceived differences. The lyrics depict the struggles faced by these Children as they navigate a world that fears and rejects them, echoing themes of alienation and persecution. Similarly, *The Midwich Cuckoos* presents a village invaded by extraterrestrial Children with extraordinary powers. These Children, unlike the rest of the community, possess telepathic abilities and a collective consciousness. Wyndham uses their otherness to explore the fear of the unknown and the challenges of integrating individuals perceived as fundamentally different.

It is important to assert that both texts delve into the societal fears and paranoia surrounding the unknown and the uncontrollable. Iron Maiden’s lyrics capture the anxieties that arise when faced with phenomena beyond human comprehension. The Children in the song become symbols of societal anxieties, representing the perceived

threat posed by the unfamiliar and the unconventional. Likewise, *The Midwich Cuckoos* reflects the pervasive fear of the “other” infiltrating and destabilizing established norms. The villagers’ growing unease and suspicion mirror real-world anxieties about the loss of control and the disruption of social order in the face of the unknown.

Both Iron Maiden and John Wyndham use their respective media to explore the complexities of human nature in the face of the unknown. In “Children of the Damned”, the lyrics compel listeners to question their perceptions of normalcy and accept the inherent diversity of human experience. The song challenges listeners to empathize with the ostracized children and confront the prejudices that fuel their marginalization. Similarly, *The Midwich Cuckoos* invites readers to reflect on the nature of humanity and the moral dilemmas inherent in confronting the unknown. As the villagers grapple with the presence of the alien children, they are forced to confront their own biases and preconceptions, ultimately raising questions about identity, belonging, and the limits of empathy.

In “Children of the Damned” and *The Midwich Cuckoos*, Iron Maiden and John Wyndham offer audiences compelling narratives. Through their exploration of themes such as otherness, societal fears, and human nature, both texts challenge audiences to confront their own beliefs and perceptions. By drawing parallels between these seemingly disparate works, one can gain a deeper appreciation for the universal themes that unite art across different media and genres, inviting one to reflect on the shared human experience.

## Iron Maiden's "Flight of Icarus" and The story of Daedalus and Icarus from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Maksymilian Totos<sup>1</sup>)

Publius Ovidius Naso (Ovid in English) was a well known Roman poet, mainly due to his two literary achievements: *The Ars Amatoria* (*The Art of Love*), an instructional elegy in three books giving advice on love and seduction, and *Metamorphoses*, the latter of which consists of 15 books. *Metamorphoses* is also regarded as Ovid's greatest work, alongside those of Virgil and Homer, as well as the primary source of classical myths. Very little is known about the poet's life, however, it is to be noted that Ovid documented the most important events of his life in the autobiographical works, for instance, in *Tristia* (*Sorrows*). From what is known, his father sent both Ovid and his older brother to Rome so that they could study rhetoric and later law. However, Ovid pursued life as a poet, rather than an official public figure. The Roman poet's first erotic poems, such as *Amores* (*The Loves*) and *Heroides*, were highly acclaimed which would make Ovid popular. Despite his popularity, Ovid was exiled to Tomis in 8 AD by the Emperor Augustus for the unknown reasons. In Tomis, the poet would write long letters and poems to Augustus, pleading the emperor to let him go back to Rome. However, these efforts were to no avail, resulting in Ovid spending the rest of his life in exile (until 17 AD). The impact of Ovid's literary output is still very much prevalent today, just as it was in the past. Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare and numerous others were greatly inspired by his works and, as claimed by Niklas Holzberg, "no writer left a deeper mark on [...] literature than the ancient Roman poet Publius Ovidius Naso" (2002, p. 1). The assumption is supported by Peter France who asserts that "from Ovid's own day, critical responses to the poet's work have been marked by a curious schizophrenia. He has been perhaps the most frequently imitated and widely influential writer in the whole European tradition. [...]. His love poetry – outspoken, shrewd, witty, knowing, self-mocking – offered later poets an alternative to the ardent solemnities of the Petrarchan tradition" (2001, p. 520).

*Metamorphoses* by Ovid is a masterpiece of classical mythology and Latin literature, consisting of 15 books written in dactylic hexameter. Completed around 8 AD, it narrates the history of the world from its creation to the deification of Julius Caesar, focusing on transformation myths, where individuals undergo dramatic changes often as a result of divine intervention. The central theme revolves around a variety of metamorphoses, reflecting the fluidity and impermanence of life. Human beings, gods, goddesses, and even objects undergo profound changes, highlighting the capriciousness of fate and the instability of existence. It is the literary work that "impressed readers with its psychological acuteness, pictorial precision, and imaginative vision of nature's continuity and flux" (France, 2001, p. 520).

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In his masterpiece Ovid weaves together various Greek and Roman myths, creating a continuous narrative that spans generations and cultures. Each story serves as a commentary on human nature, society, and the cosmic order. Love, desire, and passion are recurring motifs throughout the work, often leading to both joy and tragedy. For instance, the tales of Apollo and Daphne, Pygmalion and Galatea, and Orpheus and Eurydice explore the complexities of romantic relationships and the pursuit of unattainable beauty. Many transformations occur as a form of chastisement for hubris and transgression against the gods. Characters like Narcissus, Arachne, and Phaethon suffer dire consequences for their arrogance and defiance. Moreover, Ovid emphasizes the interconnectedness of nature and art, blurring the boundaries between the human and natural worlds. The myths of Pygmalion, Daedalus, and Perdix underscore the transformative power of creativity and craftsmanship.

The Myth of Daedalus and Icarus is one of many stories the readers can find in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is a story of the desire for liberation – more specifically, the longing to escape imprisonment by, seemingly, impossible means. This particular passage of the collection includes the themes of freedom and pride, describing the legendary artificer named Daedalus and his son Icarus who, after having built the labyrinth for the Minotaur, were forbidden to leave the island by Minos, the king of Crete. Expectedly, the artificer was devastated with the fact and decided that he would, along with his son Icarus, escape the island by whatever means available. However, he could not do that by sea, as Minos kept a strict watch on all the ships. Q.L. Pearce continues this story by asserting that while “using wax and feathers, Daedalus created two pairs of wings that enabled them to fly to freedom” (2012, p. 37), intending to escape by air with the help of his contrivance. And this is presented in such a manner at the commencement of the narrative:

Daedalus now had come to detest his protracted exile in Crete and was longing to visit his native country again, but his way was barred by the sea. ‘King Minos can block my escape, by land or water,’ he sighted. ‘The air, at least, is still open; my path lies there. He is lord of the world, but not lord of the sky (Ovid, 2004, p. 303).

Significantly, as the readers are reading the text of the myth they are encouraged to pity and support the two men, as they are presented as victims of gross injustice. But since Icarus was a young man, a rebellious and dreamy one, the “desire for skies” (without the regard of repercussions) possessed him utterly which ultimately was the cause of his downfall. In a way, the myth teaches us that total liberty mixed with hubris (pride) may, in truth, negatively influence one's perception and even prevent one from reaching one's full potential and lead to their downfall. Therefore, the whole myth can be summarized as follows: humility is the key to true autonomy.

This myth has been used in many cultural texts and other media as a recurring theme. France divulges that “it was regularly translated, adapted, echoed, and alluded to by poets in all the major European vernaculars, and drawn upon as a major source of mythological data by dramatists, musicians, and visual artists” (2001, p. 520). Due to the use of wings, crafted by Daedalus, by the protagonists in their escape, wings have invariably been recognized as a symbol of liberty. Undeniably, the myth of the two would-be refugees greatly influenced the culture of the western part of the world. This influence is likewise seen in one of Iron Maiden's songs entitled “Flight of Icarus” that appeared on their 4<sup>th</sup> studio album entitled *The Piece of Mind* in 1983.

There are a few similarities between Iron Maiden's lyrics and Ovid's story. The first of those could be the fact that structurally they both start in the *medias res*, when both Daedalus and Icarus are about to escape Crete with the help of the crafted wings. The second comparison focuses on the two protagonists. In both the myth and the song the main characters are a father and his son; however, in Iron Maiden's piece of music we have a reference to only one name, namely Icarus, the name that appears only in the title of the song. This strategy implemented by the lyricists appears, at the first sight, slightly outlandish, but, upon a closer scrutiny it seems to be exceptionally effective since, although the listeners are provided with the general layout of the myth, the lyrics of the song convey – by means of avoiding including names – more general meaning because, in that shape, lyrics can be applicable to everyone, not only to two fugitives. In that way Iron Maiden's song stands a chance of expressing the universal truth about any person's desire for freedom; yearning that, sadly at times, can lead to disastrous consequences, as epitomized by Icarus and his downfall.

As far as the lyrics are concerned, they open with a vision of an old man (presumably Daedalus) standing on the hill, early in the morning, waiting impatiently for his chance to escape from the captivity:

As the sun breaks, above the ground  
An old man stands on the hill  
As the ground warms, to the first rays of light  
A birdsong shatters the still (Smith, Dickinson, 1983).

And the truth is that this visualization differs from that in the original narrative because it presents the old man standing on the hill, from which he can observe the horizon that both signifies his native land and indicates Daedalus' growing yearning to escape from their captivity. This information is not included in the original myth where the readers are presented only with the vision of the old man, who, while loathing "his protracted exile [...] [was] longing to visit his native country again" (Ovid, 2004, p. 303). Moreover, the next section of the lyrics incorporates the important detail that is not included in the myth, either. This part of the song shows the old man's unflinching determination to be free, the resolve revealed in his eyes full of fire and passion:

His eyes are ablaze  
See the madman in his gaze (Smith, Dickinson, 1983).

And given the context of the original story, his blazing stare can confirm his desire to escape the imprisonment.

Another comparison between Ovid's myth and Iron Maiden's song revolves around the concept of the flight and Icarus' death that, partly, results from his father's resolve and encouragement towards his son to start flying with him, the determination expressed in the chorus of the song:

Fly on your way, like an eagle  
Fly as high as the sun  
On your way, like an eagle  
Fly and touch the sun (Smith, Dickinson, 1983).

but also implemented in the narrative of the myth where we can hear Daedalus' loud command directed towards his son: "Follow!" he cried" (Ovid, 2004, p. 304). Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that Icarus' death is also partly due to his obedience towards his father, expressed in the following words: "As he spreads his wings and shouts at the crowd / In the name of God, my father I'll fly" (Smith, Dickinson, 1983).

Triggered by those two factors resulting from his obedience towards his father Icarus sets off and his escape finishes gravely for him. However, Icarus' submission is not the only reason why he is ready to start flying, he is eager to begin his escape due to his youthful fervour as well. He is presented as endowed with an exceptional strength and resolve to start his flight; the flight that finishes fatally for him due to his enthusiasm (shown in the following words: "His eyes seem so glazed / As he flies on the wings of a dream" (Smith, Dickinson, 1983), his lack of experience, and his carelessness, as indicated in this passage from the narrative: "His young son Icarus, standing beside him and little aware of the threat to himself he was touching, smiled as he caught at the feathers fluttering in the breeze; and now and again he would carelessly soften the yellow wax with his thumb, enjoying his game as he meddled and interfered with his father's wonderful work" (Ovid, 2004, p. 303). Moreover, not being aware that wax that holds feathers together, enabling him to spread his wings and fly away, can melt very quickly while confronted with the power of the sun, Icarus soars too high and immediately starts to fall down: "Now his wings turn to ashes to ashes his grave" (Smith, Dickinson, 1983).

The portrayal of the tragic end of Icarus, shown in the song, caused by his daydreaming and eagerness, is portrayed in the following manner in Ovid's story:

Now Juno's island, Samos, was coming up on the left (Delos and Paros were far behind them); Lebinthos lay to the right with the honey-rich island, Calymne – when all this adventurous flying went to Icarus' head. He ceased to follow his leader; he's fallen in love with the sky, and soared up higher and higher. The scorching rays of the sun grew closer and softened the fragrant wax which fastened his plumage (2004, p. 305).

And in this context it is significant to accentuate the fact that the chorus of the song alludes to the flight in the mocking manner when it comes to the son. It even appears to tempt the son to "fly as high as the sun" (Smith, Dickinson, 1983), and this temptation did indeed work on him, just like it did with Icarus in the myth. However, it is worth noting that the lyrics of the chorus appear at the beginning of the song as well and, perhaps, the words are constructed as a form of temptation for Daedalus (the old man in the lyrics) as well – to escape the land he is being held hostage in.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the story of Daedalus and Icarus is slightly altered in Iron Maiden's song as far as other aspects of the myth are concerned. It can be observed in the following verse:

Now the crowd breaks and a young boy appears  
Looks the old man in the eye  
As he spreads his wings and shouts at the crowd  
In the name of God, my father I'll fly (Smith, Dickinson, 1983).

Here the mentioned crowd gathers right before the flight of the son, as opposed to Ovid's story where there is no crowd present whatsoever; however, in both texts there are some of the citizens who are lucky enough to spot the flying Icarus and Daedalus:

They were spied by a fisherman dangling his catch on his quivering rod,  
a shepherd at rest on his crook and a ploughman steering his ploughshare.  
All watched in amazement, thinking, 'They certainly must be gods to fly  
through the air!' (Ovid, 2004, p. 304).

What is also intriguing is the fact that it is unknown whether the father in Iron Maiden's song joins his son in the flight, but it does not appear so (or it is not directly stated, at the very least). What is remarkable and not understandable is the fact that the son feels as if he has been betrayed by his own father, as indicated in those words: "Now he knows his father betrayed / Now his wings turn to ashes to ashes his grave" (Smith, Dickinson, 1983). And while referring to the ambiguity introduced by this mention of betrayal, Pilkington asserts that:

Dickinson has said that he twisted the tale slightly to turn it into an allegory about teenage rebellion, which in the case of Icarus led to his death. There is one line 'now he knows his father betrayed', just before his wings 'turn to ashes', which leaves the question open to whether this means his father betrayed him (with faulty wings), whether his father was betrayed by someone who helped him, or indeed whether it is he who has 'betrayed' his father's belief in him by flying too close to the Sun as in the original tale (2020, p. 37).

In summary, Iron Maiden's "Flight of Icarus" is a slightly transformed version of Ovid's story of Daedalus and Icarus, a story of a father and his son who dream of achieving their desired freedom. Both the Ovid's myth and Iron Maiden's song are about a young boy who, due to his pride and insubordinate nature, tragically loses his own life. The song not only slightly alters the plot, but also focuses only on his part, with the climax being his flight and its disastrous result.

## Iron Maiden's "The Trooper" and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (Adrian Sajewicz, Aleksandra Sajewicz)<sup>1</sup>

Alfred Tennyson, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Tennyson (6<sup>th</sup> August, 1809 – 6<sup>th</sup> October, 1892) was an English poet and the Poet Laureate<sup>2</sup> during Queen Victoria's reign, known for his profound and evocative verse that captured the spirit of the Victorian era. Tennyson's breakthrough came with the publication of *Poems* in 1830, which included some of his most famous poems, such as *The Lady of Shalott* and *Mariana*. His subsequent work, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, written in memory of his dear friend Arthur Hallam and published in 1850, remains a poignant exploration of grief and faith and is considered one of his masterpieces. In line with Sanders, "following Hallam's traumatic death, Tennyson retreated into a period of mourning in which he seems to have indulged in a painful purgative process which was both personal and professional. Many of the short lyrics which date from this extended period of bereavement were later shaped into the elegiac 'mechanic exercises' which make up the early sections of *In Memoriam*" (1994, p. 425) which was published alongside another iconic work, *The Princess*, which marked the beginning of his association with the British monarchy. Queen Victoria admired his poetry and, in 1850 she appointed him Poet Laureate, a position he held for over 40 years. Sikorska claims that "in fact, the year 1850 was marked by three important events [for Tennyson]: the publication of *In Memoriam* on June 1<sup>st</sup>, Tennyson's marriage with Emily Sellwool, on June 13<sup>th</sup>, and his appointment for the position of Poet Laureate on November 19<sup>th</sup>" (2007, p. 435). This royal connection earned him the title of Baron Tennyson in 1884, cementing his status as a leading figure in British literature. Tennyson's poetry reflected the concerns and complexities of the Victorian age, with themes ranging from nature and myth to social and political issues. His famous works include *Maud*, *Idylls of the King*, and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, which exquisitely captured the bravery and heroism of the British troops in the Crimean War. Alfred Tennyson left an indelible mark on the world of poetry, and his works continue to be celebrated for their lyrical beauty and profound insights into the human condition. He passed away on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 1892, but his legacy endures through his contributions to English literature.

*The Charge of the Light Brigade* is a narrative poem written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in 1854. The poem whose "inspirations came from the *London Times* newspaper, which reported the war through their correspondent (perhaps one of the firsts), William Howard Russell" (Powyszynski, 2011, p. 7), tells the story of a disastrous military charge during the Crimean War, specifically the Battle of Balaclava (25<sup>th</sup> October, 1854), in which the British light cavalry units were ordered to charge a heavily fortified Russian position. Tennyson's poem is based on actual events and serves as a powerful commentary on the valour, heroism, and sacrifice of soldiers in the face of miscommunication and

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<sup>2</sup> The term Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom refers to poets appointed by the monarchs, on the advice of the Prime Minister, to provide poems commemorating official or historic occasions. So far, there have been twenty one Poets Laureate in the British history. Among them there are such names as John Dryden and William Wordsworth, to name only the most significant ones.



military blunders. Pilkington asserts that “the famous charge occurred as an error in communication, when the commander, Lord Raglan, gave an order to retake some British guns which were being retrieved by the Russian forces” (2020, p. 38). Tennyson’s poem consists of six quatrains (four-line stanzas) written in rhyming tetrameter. The consistent rhythm and rhyme scheme help to create a sense of momentum and urgency, mirroring the charge itself. The poem’s brevity and vivid language contribute to its impact, as it captures the essence of the charge in a concise and memorable manner.

As for themes that permeate this poem that, in line with Arturo Mora-Rioja, “resembles a metal lyric because of its aggressive, military, manly diction, and its imagery of war, hell, and Death” (2023, p. 76), the readers can detect three the most significant ones. One of those is the concept of heroism and sacrifice on account of the fact that the poem celebrates the bravery and selflessness of the Light Brigade soldiers who followed orders unquestioningly, even when execution of those orders meant certain death for them. Christopher Ricks even adds that because “the Light Cavalry Brigade suffered grievous casualties [it] made itself immortal” (1989, p. 324). Hence, the poem emphasizes the loyalty and courage of the soldiers in the face of certain death. The second notion associated with the first one is the military mismanagement. Tennyson criticizes the incompetence and miscommunication of the British military leadership, which resulted in the disastrous charge. Perceived in this light, the poem highlights the tragic consequences of poor decision-making in warfare. The third concept that infuses that poem is the notion of nationalism and patriotism. The poem conveys a sense of national pride and patriotism, as the Light Brigade’s sacrifice is portrayed as a noble and honourable endeavour in service of their country. Therefore, as asserted by J. Timothy Lovelace, “Tennyson’s intention in this work is to recount an act of transcendent courage and to call for the commemoration of that courage, a call that answers itself as the poem embodies the commemoration it enjoins” (2003, p. 105).

In his poem Alfred, Lord Tennyson asserts that:

In a valley of death [...]  
Into the valley of Death Rode the six hundred [...]  
Theirs not to make a reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die (2016, p. 52).

The Battle of Balaclava was a life-changing event for many, and, significantly, for many, it was a source of inspiration, especially the image of bravery of men charging into the roaring guns of the Russians. But the charge itself became truly famous after the publication of this renowned poem in which Lord Tennyson showed the bravery and martyrdom of the troopers. 150 years after its publication, Iron Maiden came back to the tragedy of Charge of the Light Brigade. They composed a song called “The Trooper” promoting their 1983 album “Piece of Mind”. The lyrics put a lot of emphasis on the horrendous and murderous aspect of the charge, which, in fact, is a metal theme. Was that a glorious death or a mistake when “In a valley of Death Rode six hundred”? (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52).

While basing the lyrics of the song on the poem, Iron Maiden throws us right into the fire, the fire of musket guns and, as argued by Mora-Rioja, “Steve Harris recrafts the story from an alternative perspective: that of a British soldier narrating the events

in the first person, thus becoming an intradiegetic-autodiegetic speaker” and “these changes in narrative voice allow the listener to position him/herself in the soldier’s place instead of detachedly hearing a story of the past told by a neutral narrator” (2023, p. 76). The truth is that the listeners do not have time to prepare as from the beginning of the song they are figuratively fighting for their lives while being “attacked” by an ultra-fast drumming made by Nicko McBrain. As asserted by Pilkington, “the lyric of the song may well be poignant and historically instructive, but the main thrust musically is the evocation of the battle, and the charge itself, and it does so in exceptional fashion” (2020, p. 38). And this fact distinguishes Iron Maiden’s song from the original poem since Lord Tennyson takes a more conservative approach, warning the readers about what they are about to witness, setting up a battle that is about to occur in their minds. While Lord Tennyson’s slow build-up is supposed to build a certain atmosphere, Iron Maiden heavy opening gives their song a lot of dynamism, as indicated in the words sung exceptionally fast by Bruce Dickinson just at the beginning:

You’ll take my life but I’ll take yours too  
You’ll fire your musket but I’ll run you through  
So when you’re waiting for the next attack  
You’d better stand there’s no turning back (Harris, 1983).

Those words, offering a vivid vision of brutality of war, present the listeners with a mindset we would need in the further parts of the song: the mindset of a soldier who is perceived as conditioned to fight till the end, no matter what cost. And, importantly, the lyrics of Iron Maiden’s song very smartly show us that the battle always starts in the head of a soldier. Alfred, Lord Tennyson uses similar strategy in his poem while both visualizing the perspective of a soldier who is oblivious to the upcoming events:

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”  
Was there a man dismayed?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Someone had blundered (2016, p. 52)

and showing the readers the figure of a dutiful soldier who is obeying one’s orders. Nevertheless, one may ask whether a bold cavalryman of the light brigade is aware of the fact that a commander has made a dreadful mistake, and sent the soldiers to death. Would one still charge if they knew about it? And although this question sadly remains unanswered, Lord Tennyson continues his line of thought in such a manner:

Theirs not to make a reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die (2016, p. 52).

indicating that way the unsuccessful attempts made by soldiers, fighters who are embedded in the grand mechanism of war and bloodshed. Nevertheless, it is important to assert that the mindset of a soldier proves to be a crucial element in understanding both a song and a poem. The truth is that both the readers and the listeners would eagerly challenge that disastrous decision taken by a commander and search for excuses not to charge, but not courageous cavalrymen who “Into the valley of Death Rode (...) the six hundred” (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52).

As far as a subsequent comparison between Iron Maiden's song and Lord Tennyson's poem is concerned, the two texts show the intricacies of the battle. Bruce Dickinson screams: "The bugle sounds and the charge begins" (Harris, 1983) and the speaker in the poem likewise yells: "'Forward, the Light Brigade! / Charge for the guns!" (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52). The soldiers on the horses shout their battle cries and then the cannons roar silencing charging troops. The vision of raging battle is enhanced in the next section of Iron Maiden's song:

The horse he sweats with fear we break to run.  
The mighty roar of the Russian guns,  
And as we race towards the human wall,  
The screams of pain as my comrades fall (Harris, 1983).

Undoubtedly, the above-mentioned portrayal is not only full of the soldiers' resolve, it is also replete with brutality of war and Iron Maiden's lyrics successfully describe the feelings of valiant Redcoats, something that Lord Tennyson slightly lacks in his poem. However, on the other hand, Lord Tennyson provides us with a powerful description of the chaotic battlefield:

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
[...]  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of hell Rode the six hundred (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52).

Importantly, comparing battlefields to hell is an extremely accurate comparison, just as Iron Maiden's lyrics present that:

But on this battlefield no-one wins,  
The smell of acrid smoke and horses breath.  
As I plunge on into certain death (Harris, 1983).

When the charge begins there is no turning back for the fearless Cavalry and Lord Tennyson describes that in such a manner:

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turn'd in air  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
All the world wonder'd:  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52).

And while doing so the poet provides us with a graphic depiction of a battle as if we were standing on a hill and looking into the Valley of Death.

However, it is significant to accentuate the fact that for soldiers attacking fortified positions, it looks completely different. It is more in line with the song's lyrics:

We hurdle bodies that lay on the ground,  
And the Russians fire another round.  
We get so near yet so far away,  
We won't live to fight another day (Harris, 1983).

At that point, doubt starts to take over, the soldiers' spirits are nearly shattered, but the charge continues and the troopers finally reach the enemy, just as it is described by Lord Tennyson:

Right thro' the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52).

The truth is that the fight is chaotic and swift and the soldiers, sadly, do not stand a chance to win this battle. When riders reach the infantry, they are ruthlessly gunned down, just as it is pointed out in Iron Maiden's lyrics:

We get so close near enough to fight,  
When a Russian gets me in his sights.  
He pulls the trigger and I feel the blow,  
A burst of rounds take my horse below (Harris, 1983).

Six hundred rode into the Valley of Death, and not many came back being in fact:

Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of Hell (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52)

Even Lord Tennyson himself was very vague about the losses, implying that some fighters came back and the memory of them is very important. Iron Maiden, on the other hand, does not leave us with such an implication; they end their song with a simple but a powerful image:

And as I lay there gazing at the sky,  
My body's numb and my throat is dry.  
And as I lay forgotten and alone,  
Without a tear I draw my parting groan (Harris, 1983).

It is indeed a horrid reflection of a dying soldier. Did they feel glorious and brave at this point? No, they were terrified, hurt and beaten, waiting to die, but not yet dead, staying in a limbo, a sort of purgatory. And in this context, it is important to claim that Lord Tennyson takes a completely different approach to the matter of fallen soldiers. He wants them to be glorified and remembered:

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wonder'd.  
Honor the charge they made!  
Honor the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred! (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52).

But in the grand scheme of things, the charge matters only in our imagination.

Concluding, it is a very intriguing case of comparing a poem and lyrics of a heavy metal song, both presenting the same battle, but both taking slightly different approaches to the portrayal of the battlefield and fighting soldiers. Therefore, there are a few similarities and differences between them. Iron Maiden's lyrics rather focus on a soldier charging while Lord Tennyson emphasizes an act of charging. Both texts are different yet connected. It is, therefore, important to regard Iron Maiden's lyrics as neither competition nor as an adaptation to the timeless poem, it is more of a complementary work of art that focuses on the areas the poet treats differently in his poem. Moreover, Iron Maiden's lyrics also strip the charge from its glory, while not stripping the fallen of their dignity; on the contrary, the poem provides the fallen soldier with merit and voice. After all, "In a Valley of Death rode Noble six hundred" (Tennyson, 2016, p. 52).

## Iron Maiden's "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner" and Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Jarosław Gizą<sup>1</sup>)

Alan Sillitoe was born on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1928, in Nottingham, England. He grew up in a working-class family, experiencing the hardships and struggles of the industrial city, which would later become a prominent theme in his writing in which, in line with Raymond Las Vergnas, he "presented the English proletariat, for the first time in the history of British literature, in accordance with a view sprung from the inner scheme of things, since he himself, as a Nottingham factory hand, was an integral part of the working-class environment" (1967, p. 1415). Sillitoe left school at the age of 14 and worked in various manual labour jobs, including as a factory worker in a bicycle factory, which provided him with firsthand experience of the working-class life that would feature prominently in his literary works. Despite his lack of formal education, Sillitoe was an avid reader and began writing at a young age. His early experiences and observations of the world around him served as inspiration for his writing. In 1958, Sillitoe gained international recognition with the publication of his debut novel, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* which, as asserted by Burgess, "presents class warfare as the natural state of British life" (1987, p. 232). The novel, which follows the life of a young factory worker named Arthur Seaton, received critical acclaim for its realistic portrayal of working-class life and its exploration of social issues such as class struggle and alienation. However, it is likewise a novel that in line with Sanders, "confirmed the living and working conditions of many working people had improved beyond measure (even though their real freedom of action had not)" (1994, p. 613).

One of Sillitoe's most famous works is the collection of short stories entitled *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, published in 1959. Sillitoe continued to write prolifically throughout his career, producing novels, short stories, poetry, plays, and screenplays. His works often focused on the lives of working-class individuals and the societal forces that shape their existence. In addition to *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, notable works by Sillitoe include *The Ragman's Daughter*, *Key to the Door*, and *A Start in Life*.

In addition to his literary endeavours, Sillitoe was also politically active, espousing leftist and socialist ideologies. He was a vocal critic of the class system and the injustices faced by the working class. His political beliefs and social commentary were reflected in his writing, which often highlighted the struggles of the marginalized and oppressed. Alan Sillitoe passed away on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2010, but his legacy as one of the most important British writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century endures. His works continue to be studied and celebrated for their powerful portrayal of the human condition, their social relevance, and their contribution to the canon of English literature. Alan Sillitoe's contributions to literature are significant and enduring. Through his powerful storytelling and incisive social commentary, he has left an indelible mark on the literary landscape, challenging readers to confront uncomfortable truths about society while giving voice to the struggles and aspirations of the working class.

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*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is a short story published in 1959 as part of a collection of the same title. It is a powerful exploration of social and personal themes, focusing on the life of a working-class youth named Smith,<sup>2</sup> who “refuses to conform to the world of the corrupt adults” (Diniejk, 2008, p. 169) and who finds both solace and rebellion against the social system in which he lives by means of long-distance running. The story is set in post-war England, where social class divisions are starkly visible. Sillitoe uses Smith’s character to shed light on the struggles and injustices faced by the working class. Smith comes from a lower-class background, and his life is shaped by poverty, neglect, and institutional oppression. The story captures the sense of disillusionment and alienation experienced by many young people from similar backgrounds.

The title of the short story encapsulates one of the central themes of the story. Smith’s long-distance running becomes a metaphor for his alienation from society. Despite being surrounded by people, Smith feels disconnected. Therefore, his solitary runs through the countryside symbolize his desire to escape from the confines of his life and find freedom. Running becomes more than just a form of exercise for Smith; it becomes an act of rebellion against the authorities and societal norms. Smith discovers a sense of power and control through his running, especially when he competes against the governor’s son in a cross-country race. Significantly, by refusing to conform and winning the race on his own terms, Smith asserts his defiance and autonomy.

The story, told in the first person, depicting “a young detainee of a Borstal Institution, a magnificent runner, [who] is expected by the Governor to win a race, but out of the pure defiance he forces himself to lose” (Zgorzelski, 2008, p. 350), delves into the theme of class conflict and injustice, portraying the tension between the working class and the ruling elite. Smith’s experiences in a borstal institution<sup>3</sup> highlight the oppressive nature of the system, where authority figures exploit and manipulate the inmates for their own gain. Smith’s decision to throw the race, despite being able to win it effortlessly, is a powerful act of protest against the system that seeks to control and oppress him.

It is important to highlight that Smith’s existential journey is central to the narrative. He grapples with questions of identity, purpose, and freedom in a world that seems determined to crush his spirit. Running becomes a form of existential rebellion for him, allowing him to assert his autonomy and discover moments of liberty amidst the constraints of his circumstances. “As he trains,” as asserted by Sikorska, “he finds a new form of freedom, yet, he does not want to become the governor’s protégé which is why he boycotts the race as a way to defy authority. Smith, whose name underlines his anonymity making him somebody and nobody at the same time, is a criminal only in protest against a corrupt society” (2007, p. 583).

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to point here to another rebel in English literature that bears a lot of similarities to Sillitoe’s Smith, namely George Orwell’s Winston Smith, the protagonist of the novel *1984*. They both rebel against the oppressive and unjust social system in which they exist.

<sup>3</sup> “A borstal was a type of youth detention centre in the United Kingdom, several member states of the Commonwealth and the Republic of Ireland. [...] Borstals were run by HM Prison Service and were intended to reform young offenders. The word originated from the first such institution established in 1902 near the English village of Borstal in Kent, and is sometimes used loosely to apply to other kinds of youth institutions and reformatories, such as approved schools and youth detention centres. The court sentence was officially called ‘borstal training’. Borstals were originally for offenders under 21, but in the 1930s the maximum age was increased to 23. The Criminal Justice Act 1982 abolished the borstal system in the UK, replacing borstals with youth custody centres” (Internet source 2).

Sillitoe's use of the first-person narration allows the readers to enter into Smith's mind and experience his innermost thoughts and emotions. The protagonist's voice is raw, honest, and unfiltered, giving the story a sense of authenticity and immediacy. Through his perspective, the readers can gain insight into the harsh realities of life in post-war Britain and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Seen from this perspective, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is a compelling exploration of social injustice, existential angst, and the quest for personal freedom. Sillitoe's vivid portrayal of Smith's struggles and triumphs resonates with the readers, making it a timeless and thought-provoking work of literature.

There are a few intertextual layers of comparison between the text of Sillitoe's short story and the lyrics of the song by Iron Maiden who, "by the very nature of their lyrics often introduce their fans to fascinating subject matter that they may never have bothered to look into before" (Kerr, 2023, p. 155). While analysing the song Pilkington asserts that:

As much about the runner as a metaphor for personal choice and freedom as it is about the actual plot, the story is a typical one to pique Harris's compositional interest, though his lyric is more about the race itself, with few allusions to the actual dilemma, and it doesn't reveal him finally choosing to lose. In some ways that is a good decision, as people who are not familiar with the book or film can take their own personal inspiration and interpretation from it (2020, p. 55).

In my analysis I would like to unearth those issues in the order they appear in the lyrics of the song and then juxtapose them with analogous portrayals in the story. The first section of the first stanza of the song incorporates such a message:

Tough of the track<sup>4</sup>,  
With the wind,  
And the rain that's beating down on your back (Harris, 1986).

This depiction of the protagonist, the runner, seems to be of crucial importance since, from the very beginning, it clearly points to the character of the runner; the listeners are sure that they going to listen to the story of a determined and steadfast person who never relinquishes, somebody who runs regardless of the changing weather conditions. And it is true as testified by a wealth of references to the runner's willpower and stamina in the narrative. One of those could be as follows:

I'm nowhere near puffed despite that bag of nails that rattles as much as ever, and I can still give a big last leap like galeforce wind if I want to, but everything is under control and I know now that there ain't another long-distance cross-country running runner in England to touch my speed and style (Sillitoe, 2007, p. 49).

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<sup>4</sup> The first expression used in the song does not only refer to the runner's determination and stamina, it is also an intertextual reference to the character of Alf Tupper, the famous runner presented in the comic strip entitled "The Tough of the Track". In line with the online source, Alf Tupper, the protagonist created by Bill Blaine "is a working class, 'hard as nails' runner, whose adventures appeared in *The Rover* from 1949 and then *The Victor*, British boys' comics from D. C. Thomson & Co. Ltd. His adventures appeared over almost a 40-year period, until 1992. Many artists have written and drawn his stories, including Pete Sutherland, during his run in *The Victor*" (Internet source 3).



From the beginning of the song and the story, the listeners and the readers have a chance to encounter the exceptional character of the criminal whose activities, while being incarcerated in the youth detention centre, focus upon becoming the best long-distance runner. Bruce Dickinson sings about Smith in such a manner in the next section of the first stanza of the song:

With every step you tread,  
And every breath you take,  
Determination makes  
You run,  
Never stop,  
Gotta win, gotta run till you drop,  
Keep the pace,  
Hold the race (Harris, 1986).

Undeniably, it is the vision of the person who never abandons his objectives and who always fights till the end in order to achieve them. However, his approach to life is shaped by his constant training, very often in horrible weather conditions, as indicated in the following quote:

Because when on a raw and frosty morning I get up at five o'clock  
and stand shivering my belly off on the stone floor and all the rest still have  
another hour to snooze before the bells go, I slink downstairs through all  
the corridors to the big outside door with a permit running-card in my fist,  
I feel like the first and last man on the world, both at one [...] I feel like the  
first man because I've hardly got a stitch on and am sent against the frozen  
fields in a shimmy and shorts (Sillitoe, 2007, p. 8).

At this point it is significant to assert that for Smith constant training does not only offer him a dose of freedom while being incarcerated in Borstal (he is privileged to run outside the premises of the institution entirely alone), it is also a precious time during which he can actively think and ponder upon his situation and his future, very often experiencing dream-like moments, as indicated in the subsequent part of the song:

Your mind is getting clearer,  
You're over halfway there but the miles  
Just never seem to end  
As if you're in a dream (Harris, 1986).

And, in order to prove that Smith is not an ordinary youth delinquent, but rather a bright person who does not shy away from sophisticated pondering upon his life, it is indispensable to offer a few quotes about his constant reasoning while running:

And this long-distance running lark is the best of all, because it makes  
me think so good that I learn things even better than when I'm on my bed  
at night. And apart from that, what with thinking so much while I'm  
running I'm getting to be one of the best runners in the Borstal (Sillitoe,  
2007, pp. 10-11).

Sometimes I think that I've never been so free as during that couple of hours when I'm trotting up the path out of the gates and turning by that bare-faced, big-bellied oak tree at the lane end (Sillitoe, 2007, p. 11).

By the time I'm half-way through my morning course, when after a frost-bitten dawn I can see a phlegmy bit of sunlight hanging from the bare twigs of beech and sycamore, and when I've measured my half-way mark by the short-cut scrimmage down the steep bush-covered bank and into the sunken lane, when there's not a soul in sight and not a sound except the neighing of a piebald foal in a cottage stable that I can't see, I get to thinking the deepest and daftest of all (Sillitoe, 2007, p. 19).

Therefore, what both the readers and the listeners really have is the vision of an exceptionally indomitable young man for whom the simple activity of running offers the possibility of entering his inner sanctum, the space in which he can find autonomy and independence, not only in the literal sense (being able to experience freedom outside the premises of the institution) but, even more significantly for him, emotionally. Hence, while being able to achieve such a level of self-sufficiency, Smith is encouraged to continue his efforts, as, for example, indicated in this part of the song:

I've got to keep running the course,  
I've got to keep running and win at all costs,  
I've got to keep going, be strong,  
Must be so determined and push myself on (Harris, 1986).

However, it is important to assert here that the privilege of experiencing a high degree of autonomy while being in fact incarcerated is tinged with seeming negativity as well. Smith feels free but, on the other hand, he experiences isolation and loneliness, as the title of both the short story and the song indicate. Undeniably, the chorus of the song presents Smith as a lonely person:

Run, on and on,  
Run, on and on,  
The loneliness of the long distance runner (Harris, 1986).

And the narrative offers the similar portrayal of his isolation:

Then he turned into a tongue of trees and bushes where I couldn't see him anymore, and I couldn't see anybody, and I knew what the loneliness of the long-distance runner running across country felt like, realizing that as far as I was concerned this feeling was the only honesty and realness there was in the world and I knowing it would be no different ever, no matter what I felt at odd times, and no matter what anybody else tried to tell me (Sillitoe, 2007, p. 43).

It is possible to propose a hypothesis that while constantly struggling with both inclement weather conditions while running very early in the mornings and an accompanying loneliness, Smith is unhappy with his situation, given the fact that on account of his exceptional skills he was forced by the Governor to take up running and win the Borstal Blue Ribbon Prize Cup for Long Distance Cross Country Running (All England). However, the assumption proves to be entirely false since not only does he feel liberated, it is also the time when he takes a significant decision of taking part in the competition but eventually throwing the race just in front of the finishing line to express his defiance towards the governor, the way of life he represents, and the institution in which he is forced to live. Smith cunningly continues his training with this clearly defined objective, as indicated in the following quote:

And I'll lose that race, because I'm not a race horse at all, and I'll let him [a governor] know it when I'm about to get out – if I don't sling my hook even before the race. By Christ I will. I'm a human being and I've got thoughts and secrets and bloody life inside me that he doesn't know is there, and he'll never know what's there because he's stupid. [...] Admitted, we're both cunning, but I'm more cunning and I'll win in the end even if I die in gaol at eighty-two (Sillitoe, 2007, p. 13).

And at the end of both the story and the song the readers and the listeners are offered the vision of the powerful and invincible Smith who, by means of throwing the race, challenges and defies the oppressing system and eventually stays loyal to his beliefs and convictions. The last stanza of the songs offers, therefore, a completely different portrayal of the runner, the person who is aware of his dignity and who knows that winning the race would mean a hypocritical acceptance of values that are incompatible to his approach to life:

The line is getting nearer but do  
You want the glory that goes,  
You reach the final stretch,  
Ideals are just a trace,  
You feel like throwing the race,  
It's all so futile (Harris, 1986).

Nevertheless, it is important to accentuate the fact that, although the lyricist of Iron Maiden's song takes recourse to the story written by Sillitoe, Harris constructs his lyrics concentrating mostly upon the character of the runner and his unflinching determination that is divulged not only in his constant training, but also in his tough decision not to finish the race. Harris does not allude to any social context in which the runner is forced to exist. Hence, the lyrics of Iron Maiden's song can be regarded as the more universal story about anybody who achieves their objectives despite difficulties, the story about person who is not afraid to take tough decisions, staying loyal to their own beliefs.

## Iron Maiden's "The Clansman" and Randall Wallace's *Braveheart* (Adrian Sajewicz, Aleksandra Sajewicz)<sup>1</sup>

Randall Wallace, born on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1949, in Jackson, Tennessee, is an American screenwriter, director, producer, and author. He studied at Duke University and later earned Master's degree from the American Film Institute. Wallace's career in the film industry began with his screenwriting debut for the 1990 film "Back to the Future Part III". However, he gained widespread recognition and critical acclaim for his work on the screenplay of the epic historical drama "Braveheart" (1995), directed by and starring Mel Gibson that earned Wallace an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay and won five Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director for Mel Gibson. Following the success of "Braveheart", Wallace continued to contribute to Hollywood with various screenplays and directing projects. He wrote and directed the war film "We Were Soldiers" (2002), starring Mel Gibson, which explored the Vietnam War's brutal realities. He also directed "The Man in the Iron Mask" (1998) and "Secretariat" (2010), among other films. In addition to his work in film, Randall Wallace has authored several novels, including *Pearl Harbor* which was published in 2001. He has demonstrated a penchant for historical narratives and stories that explore themes of courage, honour, and sacrifice.

Randall Wallace's most notable literary work is undoubtedly *Braveheart* which he both wrote and co-produced as the film. The book is a sprawling epic that portrays the life of the Scottish warrior William Wallace in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and his role in the First War of Scottish Independence against King Edward I of England, called 'the Hammer of the Scots'. As asserted by Morton, "William Wallace (?1270-1305) achieved remarkable and impactful outcomes during his short time on this earth, yet influenced his nation's development to a significantly greater extent in the centuries long after death had come" (2014, p. 1). And, as indicated by the author of the novel, "songs of William Wallace have been sung for hundreds of years, and not just by Scotland's poets alone – even Winston Churchill wrote, with keen admiration, about Wallace's courage and spirit (Wallace, 1997, ix). One of the key literary elements in *Braveheart* is the depiction of a hero's struggle for independence of his Scottish nation. William Wallace, portrayed as a commoner driven by a desire for freedom and justice, evolves into a symbol of resistance and courage for the Scottish people. The book explores themes of love, betrayal, loyalty, and the struggle for independence, resonating with audiences worldwide.

Wallace's *Braveheart* is characterized by its emotive power and its ability to capture the essence of historical events while infusing them with dramatic tension and personal approach. The dialogues are often stirring and memorable, reflecting the characters' passions and convictions. In terms of style, Wallace's novel is marked by its epic scope and attention to detail. The battle sequences are particularly vivid and visceral, conveying the chaos and brutality of medieval warfare while also emphasizing the heroism and sacrifice of the warriors.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz.

Among many wars and battles fought around the world, the Scottish and American Wars for Independence, both fought against the English, appear to be very closely associated with the concept of freedom which emerges as a powerful longing of the subjugated who were fighting with all their might and resolve. For instance, while analysing the First War for Scottish Independence, Spencer C. Tucker states that “Edward invaded Scotland with as many as 10,000 cavalry and 15,000 infantry, the latter including many Welsh longbowmen. The invasion went poorly at first, for Wallace, who was named guardian of Scotland in March 1298, practiced a scorched-earth policy that denied the English supplies and drew them into central Scotland” (2018, p. 76). And even though the American Independence seems to be more important from a historical perspective, the struggle for liberty of the Scottish people appears to be more stimulating for our imagination. There is something extremely idealistic about curly haired Highlanders, running around in kilts and struggling with the world’s greatest military force at the time. The most romantic of all Scottish heroes was, obviously, William Wallace, and many legends arose around that character and many stories were told about him and his bravery. One of those is *Braveheart* by Randall Wallace (it is important to add here that Randall Wallace is not related to William Wallace).

The history presented in the book likewise inspired Steve Harris, the bassist and songwriter of the heavy metal band Iron Maiden that “have surfed in on the ‘new wave of British heavy metal’ – the early-80s movement that inspired Metallica and laid the foundations for death metal and trash” (Brackett, Hoard, 2004, p. 407). A fruit of this inspiration is the 1998 song entitled “The Clansman” that appeared on their eleventh album “Virtual XI”. Pilkington affirms that being “inspired by the 1995 films *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy*, this clear highpoint of the album is probably the only real enduring classic to come from the Bayley era (along with, possibly, ‘The Sign of the Cross’ in terms of live songs)” (2020, p. 94). One cannot admit that the song is a direct adaptation of Wallace’s *Braveheart*; it is merely inspired by the book and the movie that was created on the basis of it. While analysing the lyrics of the song we can perceive that Steve Harris takes recourse of two main themes in the song; one is that of the camaraderie of Clansmen and the second revolves around their determination to fight for freedom.

The song starts by showing, in very vibrant expressions, what freedom really means for the Highlanders. Blaze Bayley<sup>2</sup> initiates the song in such a manner:

Wake alone in the hills  
 With the wind in your face  
 It feels good to be proud  
 And be free and a race that is part of a clan  
 To live on highlands  
 With the air that you breathe  
 So pure and so clean (Harris, 1998).

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<sup>2</sup> In line with the online article, “Blaze Bayley (born Bayley Alexander Cooke, 29 May 1963) is an English heavy metal singer. He was the lead singer of Wolfsbane from 1984 to 1994 (and currently since 2010, following reunions in 2007 and 2009). He was also the lead singer of Iron Maiden during Bruce Dickinson’s absence from 1994 to 1999. Since then, he has pursued a solo career and has released eleven studio albums. Blaze was voted number 67 in Sweden Rock magazine’s top 100 singers of all time” (Internet source 4). Besides, as asserted by Daniels, while being constantly compared to Bruce Dickinson and his powerful style of singing, “Bayley suffered a lot of harsh criticism during his tenure in Iron Maiden” (2016, p. 227).

only to instantly inform the listeners about the main predicament for the Scottish people during those troublesome times of their Wars for Independence. They are enslaved by the English and they desire to be free again, to be independent and to feel wind in their hair up on the hills one more time, as asserted in the next stanza of the song:

When alone on the hills  
With the wind in your hair  
With a longing to feel  
Just to be free (Harris, 1998).

This is exactly where the main theme of both *Braveheart* and the song “The Clansman” is brought to the fore. It is the concept of autonomy and liberty. What freedom really is and what cost of obtaining it might really be as well as offering answers to those pressing questions is what *Braveheart* and the song by Iron Maiden are all about. However, it is significant to emphasize that in “The Clansman” the answer to those urgent questions is less complicated than in the book. The most relevant message is that one just needs to fight, and even die, eagerly sacrificing one’s life for this noble cause, as indicated in this part of the song:

Is it right to believe  
In the need to be free  
It’s a time when you die  
And without asking why (Harris, 1998).

It is significant to assert that in both the movie and the book, William Wallace is presented uttering inspirational words to his soldiers, the message similar to that one directed towards Highlanders gathered on Stirling Field during the Battle of Stirling Bridge on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1297. In the film guardian of Scotland shouts to his warriors:

The might take your lives, but their never take your freedom  
 (“Braveheart”, 1995)

and in the book we have such a message:

‘My name is William Wallace. I am no banditti who hides his face. I am a free man of Scotland. We are all free men of Scotland!’ (Wallace, 1997, p. 91).

The truth is that Scottish Highlanders were very tough warriors; they did not bend easily even in the face of a much greater military power of the English army. Harris also shows this resolve and fearfulness of the Scottish people in the song in the fragment that demonstrates that the Scottish people will eventually claim what is rightfully theirs, their freedom and their land. It will eventually happen despite the fact that, as asserted by David McDowall, “Scotland paid heavily for its ‘Auld Alliance’ with France. Because it supported France during the Hundred Years War, the English repeatedly invaded the Scottish Lowlands, from which most of the Scots king’s wealth came” (1997, p. 56). Unquestionably, there is not much that English can do with that Scottish determination, as revealed in the lyrics of the song:

And I know what I want  
When the timing is right  
Then I'll take what I want  
I am the clansman (Harris, 1998).

Undoubtedly, it is hard not to understand the Scottish nation and its yearning for freedom that is triggered by their craving to dispose of the English army who took their land by force, and treated local population brutally, often abusing, robbing, raping women and girls, and killing poor defenceless Scottish people, as indicated, for instance, in this portrayal of a humiliating approach of the English invaders:

The riders stopped in front of the bride and groom. The nobleman was gray, in his fifties. His face was plump, his cheeks red and puffy above his beard. He rose in his stirrups and announced, 'I have come to claim the right of *prima noctes*! As the lord of these lands, I will bless this marriage by taking the bride into my bed on the first night of her union' [...] Stewart, the father of the bride, lunged forward, 'No, by God!' he yelled. The knights carried short battle pikes, and they were ready for this; in an instant their pikes were pointed down at the unarmed Scots. 'It is my noble right,' the nobleman said (Wallace, 1997, p. 63).

And, while detecting the vehement emotions of the infuriated Scottish warriors, Harris describes them in such a manner:

It's a time wrought with fear  
It's a land wrought with change  
Ancestors could hear what is happening now  
They would turn in their graves  
They would all be ashamed  
That the land of the free has written in chains (Harris, 1998).

In the movie and the book the unspeakable violence of the English towards the Scottish people is mostly shown by the example of two situations. The first one is a wedding of Helen MacClannough and Robbie and the right of *jus primae noctes* (right of the first night) which was revived by the king Edward I who decided to "solve 'the Scotland problem' by invoking against the Scots people the right of a sovereign to spend the wedding night with the bride of any of his subjects" (Briggs, 2008, p. 198). The second one is connected with the execution of Murrin, William Wallace's wife. The English noble killed her just to get to Wallace, who was not even a trouble maker at that time. The portrayal of the English soldier's brutality is graphic:

At the head of his entire garrison, Hesserling led Murrin, her arms still bound behind her, into the village square. [...] Hesserling looked all around at them and shouted to his people. 'An assault on the king's soldiers is the same as assaulting the king!' he shouted. He looked down at Murrin, her mouth bound, her eyes defiant. 'So under the authority of the king – and yours – I exercise his rightful power!' He pulled his dagger from his

belt, and as calmly as a man might sign his name in a letter to a stranger, he drew a blade across Murron's throat. Her eyes sprang open like a doe's; she tried to cough. Blood wept from the gash across the throat. In but a moment, she sagged dead (Wallace, 1997, p. 80).

However, with each act of violence and terror the anger and defiance rise among the Scottish people. And when William Wallace who, according to Allan Young and Michael J. Stead, has "captured popular imagination and hold a unique place in Scottish history and tradition" (2010, p. 89) leads his warriors, they follow him numerous and enthusiastically, ready to fight till the end, as indicated in this section of the song:

No, no we can't let them take anymore  
No we can't let them take anymore  
We're the land of the free (Harris, 1998).

The Scottish soldiers rise and they fight bravely, but what is most important here is that they struggle together, in a great camaraderie. They are united in their common goal and in their hatred towards English:

Not alone with a dream  
Just a want to be free  
With a need to belong  
I am a clansman (Harris, 1998).

Although the book discloses a lot of the examples of brotherhood among the Highlanders, there are also divisions, chiefly between the nobles and the commoners. It is most vividly presented during the battle of Stirling Field when some Highlanders who came to the battle, decide to leave the nobles, because they are sure about losing the battle, as shown in the following description of the conduct of Mornay:

Wallace was waving frantically to Mornay with the Scottish cavalry. Mornay was looking right toward the action, and yet he did nothing! The crossbowmen were reloading; Wallace was screaming. 'Charge! Charge them!' Mornay tugged his reins and led his cavalry away (Wallace, 1997, pp. 199-200).

However, Iron Maiden does not go that deep into the class differences between Scots. Blaze Bayley sings about them, presenting them rather as a unity, and this fact indicates the radical difference between the lyrics of the song and the content of the book:

Can't you see what they do  
They are grinding us down  
They are taking our land  
That belongs to the clans (Harris, 1998)



and

And I swear to defend  
I will fight to the end  
And I swear that I'll never be taken alive  
And I know that we'll stand  
We'll fight for a land  
And I swear that my bairns  
Will be born free (Harris, 1998).

Iron Maiden also put emphasis on this concept by ending their song with the following words:

And I know what I want  
When the timing is right  
Then I'll take what is mine  
I am the clansman (Harris, 1998).

In conclusion the theme of standing against a much greater and powerful enemy, and fighting together is very common in history and literature and the Scottish Wars for Independence appear to be exceptionally captivating. The truth is that Iron Maiden is not the only band to write a song about the brave Scottish people. For example, metal band Sabaton, famous for their vivid presentations of historical events, released a song entitled "Blood of Bannockburn" on their 2016 album "Last Stand" depicting the story of Robert Bruce and the victorious Scottish revolution against the English. Like Iron Maiden, they sing about freedom, sacrifice and unity of the Scottish. As we know from the history, Scotland eventually won their independence from England. In line with Barbara Lorek, James VI of Scotland "adopted the English spelling *Stuart* although his dynasty in Scotland was generally referred to as the *Stewarts*. In this way England and Scotland became united under one Crown" (2007, p. 80), uniting two nations in a relative peace, and offering the Scottish their desired freedom. Accordingly, the last word of William Wallace that he utters in the movie "Braveheart", and at the same time, the chorus of Iron Maiden song "The Clansman", becomes true and this word is a very simple one, yet prevailing: "FREEDOM".

## Iron Maiden's "Brave New World" and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (Tomasz Kiwak<sup>1</sup>)

Aldous Leonard Huxley was born on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1894, in Godalming, Surrey, England, into a family known for its intellectual and literary achievements. His grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley, was a prominent biologist and his brother, Julian Huxley, was a biologist and philosopher. From an early age Aldous Huxley was beset with health problems, as asserted by Jake Poller. He was "plagued by respiratory complaints and chose to live abroad as soon as he was able in order to avoid the brumous British winter, but even in the temperate climates of Italy, the south of France and California he was beset by influenza, bronchitis and pneumonia" (2021, p. 9). Nevertheless, despite those complaints, Huxley showed signs of intellectual promise. Huxley attended Eton College where he excelled academically. Later, he studied English literature at Balliol College, Oxford. However, his education was interrupted by an eye illness that left him nearly blind. Despite this setback, Huxley persisted and learned to read Braille. He eventually regained some of his sight, although it remained impaired for the rest of his life. In 1916, during World War I, Huxley volunteered to serve in the military but was deemed unfit for combat due to his eyesight. Instead, he worked in the Ministry of Information, an experience that influenced his later satirical works. Huxley's literary career began in the 1920s with the publication of his early novels, including *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923) that, in line with Sikorska, "explores the lack of values in contemporary society of Bohemian London [...] [being] pronounced obscene because of its explicit description of sexual desires" (2007, p. 539), and *Point Counter Point* (1928). These literary works that "showed a world without aim or direction (artists, rich people, the Waste Land of post-war London) and offered no solution to the puzzle of a seemingly meaningless existence" (Burgess, 1987, p. 219) established him as a prominent writer of his generation, known for his wit, satire, and exploration of philosophical ideas, who, according to Sikorska, "notices that industrial civilisation brings nothing but odour and that the only way to know true life is to escape from civilisation" (2007, p. 539).

However, it was his dystopian masterpiece, *Brave New World* (1932) that, in line with Zgorzelski, is "a satiric prophesy of the totalitarian future society, based on genetic conditioning, on sedative and bliss-producing drugs and on licensed promiscuity" (2008, p. 309) that brought Huxley worldwide fame and cemented his reputation as one of the most important writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Brave New World* depicts a future society where technology, consumerism, and government control has led to the erosion of individuality and freedom. It presents a universe where, "society successfully eliminates the individual. Determined by impersonal state decisions, man is programmed here to become simply a single unit of a given productive category and his really individual choices, thoughts, and emotions appear an obstacle in his automatic functioning in the nightmarish machine-like state" (2008, p. 309). The novel remains a seminal work of dystopian literature, exploring themes of power, conformity, and the dangers of scientific progress.

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Throughout his career, Huxley continued to write novels, essays, and non-fiction works that tackled a wide range of subjects, including psychology, spirituality, and the nature of human consciousness. His later works, such as *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and *Island* (1962), reflected his interest in mysticism, psychedelics, and alternative forms of spirituality. In addition to his literary pursuits, Huxley was also a prolific essayist and lecturer, known for his keen insights into the human condition and his ability to articulate complex ideas with clarity and precision. Aldous Huxley passed away on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1963, in Los Angeles, California, USA. His legacy continues to endure through his timeless works, which remain essential reading for anyone interested in exploring the complexities of the modern world and the human experience.

*Brave New World* is a dystopian novel depicting the world in which society is “so heavily organized and controlled that the only way for people to be themselves lies in escape” (Thornley, Roberts, 1990, p. 163) and it is a reservoir of the following themes and literary techniques. *Brave New World* depicts a dystopian world where the state exerts complete control over the lives of its citizens. In line with Burgess, the novel derides “Wellsian Utopias, showing that, if man became completely happy and society completely efficient, he would cease to be human and it would become intolerable” (1987, p. 220). Moreover, the government presented in the novel maintains stability and conformity through the suppression of individuality and the promotion of consumerism, hedonism, and unrestrained promiscuity. People are conditioned from birth to accept their predetermined roles in society, leading to a lack of personal autonomy and genuine human relations.

It is likewise the narrative that illustrates in detail technological advancements, and by doing so it explores the consequences of rapid technological progress, scientific manipulation, advances in biotechnology, such as genetic engineering and the manipulation of human embryos that have eliminated natural reproduction and familial bonds. The society in the novel uses technology to maintain control and enforce conformity, as exemplified by the use of conditioning techniques and the mass production of consumer foods.

The novel focuses on social stratification as well. The world of *Brave New World* is stratified into rigid social classes based on intelligence, physical attributes, and social status. People are genetically engineered and conditioned to fulfil precise roles within the social hierarchy. Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons represent different tiers of society, with each group conditioned to accept its place and function without questioning it.

Moreover, the concept of individuality vs. conformity is brought to the fore, exploring the tension between them. Characters such as Bernard Marx and John “the Savage” struggle to reconcile their desire for personal autonomy and authentic experiences with the expectations of society. The World State promotes conformity and discourages independent thinking, leading to the total suppression of creativity, emotions, and critical thinking. Robert McParland offers a similar interpretation of the novel while asserting that “*Brave New World* is critical of conformity. Huxley attacked a conforming society based upon the pleasure principle. Huxley would no doubt sharply criticize the frivolity and narcissism of ‘selfies,’ repeated Twitter hashtags, or Facebook reports posted about what one has had for breakfast” (2019, p. 98).

Consumerism and hedonism are also disparaged in *Brave New World* while criticizing the pursuit of pleasure and materialism at the expense of meaningful human relationships and intellectual engagement. The citizens of the World State

prioritize instant gratification, entertainment, and sensory experiences over introspection and self-discovery. The constant consumption of goods and experiences serves as a means of social control and distraction from existential issues.

The novel likewise incorporates the concept of alienation and discontent. Despite the superficial sense of happiness and stability promoted by the World State, many characters experience a profound sense of estrangement and dissatisfaction with their lives. Bernard, Helmholtz Watson, and John “the Savage” represent individuals who challenge the values and norms of society, seeking at the same time genuine relations and authentic experiences beyond the confines of the World State.

It is also important to add that Huxley profusely employs symbolic imagery and language throughout the novel to convey themes of oppression, control, and disillusionment. The use of terms such as *soma* to describe the government-sanctioned drug that induces euphoria highlights the society’s reliance on artificial means of contentment and escapism. The pervasive use of technology and propaganda underscores the dehumanizing effects of a totalitarian regime.

Therefore, perceived in this light, *Brave New World* remains a powerful critique of totalitarianism, technological progress, and the erosion of individual freedom in modern society. Through its vivid portrayal of a dystopian future, Huxley invites readers to reflect on the consequences of sacrificing personal autonomy and human dignity in the pursuit of social stability and technological advancement. Significantly, being:

the first true English antiutopia, the book constitutes an important link between the nineteenth-century utopian ‘novels of warning’ and the most famous British antiutopia written by George Orwell, namely *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), also a picture of a totalitarian state with the typical elements, for instance, of the disgusting ceremonies such as the Two Minutes Hate, the terrifying institutions of the Thought Police watching the citizens from a number of telescreens, or of the Records Department that destroys the documents of the past (Zgorzelski, 2008, pp. 309-310).

Unquestionably, the topics and images used in the lyrics of Iron Maiden’s song “Brave New World” that appeared on the band’s twelfth album of the same title released on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2000 and that, in line with McPartland, is “more concerned with futuristic drama” (2019, p. 98), clearly resemble those employed in Huxley’s novel. One of those is the reference to the life of one of the main characters, John the “Savage”. Unlike the other characters in the novel, John was born naturally, after his mother Linda got lost in a Savage Reservation of Malpais, a region deemed too poor to be developed by the world government, and as such it was turned into a reservation where people live the same way they did for thousands of years. The truth is that people in this place lack most of the amenities of the modern life and they are forced to dwell in dirt and poverty but, unlike the civilized people, they do have freedom they desire.

At the beginning of the song Bruce Dickinson sings such words: “I have seen many things / In a lifetime alone” (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000) that can be attributed to John the “Savage” because while living in the savage reservation John and his mother Linda are many a time ostracized by the local society. Not only is Linda viewed as an outsider, but her ways of life are also incompatible with what the natives are used to. She is a Beta citizen, conditioned to undertake intellectual work,

not manual labor she is expected to perform in the reservation. Additionally, her view of sex where “everyone belongs to everyone” does not sit well with the local women, who are infuriated to see their husbands having sexual intercourses with Linda. Linda’s approach is shown, for example, in this quote:

Lots of men came to see Linda. The boys began to point their fingers at him. In the strange other words they said that Linda was bad; they called her names he did not understand, but that he knew were bad names. One day they sang a song about her, again and again. He threw stones at them. They threw back; a sharp stone cut his cheek. The blood wouldn’t stop; he was covered with blood (Huxley, 1984, p. 108).

Because of it all, John is viewed as an outcast in the reservation; he is treated as a foreigner and a son of a ‘she-dog’. While perceiving John in that light, Coleman Carroll Myron accentuates that “in the character of John the Savage, Huxley gives the readers the outsider in civilization, the one who is to provide understanding to the situation. Not only is John the outsider to the Brave New World, but also to those on the ‘Savage Reservation’ (2008, p. 15) and the scholar adds that John’s “mother’s amoral behavior and her present circumstances as a woman of the new world shift to her son John who is despised and chastised by her peers on the reservation” (2008, p. 15). What is more, his mother becomes addicted to alcohol, making her neglectful and sometimes abusive towards John. It is indicated, for example, in this quote:

Men were standing, dark, at the entrance to the kiva; the ladder went down into the red lighted depths. Already the leading boys had begun to climb down. Suddenly, one of the men stepped forward, caught him by the arm, and pulled him out of the ranks. He broke free and dodged back into his place among the others. This time the man struck him, pulled his hair. ‘Not for you, white-hair!’ ‘Not for the son of the she-dog,’ said one of the other men. The boys laughed. ‘Go!’ And as he still hovered on the fringes of the group, ‘Go!’ the men shouted again. One of them bent down, took a stone, threw it. ‘Go, go, go!’ There was a shower of stones. Bleeding, he ran away into the darkness. From the red-lit kiva came the noise of singing. The last of the boys had climbed down the ladder. He was all alone.

All alone, outside the pueblo, on the bare plain of the mesa. The rock was like bleached bones in the moonlight. Down in the valley, the coyotes were howling at the moon. The bruises hurt him, the cuts were still bleeding; but it was not for pain that he sobbed; it was because he was all alone, because he had been driven out, alone, into this skeleton world of rocks and moonlight. At the edge of the precipice he sat down. The moon was behind him; he looked down into the black shadow of the mesa, into the black shadow of death. He had only to take one step, one little jump... He held out his right hand in the moonlight. From the cut on his wrist the blood was still oozing. Every few seconds a drop fell, dark, almost colourless in the dead light. Drop, drop, drop. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...

He had discovered Time and Death and God (Huxley, 1984, pp. 113-114).

The subsequent comparison between the novel and the lyrics of the song is closely associated with the title of the novel and the song. Bruce Dickinson repeats a few times such an expression: "A brave new world / In a brave new world" (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000). This Shakespearean phrase, voiced in the play *The Tempest* by Miranda: "O wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people in't!" (Shakespeare, 1998, V.1. pp. 184-187) is uttered many a time by John "the Savage" as a reaction to the new civilized world he observes after having left the reservation. Just as it is done by John, in the song this phrase is reiterated many times, enhancing thus the message about the strange world, as indicated, for instance, in this dialogue between John and Bernard Marx:

'Who's Miranda?'

But the young man had evidently not heard the question. 'O wonder!' he was saying; and his eyes shone, his face was brightly flushed. 'How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is!' The flush suddenly deepened; he was thinking of Lenina, of an angel in bottle-green viscose, lustrous with youth and skin food, plump, benevolently smiling. His voice faltered. 'O brave new world,' he began, then-suddenly interrupted himself; the blood had left his cheeks; he was as pale as paper. 'Are you married to her?' he asked.

'Am I what?'

'Married. You know—for ever. They say 'for ever' in the Indian words; it can't be broken.'

'Ford, no!' Bernard couldn't help laughing.

John also laughed, but for another reason—laughed for pure joy.

'O brave new world,' he repeated. 'O brave new world that has such people in it. Let's start at once' (Huxley, 1984, p. 116).

In one section of the song the listeners can listen to such words: "Mother love is no more / Bring this savage back home" (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000) that constitute the subsequent level of comparison between the content of the book and the lyrics of the song. After becoming an adult, John finally gets a chance to visit the Brave New World outside of the reservation. With the help of Bernard Marx, another major character in the book, John and Linda are allowed to return to the civilized world. John is rejoiced at the thought of being able to see the wonderful land his mother used to live in with his very own eyes. Not only that, but he also falls in love with Lenina Crowne who comes with Bernard to the Savage Reservation. There is a spark between them the moment they meet, but from the start it is clear that John does not know how to properly deal with his feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, John's initial amazement with the wonders of this world quickly starts to fade, as the darker reality starts to become more and more apparent for him. Linda, now elderly, sick and ugly, is rejected by the society where youth and beauty are the most important values. She turns to *soma* to numb her internal pain, becoming permanently stuck in a state of drug-induced bliss. She does that since, as asserted by Z. Gilead, "Huxley's *Brave New World* was free from worries, depression, wars and poverty and its citizens were endlessly happy. All this was achieved by daily consumption of a pill called 'SOMA' which has been developed by the *Brave New World's*

scientists” (2022, p. 17). However, this numbing addiction soon kills her, leaving John without the love of his mother, the only person who truly cared for him. This horrendous situation for John of being unable to come back to his mother’s love is presented in this quote:

‘But I’m John!’ he shouted. ‘I’m John!’ And in his furious misery he actually caught her by the shoulder and shook her.

Linda’s eyes fluttered open; she saw him, knew him-‘John!’-but situated the real face, the real and violent hands, in an imaginary world-among the inward and private equivalents of patchouli and the Super-Wurlitzer, among the trans-figured memories and the strangely transposed sensations that constituted the universe of her dream. She knew him for John, her son, but fancied him an intruder into that paradisaic Malpais where she had been spending her *soma*-holiday with Popé. [...]

The Savage was on his feet, bent over her. ‘What is it, Linda? What is it?’ His voice was imploring; it was as though he were begging to be reassured.

The look she gave him was charged with an unspeakable terror-with terror and, it seemed to him, reproach. She tried to raise herself in bed, but fell back on to the pillows. Her face was horribly distorted, her lips blue. [...]

By the time they were back at the end of the ward Linda was dead.

The Savage stood for a moment in frozen silence, then fell on his knees beside the bed and, covering his face with his hands, sobbed uncontrollably (Huxley, 1984, pp. 165-166).

The next part of the song: “Dragon kings, dying queens / Where is salvation now? / Lost my life, lost my dreams” (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000) is closely associated with the previous section depicting John’s inability to come back to his mother’s love since she is dead; despite her weaknesses she was queen to him, the sovereign who is now dead. As mentioned before, John grew up listening to his mother’s tales of the civilized world, the religious tales of the tribe elders, and reading the literary works of William Shakespeare. This created in his mind the view of a world that is grander than life, full of passion and adventure, and now he is forced to be confronted with the reality of the modern world. There is no passion or adventure like in the works of Shakespeare. Religion is no longer needed in this world. And the fantastical civilized world is far less fantastical than what Linda’s tales portrayed. By leaving the Savage Reservation John not only lost his previous life as a tribe member, but he also lost his dreams of the Brave New World.

In consequence, everything what happens to John from this moment on can be visualized in the words that constitute the next section of the song:

Close this mind, dull this brain  
Messiah before his fall  
What you see is not real  
Those who know will not tell  
All is lost, sold your souls  
To this brave new world

Dying to tell you the truth  
You are planned and you are damned  
In this brave new world (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000).

John repeatedly tries to convince the people around him that their way of life is not correct, that they are being constantly controlled, stripped of their freedom, that lives they are living are just one big façade created by the government. He strongly opposes the use of *soma* which he regards as a corrupting drug, as indicated in the following quote, in which one can observe John assuming the role of the Messiah coming to people and offering them freedom:

‘Listen, I beg of you,’ cried the Savage earnestly. ‘Lend me your ears...’  
He had never spoken in public before, and found it very difficult to express what he wanted to say. ‘Don’t take that horrible stuff. It’s poison, it’s poison.’

[...]

‘Poison to soul as well as body.’

[...]

‘Throw it all away, that horrible poison.’

The words ‘Throw it all away’ pierced through the enfolding layers of incomprehension to the quick of the Delta’s consciousness. An angry murmur went up from the crowd.

‘I come to bring you freedom,’ said the Savage, turning back towards the twins. ‘I come...’ (Huxley, 1984, p. 170).

John feels as if it was his obligation to free everyone from the nightmarish enslavement offered to them by the government; his desire is to be like Jesus Christ, to suffer like Him and bring salvation to the misguided people. Nonetheless, he is completely ignored, seen as nothing more than a curiosity as presented in this quote:

‘But do you like being slaves?’. [...]. ‘Don’t you want to be free and men? Don’t you even understand what manhood and freedom are?’ Rage was making him fluent; the words came easily, in a rush. ‘Don’t you?’ he repeated, but got no answer to his question. ‘Very well then,’ he went on grimly. ‘I’ll teach you; I’ll *make* you be free whether you want to or not.’ [...]

‘He’s mad,’ whispered Bernard, staring with wide open eyes. ‘They’ll kill him. They’ll...’ A great shout suddenly went up from the mob; a wave of movement drove it menacingly towards the Savage. ‘Ford help him!’ said Bernard, and averted his eyes.

[...]

‘Free, free!’ the Savage shouted, and with one hand continued to throw the *soma* into the area while, with the other, he punched the indistinguishable faces of his assailants. ‘Free!’ And suddenly there was Helmholtz at his side – ‘Good old Helmholtz!’ – also punching – ‘Men at last!’ – and in the interval also throwing the poison out by handfuls through the open window. ‘Yes, men! men!’ and there was no more poison left. He picked up the cash-box and showed them its black emptiness. ‘You’re free!’

Howling, the Deltas charged with a redoubled fury (Huxley, 1984, pp. 171-172).



He even refuses to have sexual intercourse with Lenina, despite both of them having feelings for each other since deep inside John sees her sexual openness as yet another sign of moral degradation in this horrible world. After having been arrested for his atrocious deeds, he meets Mustapha Mond, one of the World Controllers who rule the World State. During their discussion, Mond explains to John that the world is better now. There are no wars, no conflicts, no suffering. Most people are happy, and the few that are not content have to endure it for the greater good.

In consequence, John, utterly devastated, feels downhearted and isolated. And his emotions are visualized in the words of the next section of the song: "Wilderness, house of pain / Makes no sense of it all" (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000). After everything he has seen, John decides, despite being modelled as having character that was to become "one of rebellion against a conformist totalitarian system" (McParland, 2019, p. 99) that there is no point in fighting against the modern society. Unable to return to his old life, John hides in the wilderness outside of London to avoid further corruption from the modern life. He lives alone, isolating himself from all other people, and the corruption of the Brave New World, as shown in the following quote:

The Savage had chosen as his hermitage the old light-house which stood on the crest of the hill between Puttenham and Elstead. The building was of ferro-concrete and in excellent condition-almost too comfortable the Savage had thought when he first explored the place, almost too civilly luxurious. He pacified his conscience by promising himself a compensatingly harder self-discipline, purifications the more complete and thorough. His first night in the hermitage was, deliberately, a sleepless one. He spent the hours on his knees praying, now to that Heaven from which the guilty Claudius had begged forgiveness, now in Zuñi to Awonawilona, now to Jesus and Pookong, now to his own guardian animal, the eagle. From time to time he stretched out his arms as though he were on the Cross, and held them thus through long minutes of an ache that gradually increased till it became a tremulous and excruciating agony; held them, in voluntary crucifixion, while he repeated, through clenched teeth (the sweat, meanwhile, pouring down his face), "Oh, forgive me! Oh, make me pure! Oh, help me to be good!" again and again, till he was on the point of fainting from the pain (Huxley, 1984, pp. 194-195).

John sees himself as guilty of many things, responsible for his mother's death, culpable of both sexually desiring Lenina and rejecting her; he feels guilty of everything that has happened to him so far. Because of that, he does everything to make his life as miserable as possible. When the hardships of everyday life in the wilderness are not enough, John starts practicing self-flagellation, whipping his own back until it bleeds and he does what Bruce Dickinson sings about in the song: "Rip the bones from my flesh" (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000). Although John believes to be alone in his sanctuary, it is not the case. After his hermitage has been discovered, a movie director starts to secretly record him, like a wild animal in a nature documentary. He captures everything, all the raw emotions of sadness and despair John has experienced. This movie becomes a massive hit and thousands of people arrive to see "the Savage" in person. John tries to scare them off, screaming at them, and threatening them with his whip, but his cries are drowned in the laughter and chants of the people around him.

‘Go away!’ he shouted.

The ape had spoken; there was a burst of laughter and hand-clapping. ‘Good old Savage! Hurrah, hurrah!’ And through the babel he heard cries of: ‘Whip, whip, the whip!’

Acting on the word’s suggestion, he seized the bunch of knotted cords from its nail behind the door and shook it at his tormentors.

There was a yell of ironical applause (Huxley, 1984, p. 203).

The people are chanting “Whip!” demanding from John to start whipping himself again. They are consumed by their lust for blood and entertainment and the same situation happened to Jesus Christ before His crucifixion.

On account of that all, John’s sanctuary transforms into ‘the garden of fear,’ with him being the centre of humiliating attention by seemingly civilized and content people of the modern world. In one part of the song Dickinson sings such words that vividly capture the final moments of John: “Lost my love, lost my life / In this garden of fear” (Murray, Harris, Dickinson, 2000). During this whole ordeal, John is surprised to see a familiar face of Lenina. The woman tries to say something, but the crowd is too loud for John to hear anything. All of the sudden, John hits Lenina with his whip and then he starts whipping himself, all to the excitement of the crowd. As a reaction to this people begin whipping themselves, each other, and poor Lenina. Soon the blood frenzy evolves into the *soma* fuelled orgy that lasts for hours, as shown in the following quote:

Drawn by the fascination of the horror of pain and, from within, impelled by that habit of cooperation, that desire for unanimity and atonement, which their conditioning had so ineradicably implanted in them, they began to mime the frenzy of his gestures, striking at one another as the Savage struck at his own rebellious flesh, or at that plump incarnation of turpitude writhing in the heather at his feet.

‘Kill it, kill it, kill it...’ The Savage went on shouting.

Then suddenly somebody started singing ‘Orgy-porgy’ and, in a moment, they had all caught up the refrain and, singing, had begun to dance. Orgy-porgy, round and round and round, beating one another in six-eight time. Orgy-porgy...

It was after midnight when the last of the helicopters took its flight. Stupefied by *soma*, and exhausted by a long-drawn frenzy of sensuality, the Savage lay sleeping in the heather. The sun was already high when he awoke. He lay for a moment, blinking in owlish incomprehension at the light; then suddenly remembered – everything (Huxley, 1984, p. 205).

After everything is over and John returns to his senses, he realizes what has happened. He has just killed Lenina. His mind is flooded with guilt, just like when his mother died, but this time it is too much for him. The woman he loved is dead, murdered by his own hands. When the people return there is no one to be found, except for the hanging corpse of John, who committed suicide, surrounded by wilderness and fear.

## Iron Maiden's "New Frontier" and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*

(Kacper Horowski<sup>1</sup>)

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was born in London on 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1797. She was the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, famous radical writers of the day. Mary's mother died tragically ten days after her birth. Under Godwin's conscientious and expert tuition, Mary had an intellectually stimulating childhood though she was emotionally undernourished. In 1814 she met and soon fell in love with the then unknown Percy Bysshe Shelley, and in July they eloped to the continent. In December 1816, after Shelley's first wife Harriet committed suicide, Mary and Percy married. Of the four children she bore Shelley, only Percy Florence survived. They lived in Italy from 1818 until 1822, when Percy Shelley drowned, following the capsizing of his boat *Ariel* in a storm. Mary returned with Percy Florence to London, where she continued to live as a professional writer until her death in 1851.

Mary Shelley is famous mostly for her *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*, the Gothic novel that in line with Sanders is "more than simply a recall of her 'thrill of fear'; it is a morally probing exploration of responsibility and of the body of knowledge which we now call 'science'" (1994, p. 346). Sikorska, on the other hand, asserts that "Mary Shelley created the Monster which is a child of a father only. In the novel she asks questions not about creation itself but about parenthood. The story of Frankenstein is the story of a Prometheus of science, who brings to life an artificial creature, but cannot undertake to be a father to his creation" (2007, p. 347). Sanders adds that Mary Shelley "conceived her novel as a *divertissement* during a wet summer in Switzerland with her husband and Byron" (1994, p. 345). She was stimulated to begin her unique tale after Byron suggested a ghost story competition. Byron wrote "Fragment of Novel", the 1819 vampire horror story, which later inspired his physician John Polidori to write *The Vampyre: A Tale*. Mary completed her story back in England and it was published in 1818. Among her novels there are *The Last Man*, an apocalyptic, dystopian science fiction novel set in the twenty-first century (1826), *Perkin Warbeck* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837). As well as contributing many stories and essays to publications such as the *Keepsake* and the *Westminster Review*, she contributed numerous biographical essays for Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia* (1835, 1838-9). Her other books include the first collected edition of P. B. Shelley's *Poetical Works* (4 vols., 1839) and a book based on the continental travels she undertook with her son Percy Florence and his friends, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844). Mary Shelley died in London on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1851.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* explores the disaster that ensues after Victor Frankenstein, a natural philosophy student, unlocks creation's secrets and arrogantly brings to life a monstrous creature, playing God. As asserted by Sikorska:

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Frankenstein is like Prometheus, determined to gain forbidden knowledge of life giving and attempting to use it for the benefit of mankind. He creates a being, whom from the moment of creation, Frankenstein sees as monstrous. Frankenstein rejects alchemy and sorcery, but nevertheless, in the name of science, transgresses God's laws of creation and, like Prometheus, is punished as it kills all whom he loves (2007, p. 347).

Told from the first-person perspectives, both Victor's and the Monster's, the novel explores themes such as God complex, the sublimity of nature, cycles of vengeance, and the nature of prejudice.

Frankenstein's aspirations to control nature along with his selfishness cause him to reject his creation, ducking responsibility for his creature. When Victor gives life to it, he initially recognizes how disgusting it is. He laments that he "worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body" (Shelley, 2003, p. 55), but now that he has succeeded "the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled [his] heart" (Shelley, 2003, p. 56). Victor reveals that his sole purpose for generating the creature stems not out of a desire for relationship or love, but rather to prove that he can perform actions equal to those of God. When the final product does not meet his expectations, he realizes that his ambitions have not matched his abilities and that he has evoked a father-like responsibility for his monstrosity. Victor has provided his creature with a miserable existence, yet he is sure that he has the right to take it away. This confirms the fact that Victor believes he can play God without any consequences. He even besmirches his creature as inferior to a human being when he refers to it as a "vile insect" (Shelley, 2003, p. 95). This dehumanization clearly confirms the fact that Victor does not attribute any value in the creature's life and does not understand that he does not fulfil the responsibilities of a father for his "offspring" because his selfishness makes him blind to the creature's perspectives.

Apart from this, the theme of the sublimity of nature plays a crucial role in the novel and, according to this concept, formulated by Edmund Burke in his treatise on aesthetics entitled *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, nature is comprised of a mixture of terror and beauty. Nature, as presented in the novel, is indeed the stimulant for the sublime since, as asserted by Burke, "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (2015, pp. 33-34). One example of the sublime the readers find in nature is in fact the Monster itself whose appearance evokes emotions of terror. Moreover, Shelly contrasts the terror of Ingolstadt with the beauty of Geneva, Frankenstein's birthplace. Once the fruit of Frankenstein's labour is fully developed and the horrific Monster is born, even Frankenstein himself is unable to endure the terrible aspects of his creature and attempts to cast it away and forget about it completely. However, the Monster that has walked around Europe in search of Geneva is, in fact, surrounded by the peace it can never achieve, as the terror which resides inside of the Monster's soul, a form of hell-within, will not allow it. One such instance occurs in the narrative when spring begins and the Monster feels emotions of gentleness and pleasure in the sunshine and the balminess of the air but then it realizes that it is still lonely and quickly becomes bitter.

Catherine Spooner in her book *Contemporary Gothic* asserts that:

Perhaps the most intriguing thing about Shelley's novel, however, in terms of its contemporary influence, is the sympathy the monster elicits. The Creature – he has no name – tells his creator a story of ostracism, prejudice and withheld human contact. Articulate and well read, he is a powerful advocate of the human right to love and be loved. Unlike other nineteenth-century Gothic monsters – Quasimodo, Carmilla, Mr Hyde – Frankenstein's Creature elicits not only fascination or even sympathy, but also empathy (2006, p. 70).

The Monster begins its life as an individual with a warm and open heart. But after having been abandoned and mistreated, first by Victor and then by the De Lacey family, the creature turns to revenge and crime. His actions are therefore understandable and partially justified: it has been devastated by the unfair rejection by people who are unable to see past their own prejudices, and in turn the Monster wants to assault those people who have hurt it, as expressed by it when Felix attacks it and flees with the rest of the De Lacey family: "feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom [and] I bent my mind towards injury and death" (Shelley, 2003, p. 131). But while taking revenge, two things happen to the Monster. The first, it makes it aware of the fact that it will never be accepted by human society. The second, on account of taking revenge, the Monster definitely eradicates any hope of ever joining people, which is what it really wanted, and, eventually, vengeance becomes the only emotion that triggers its activities. As the Monster puts it, revenge becomes "dearer than light or food" (Shelley, 2003, p. 165).

Retribution does not consume only the Monster, however. It also overwhelms Victor, the victim of his "offspring's" revenge. After the Monster has murdered Victor's relatives, the scientist vows a "great and signal revenge on [the Monster's] cursed head" (Shelley, 2003, p. 193). Undeniably, the very human desire for revenge transforms both Victor and his creature into true monsters that seem not to have any feelings or desires beyond destroying their foes.

As far as the lyrics of Iron Maiden's song are concerned, the opening words: "Bleeding you dry from the start / The sum of my parts to give it away / New life in a day, some new Frankenstein / Damned for all time" (McBrain, Smith, Dickinson, 2003), allude to the "production" of the Monster which is generated by the brilliant scientist Victor Frankenstein as the fruit of his research into the animation of inanimate matter. Frankenstein, wanting to prove that his research is not a futile dream, devotes his utmost efforts to it, completely ignoring the world around him, limiting his meals, sleep and contacts with other people, continuously sitting in dissecting rooms and cemeteries (from where he obtained the "parts" indispensable to create his "artificial man"). After almost two years of exhaustive research and testing, he finally completes his strenuous work, although on closer inspection it turns out that it is not as beautiful and desirable as he originally envisaged; on the contrary, as the source of the sublime, he finds it revolting, to the point where he claims that even Dante would not have been able to imagine such a horrible thing in his literary works. Unable to understand why his work is a failure, Victor abandons it, regretting the time spent on it. Sue Grand affirms that "Frankenstein is repelled because it is death *itself* that he has animated. Far from voiding

death, he has simply *given consciousness* to that which he had denied. The Creature is an awakened corpse with eyes to see him, a voice with which to command him, limbs with which to pursue him. And more: the Creature is the howling embodiment of loss” (2002, p. 138). This can be seen in the following quote:

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me that I might infuse a spark of being into lifeless thing that lay at my feet. [...].

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips (Shelley, 2003, p. 55).

Significantly, in the next part of the song: “Cursed by the angel who fell / Who saves me from hell / And who is my God and where is my soul / Too tired to jump, too young to run” (McBrain, Smith, Dickinson, 2003), there is a reference not only to Frankenstein’s degradation despite his initial brilliance at scientific experiments, but also, in the longer perspective, to the downfall of the Monster. The scientist, during his time at the University of Ingolstadt, after struggling for a while to find his niche in which he could be specialising, decides to turn to Professor Waldman who teaches chemistry. Over the next two years of study, he makes such great progress that he is no longer able to learn anything more from the professors at the university, reaching thus limits of possibilities that can be offered to him by the scientific world. However, while pondering upon returning to his homeland, something unexpected happens that makes him change his mind and relinquish returning home, the possibility of animating inanimate matter opens before him.

This situation ignites his yearning to discover the secret of life. However, in order to achieve it, he must first delve into the subject of death, which ends in an attempt to create an artificial man. Importantly, along with the start of this research, Victor’s downfall takes place as he becomes utterly possessed by the urge to cross a frontier that a human being should never cross. This can be seen in the following quote:

One of the phenomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? [...]. To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy: but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. [...]. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the

human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me – a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised, that among so many men of genius who had directed their enquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret (Shelley, 2003, pp. 48-49).

The next comparative theme in this section of the song refers more to the artificial man than to Frankenstein. Again, the issue of abandonment is addressed, as well as the aspect of the Monster's first steps in a hostile reality. The creature that has been left to its own devices begins to be influenced by many different stimuli of the world around it. Still being confused and tired, it ends up in the forest where it begins to get to know it. Slowly, it begins to learn new sensations that it was initially unable to distinguish. George Zarkadakis, while analysing the gradual development of the Monster, emphasizes that "with time, he becomes more intelligent, articulate and cultured. Once the creature achieves this level of cultured self-awareness he understands himself to be a living being, and claims the rights that other human beings have" (2015, p. 56). As time goes by, it gets better and better at distinguishing one thing from another. It picks berries and drinks water from a stream, but still it cannot find a solution to the cold it feels. Once, it accidentally stumbles upon a still barely smouldering hearth. This is a great discovery, because not only can it provide it with warmth and light after nightfall, it also notices that the fire has an effect on the quality of meals: food roasted in the embers taste much better and it can be indicated in this quote:

One day I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. [...]. When night came again I found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat; and that discovery of this element was useful to me in my food, for I found some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from trees (Shelley, 2003, pp. 99-101).

In the following excerpt from the song: "Never ending, forever searching / Chasing dreams, the dreams of my heart / Always seeking, always asking / Questions right from the start" (McBrain, Smith, Dickinson, 2003), it is possible to discern a desire of the Monster to befriend people it encounters on its path; but it is rejected by them on account of its horrifying appearance and their prejudice against it. One can likewise detect here another theme associated with the Monster's request directed towards its creator to generate for it a similar individual.

One day, the Monster comes across a village whose beauty it admires. Unfortunately, as soon as it is spotted, the terrified inhabitants drive it away. Injured, it takes refuge in an abandoned hovel adjacent to one of the houses not far from the village. After

having settled in, it notices through a crack in its new abode, a family living in the same house to which the hovel is adjoined. While observing them, it comes to the conclusion that they are benevolent creatures, relating to each other with respect and love. However, seeing their plight, it decides to help them with their chores. Keen to join them, it learns from them how to speak and begins to understand people and their emotions better. Thanks to its new-found ability, it concludes that it is ready to meet them. It waits for the right moment when the blind old man is left alone to talk to it. Initially the plan seems to work because the old man assures it that he will help it introduce it to the rest of the inhabitants. Unfortunately, the plan is shattered when the younger household members return and, in horror, drive the Monster out and make a decision to immediately move out. Exasperated and furious, the creature destroys the farmlands and their former home, and then decides to set off in search of its creator, hoping to get answers to its questions and make its requests.

The following excerpt from the song: "Out beyond the new frontier / Playing God without mercy, without fear / Create a beast, made a man without a soul / Is it worth the risk, a war of God and man?" (McBrain, Smith, Dickinson, 2003) refers to Frankenstein's selfish and irresponsible behaviour according to which he deliberates only upon his own scientific satisfaction and glory, disregarding his creation whatsoever. This may indicate his sense of superiority or even a "God complex". There is also the aspect of the vicious circle of death through which the Monster and Victor embark on their paths of revenge.

The creature, wanting only a soul-mate akin to it, asks its creator to construct such a companion since, as asserted by Zarkadakis, "first and foremost is his right to reproduce. He begs his creator to fashion a female for him; and promises to take her away from away from people, where the two of them will love alone" (2015, p. 58). This desire is expressed in the following manner in the novel:

'We may not part until you have promised to comply with my request. I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create.' (Shelley, 2003, p. 146).

Victor, after confronting his "offspring", accedes to its request. Unfortunately, despite his promise, he is constantly plagued by remorse, resulting in the destruction of the Monster's companion at the final stage of its completion. This information infuriates the creature that in a rage announces its eternal revenge upon Victor for not fulfilling his vow. While fulfilling its yearning for vengeance, the Monster kills Victor's friend Henry Clerval but he does not stop here. Victor's newlywed wife, Elizabeth, becomes the Monster's next prey. With the death of his wife and best friend, Victor visits the cemetery where the graves of his loved ones are located. There, he announces that he will not forgive the Monster for what it has so far committed. He takes the necessary amount of money with him and then sets off in pursuit of the Monster to slay it. In all this pursuit, he ends up all the way north where, barely alive, he is rescued by Walton's passing ship, whom in his last moments of life he asks to kill his Monster.

Another passage from the song: "I want to end my life now but I don't know how / Recycled again, a lifetime of pain / The spawn of a man / The devil has planned" (McBrain, Smith, Dickinson, 2003), alludes to the Monster's lamenting its fate despite



having taken revenge on its creator. The creature regrets its actions, explaining to Walton that, in fact, all these crimes have been painful to it. It also explains that during the commission of these crimes it has been driven by cumulative negative emotions that it was, in fact, unable to control. It talks about its experiences with people, the dreams it could not realise and the injustice that befell it. No longer having a purpose in life, the Monster decides to travel to the furthest reaches of the north and commit a suicide there. Iron Maiden's lyrics allude to the cycle of life, i.e. to the moment of the Monster's creation as well as its demise, which closes this vicious cycle and restores it to its original form, as indicated in the following quotes:

I entered the cabin where lay the remains of my ill-fated and admirable friend. Over him hung a form which I cannot find words to describe: – gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions. As he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy. [...]. 'Farewell! I leave you, and in you the last of human-kind whom these eyes will ever behold. Farewell, Frankenstein! If thou wert yet alive and yet cherished a desire of revenge against me, it would be better satiated in my life than in my destruction. But it was not so; thou didst seek my extinction, that I might not cause greater wretchedness; and if yet, in some mode unknown to me, thou hadst not ceased to think and feel, thou wouldst not desire against me a vengeance greater than that which I feel. [...].

He sprung from the cabin window, as he said this, upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance (Shelley, 2003, pp. 221-22).

## Iron Maiden's "The Longest Day" and Cornelius Ryan's *The Longest Day: June 6, 1944* (Jarosław Giza<sup>1</sup>)

Cornelius Ryan was an Irish-American journalist and author renowned for his gripping narratives of historical events, particularly those centred around World War II. Born on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1920, in Dublin, Ireland, Ryan grew up in a tumultuous time marked by the Irish War of Independence and the subsequent Civil War. He attended Synge Street Christian Brothers School in Dublin and later moved to London, where he began his career in journalism. His career started with freelance reporting for various British newspapers. During World War II, he served as a war correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph and covered events such as the D-Day landings in Normandy, the liberation of Paris, and the Battle of Berlin. These experiences provided him with firsthand knowledge of the people and events that would later inspire his literary works.

In 1947, Ryan immigrated to the United States, where he continued his occupation as a reporter. He became a naturalized American citizen in 1951. His breakthrough came with the publication of his first book, *The Longest Day: June 6, 1944* in 1959. Following the success of this book, Ryan continued to delve into the untold stories of World War II. In 1966, he published *The Last Battle*, which chronicled the Battle of Berlin and the final days of the Third Reich. Similar to his debut work, this book garnered praise for its gripping narrative and meticulous attention to detail. Ryan followed this work by *A Bridge Too Far* (1974), which tells the story of Operation Market Garden, the ill-fated assault by Allied airborne forces on the Netherlands, culminating in the Battle of Arnhem.

Ryan's journalistic approach to storytelling set him apart in the realm of historical nonfiction. He conducted extensive interviews with veterans, military leaders, and eyewitnesses to recreate the events with vivid realism. His ability to humanize the experiences of individuals caught up in the turmoil of war resonated with readers and critics alike. In addition to his books, Ryan contributed articles to publications such as *Collier's*, *Reader's Digest*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. He also worked as a screenwriter, adapting his own works for film. *The Longest Day: June 6, 1944* was made into a blockbuster movie in 1962, starring an ensemble cast including John Wayne, Sean Connery, and Richard Burton.

Tragically, Cornelius Ryan's prolific career was cut short when he passed away from prostate cancer on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1974, at the age of 54. Despite his untimely death, his legacy endures through his groundbreaking works of narrative history. His books continue to be celebrated for their contribution to our understanding of World War II and the individuals who shaped its outcome. Cornelius Ryan's unwavering dedication to documenting the human side of history ensures that his work will be remembered for generations to come.

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*The Longest Day: June 6, 1944* is a classic historical book that meticulously recounts the events leading up to and during the D-Day landings on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1944, during World War II. It starts with a prologue that sets the stage for the invasion, providing a brief overview of the planning and preparation undertaken by the Allied forces. The narrative then unfolds chronologically, covering the events of D-Day from multiple perspectives: American, British, Canadian, French, and German. Ryan delves into the months of planning and intelligence gathering that preceded D-Day, highlighting the thorough coordination among Allied commanders. He describes the deception operations, such as the creation of fake armies and the use of double agents, designed to mislead the Germans about the location and timing of the invasion.

As the invasion day approaches, Ryan vividly portrays the tension and anticipation felt by soldiers on both sides. He describes the weather forecasters' critical role in predicting a brief break in the stormy weather, which ultimately determined the timing of the invasion. On the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1944, Allied troops land on the beaches of Normandy in an operation codenamed "Overlord". In his book Ryan provides a gripping account of the amphibious assault, depicting the chaos, confusion, and carnage that ensued as soldiers stormed the heavily fortified beaches under heavy enemy fire.

The book follows the progress of the invasion throughout the day, detailing the struggles and triumphs of individual units as they fight to secure their objectives. Ryan highlights key moments, such as the capture of strategic points like Pegasus Bridge and the fierce resistance encountered at Omaha Beach. As the day wears on, Allied forces manage to establish a foothold in Normandy, albeit at a significant cost in lives. Ryan captures the human side of the conflict, recounting the experiences of individual soldiers and civilians caught up in the chaos of war.

The book concludes with the Allied forces consolidating their position in Normandy, paving the way for the liberation of Western Europe from Nazi occupation. Importantly, Ryan reflects on the significance of D-Day as a turning point in World War II and pays tribute to the audacity and sacrifice of those who participated in the invasion. By means of his narrative, Ryan accentuates the fact that "the hard-fought invasion on the sixth day of June opened a new European battlefield that would expand during the ensuing eleven months into the heart of Germany and thereby help ensure the eventual destruction of Hitler's Nazi regime" (Dolski, Edwards, Buckley, 2014, p. 1).

Therefore, Cornelius Ryan's *The Longest Day* stands as a timeless tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of those who participated in the D-Day landings. Through scrupulous research, engaging storytelling, and a balanced perspective, Ryan brings the events of 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1944, to life, ensuring that the legacy of D-Day endures for future generations. The book became an instant bestseller and received widespread critical acclaim, establishing Ryan as a leading authority on World War II history.

There are a few levels of comparison between the content of Iron Maiden's song and the content of the book. In my analysis I would like to present and compare those overlapping elements in the order that they appear in the lyrics of the song. The beginning of the song adjusts all our senses to the events to come:

In the gloom the gathering storm abates  
In the ships gimlet eyes await (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006).

There are plenty of references to weather conditions that play a significant part during both the preparations and the day of the invasion itself. The readers can encounter the first mention about the disastrous weather just at the beginning of the first section of the narrative called "The Wait", and it is as follows:

By 11 A.M. the gale in the Channel was blowing hard. In the restricted coastal areas of Britain, sealed off from the reminder of the country, the invasion forces sweated it out. Their world now was the assembly areas, the airfields and the ships. It was almost as though they were physically severed from the mainland (Ryan, 1967, p. 44).

The readers can almost feel the growing tension and anxiety among the soldiers who are impatiently waiting for the signal to attack and who are aware of the fact that weather conditions have to be stable enough to launch and properly conduct this significant military operation: "and so, on this stormy Sunday night, men waited, in loneliness, anxiety and secret fear, for something, anything, to happen" (Ryan, 1967, p. 60). It is important to acknowledge that not only soldiers, but Supreme Commander Dwight David Eisenhower as well, is anxiously waiting for the more favourable weather conditions, knowing that they are crucial for the success of the invasion. Among a few presentations of Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, the readers are provided with those that are marked with his apprehensive waiting for better weather condition, for example:

Throughout most of June 4 Eisenhower remained alone in his trailer. He and his commanders had done everything to insure that the invasion would have every possible chance of success at the lowest cost in lives. But now, after all the months of political and military planning, Operation Overlord lay at the mercy of the elements. Eisenhower was hopeless; all he could do was to wait and hope that the weather would improve (Ryan, 1967, p. 53).

And this predicament is also shown a few paragraphs later in the following quote:

Nobody at Supreme Headquarters expected perfect conditions on D Day, least of all Eisenhower. He had schooled himself, in countless dry runs with his meteorological staff, to recognize and weigh all the factors which would give him the bare minimum conditions acceptable for the attack. But according to his meteorologist the chances were about ten to one against Normandy having weather on any one day in June which would meet even the minimal requirements. On this stormy Sunday, as Eisenhower, alone in his trailer, considered every possibility, those odds appeared to have become astronomical (Ryan, 1967, p. 54).

The Supreme Commander is cognizant of the fact that the invasion is so crucial and that the time is so urgent that he gives a green light to initiate the operation despite adverse conditions; the soldiers are those who experience this predicament the most the moment they set sail for Normandy, as for instance, mentioned in this quote: they were "amazed to see waves so high that they smashed over one end of the wallowing craft and rolled out the other [...] all day they had ridden out the storm in the Channel. Now, waterlogged and weary, they glumly lined the rails as the last of the straggling convoys dropped their anchors" (Ryan, 1967, p. 64).

Significantly, the moments prior the invasion are not only marked by horrendous weather conditions, but also with the excruciating waiting on the part of the soldiers, often being cramped in the small confines of their boats and other means of transport, as vividly indicted in the following quote, which is only one of many similar ones that permeate the narrative:

The men on heavy naval vessels or large transports, on airfields or in embarkation areas, were the lucky ones. They were restricted and overcrowded, but they were dry, warm and well. It was different story for the troops on the flat-bottomed landing ships heaving at anchor outside nearly every harbor. Some men had been on these vessels for more than a week. The ships were overcrowded and foul, the men unbelievably miserable. For them the battle began long before they ever left England. It was a battle against continuous nausea and seasickness. Most of the men still remember that the ships smelled of just three things: diesel oil, backed-up toilets and vomit (Ryan, 1967, p. 64).

And while being confined in their vessels and waiting for the invasion the soldiers are engaged in the activities that they, possibly, would never do under ordinary and peaceful circumstances, they openly talk about their emotions and fears and strike new relations with the strangers: “they drew closer to one another on this strange night and confided in men they had never even met before” (Ryan, 1967, p. 84).

The subsequent comparison between the song and the novel is associated with following image:

The call to arms to hammer at the gates  
To blow them wide throw evil to its fate (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006).

As the story is unfolded the readers are presented with a vision of troops of soldiers who, upon landing in Normandy, are forced to find their particular groups in the darkness of the night, in the havoc of a variety of groups of people. Different nationalities accomplish that in different ways. For instance, the English use hunting horns:

Across the moonlit fields of Normandy rolled the hoarse, haunting notes of an English hunting horn. The sound hung in the air, lonely, incongruous. Again and again the horn sounded. Scores of shadowy helmeted figures, in green-brown-and-yellow camouflaged jump smocks festooned with equipment, struggled across the fields, along ditches, by the sides of hedgerows, all heading in the direction of the call. Other horns took up the chorus. Suddenly a bugle began trumpeting. For hundreds of men of the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division this was the overture to battle (Ryan, 1967, pp. 106-107).

The Americans employ toy crickets:

In countless small fields and pastures between the Channel and the flooded areas, Americans came together in the night, drawn not by hunting horns but by the sound of a toy cricket. Their lives depended on a few cents’

worth of tin fashioned in the shape of a child's snapper. One snap of the cricket had to be answered by a double snap and – for the 82<sup>nd</sup> lone – a password. Two snaps required one in reply (Ryan, 1967, p. 123).

Finally, the Canadians tend to use bugles and the Scottish, bagpipes. It is, therefore, important to assert here that despite the differences between the nations taking part in the invasion, they all are eager to employ a verity of the same technique that could allow them survive the atrocities of the Operation.

The subsequent comparison between the content of the song and the novel is associated with the depiction of the soldiers taking part in fighting:

All summers long the drills to build the machine  
To turn men from flesh and blood to steel  
From paper soldiers to bodies on the beach  
From summer sands to Armageddon's reach (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006).

The references to constant and long-term preparations for the invasion are in abundance in Ryan's book. One of the first mentions to a meticulous preparation for the attack appears in the first section of the book and it is as follows:

To prepare for an all-out invasion on which so much depended, intensive military planning had been going on for more than a year. Long before anyone knew that Eisenhower would be named Supreme Commander a small group of Anglo-American officers under Britain's Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan had been laying the groundwork for the assault. [...] Ultimately their studies, enlarged and modified into the final Overlord plan after Eisenhower took over, called for more men, more ships, more planes, more equipment and matériel than had ever been assembled before for a single military operation (Ryan, 1967, pp. 50-51).

Importantly, not only equipment had been scrupulously collected and plans of the invasion designed, soldiers were likewise subject to a continuous and lengthy training, as indicated in the following quote:

As the night closed in, the invasion forces all over England continued to wait. Keyed up by months of training, they were ready to go, and the postponement had made them jittery (Ryan, 1967, p. 60).

Nevertheless, it is significant to accentuate the fact that despite thorough training and preparations, what some soldiers really saw and experienced upon landing in Normandy was beyond their expectations and their prowess of endurance; they simply were not prepared for such a fierce and atrocious battle, as indicated in this quote:

In the British zone, almost on the coast and just three miles east of Sword Beach, Lieutenant Colonel Terence Otway and his men lay under heavy machine gun fire at the edge of the barbed wire and mine fields protecting the massive Merville battery. Otway's situation was desperate.

In all the months of training he had never expected every phase of his elaborate land-and-air assault of the coastal battery to work out exactly as planned. But neither had he been prepared for its total disintegration. Yet, somehow, it had happened (Ryan, 1967, p. 141).

However, the majority of soldiers, those who landed on Utah Beach, were very well prepared and for them the invasion itself was less arduous than the training.

The next stanza of the song uncovers another layer of comparison between the lyrics and the content of the narrative:

Overlord, your master not your god  
The enemy coast dawning grey with scud  
These wretched souls puking, shaking fear  
To take a bullet for those who sent them here (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006).

Although in this section of the song Bruce Dickinson sings about scud which in truth refers to a series of tactical ballistic missiles developed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it is very likely that the lyricists try to paint a particular picture in the listeners' imagination, a picture in which Normandy's beaches are permeated with a variety of obstacles that have been placed there by Germans. And the references to those obstacles such as "jagged triangles of steel, saw-toothed gatelike structures of iron, metal-tipped wooden stakes and concrete cones [...] mines, shells" (Ryan, 1967, p. 28), "lethal, ugly mines" (p. 68), "a 15-foot-thick hedge of barbed wire [...] a maze of machine-gun-filled trenches" (p. 112), "'Rommel's asparagus' – lines of heavy posts embedded in the ground as antiglider obstacles" (p. 138), "a hideous labyrinth of mine fields" (p. 141), "the lethal jungles of steel-and-concrete obstacles" (p. 170), "the forest of mined obstacles" (p. 171), "the obstacle-strewn sand" (p. 172), "underwater obstacles [...] causing more trouble than the enemy" (p. 187), "razor-edged reefs on the eastern half of the beach and barricades of obstacles creat[ing] havoc among the assault craft" (p. 192), and "coastal-zone obstacles" (p. 202) are in abundance in the book. They indeed paint the picture of sheer impossibility for the Allied Forces of entering Normandy. However, as the narrative unfolds, the readers observe advancing soldiers, those "wretched souls puking, shaking fear" (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006) who, after the long struggle eventually land in Normandy, and after having crossed those obstacles, defeat the Germans.

The subsequent stanza of the song illustrates the process of fierce fighting:

The world's alight, the cliffs erupt in flame  
No escape, remorseless shrapnel rains  
Drowning men no chance for a warrior's fate  
A choking death enter hell's gates (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006).

It is a violent portrayal of the struggle that Allied forces encounter upon landing in Normandy and the book likewise incorporates a wealth of similar horrid presentations of viciousness of war. In the book the readers can find a few references to fire and flames that constitute the essential part of the invasion, considerably enhancing sinister and hellish aura of the struggle. Flames and their mesmerizing powers are detected by both civilians, as indicated in the following quote:

Even before he reached the door, he could see what the trouble was. Through the windows of his shop the square, with its edging of chestnut tree and its great Norman church, appeared brilliantly lit up. M. Hairon's villa across the square was on fire and blazing fiercely (Ryan, 1967, pp. 114-115).

and soldiers landing in Normandy, as presented in those two quotes: "Private John Steele of the 82<sup>nd</sup>'s 505<sup>th</sup> Regiment saw that instead of landing in a lighted drop zone he was heading for the center of a town that seemed to be on fire" (Ryan, 1967, p. 116) and "Surgical Technician Emile Natalle looked down on shell bursts and burning vehicles below and saw 'a wall of fire coming up to greet us'" (p. 137). However, the most dramatic and hideous presentation of fire employed as the powerful ingredient in the invasion is the fact of its being used in flame throwers. Those war tools are implemented not only by Germans, perceived as the indication of their final attempt not to be defeated, but by the British soldiers as well. The implementation of flame throwers by the British army upon Germans hiding in their bunker is presented in the following quote:

The firing outside stopped and it seemed to Häger that everyone realized almost at the same moment that what was about to happen. There was a small peephole in a cupola over their heads. Häger and several others lifted a man up so he could see what was happening. Suddenly he yelled, 'Flame thrower! They're bringing up a flame thrower'. Häger knew that the flames could not reach them because the metal air shaft which entered the bunker from the back was built in staggered sections. But the heat could kill them. Suddenly they heard the 'woof' of the flame thrower. [...] Gradually the temperature began to rise. Some men panicked. [...] Häger watched the metal fairing of the air shaft go from pink to red and then to a glowing white (Ryan, 1967, p. 205).

Interestingly, the analysed stanza of the song does not allude only to fire and flames, but it likewise makes a reference to the destructive power of water. Along with the presentations of mesmerizing power of flames, there are references to the soldiers' considerable predicament connected with their landing on the vast territory that is dotted with rivers, lakes, ditches, marshes or swamps. One of the first references to this difficult situation is as follows:

Some pilots, caught in heavy cloud, mistook the mouth of the Dives for that of the Orne and let men out over a maze of marshes and swamps. One entire battalion [...] was scattered, instead, over fifty miles of countryside, most of it swampland. [...] The number of troopers who died in the wastes of the Dives will never be known. Survivors say that the marshes were intersected by a maze of ditches about seven feet deep, four feet wide and bottomed with sticky slime (Ryan, 1967, p. 111).

Therefore, it is obvious to observe that the soldiers landing in Normandy are required to fight not only with the Germans but with difficulties of the terrain on which they landed, and this struggle appears to be as strenuous as fighting the enemy. The narrator of the story asserts that:



Hundreds of men, heavily weighted with equipment, fell into the treacherous swamps of the Marderet and the Douve. Many drowned, some in less than two feet of water. Others, jumping too late, fell into the darkness over what they thought was Normandy and were lost in the Channel. [...] Some never appeared again. Others came up gasping, fighting for air and sawing desperately at chutes and equipment that could drag them under again (Ryan, 1967, pp. 121-122).

The narrative abounds in the similar presentations of the soldiers' 'premature' death resulting from being dropped into regions whose natural conditions emerge to be too arduous and, as asserted by the narrator, "scores of Utah-bound men saw the dead bodies and heard the yells and screams of the drowning" (Ryan, 1967, p. 168). The narrator continues this train of thoughts by acknowledging that "the sight of the bodies in the water, the strain of the long trip in from the transport ships and now the ominous nearness of the flat sands and the dunes of Utah Beach jerked men out of their lethargy" (p. 168). Therefore, it is genuine what is conveyed in the lyrics of the song that the drowning men, before the battle, did not stand a chance for warriors' fate. They simply died before being able to fight their enemy, undergoing "a choking death" while "enter[ing] hell's gate" (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006). The next stanza of the song is likewise a platform on which we can observe similarities between the content of the book and the lyrics of the song:

Sliding we go, only fear on our side  
To the edge of the wire  
And we rush with the tide (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006).

The expression 'sliding' used in this stanza is compatible with the activity undertaken by some groups of soldiers landing in Normandy; they literary slide in the gliders, as, for example, indicated in those quotes: "like huge bats, the six gliders, each carrying approximately thirty men, swooped silently down" (Ryan, 1967, p. 97) and "a fleet of sixty-nine gliders was due to sweep down out of the Normandy skies carrying men, vehicles, heavy equipment and the precious guns" (Ryan, 1967, p. 107). At the beginning of the invasion, the glider appears to be one of the most convenient means of transport offering the soldiers and their weapons fast access into the territory of the enemy. But after having landed the genuine predicament really begins, the soldiers have to rush "to the edge of the wire" (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006) that comprises one of the elements of the intricate structure of the obstacles that have been put on the beaches by Rommel's soldiers:

Nor had Rommel forgotten the threat of parachutists or glide-borne infantry. Behind the fortifications low-lying areas had been flooded, and into every open field within seven or eight miles of the coast heavy stakes had been driven and booby-trapped. Trip wires were strung between these posts. When touched, they would immediately set off mines or shells (Ryan, 1967, p. 30).

The narrative incorporates a lot of descriptions of the horrible predicament of the soldiers while trying to cross the terrain between the coast and the cliffs, the area permeated with a plethora of obstacles. And one of those portrayals is as follows:

Everywhere men extricated themselves from extraordinary predicaments. Most of their situations would have been bad enough in daylight; at night, in hostile territory, they were compounded by fear and imagination. Such was the case with Private Godfrey Maddison. He sat at the edge of a field imprisoned by a barbed-wire fence, unable to move. Both legs were twisted in a wire and the weight of his equipment – 125 pounds, including four 10-pound mortar shells – had driven him so far forward into the wire that he was almost completely enmeshed (Ryan, 1967, p. 110).

However, despite the excruciating difficulty of crossing the terrain, the narrative of the book and the history of the World War II inform us that Allied Forces were successful and managed to cross the defences and enter the territory of Normandy occupied by the Germans.

The refrain of the song: “How long on this longest day / ‘Til we finally make it through” (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006) constitutes another meeting point between the content of the book and the lyrics. Importantly, the concept of waiting for the battle to begin permeates the narrative of the first part of the book entitled “The Wait”. Here the readers encounter a lot of images presenting the anxious waiting on the part of soldiers for whom the day of the invasion will be one of the longest they will ever experience, as indicated in the following quote presenting the moment of waiting for the invasion to commence:

Almost every man in the invasion forces wrote a letter to someone during the long hours of waiting. They had been penned up for a long time, and the letters seemed to give them emotional release. Many of them recorded their thoughts in a way that men seldom do (Ryan, 1967, p. 63).

And the truth is that the day of the invasion proves to be one of the longest days for soldiers and, significantly enough, this has been predicted by Rommel himself while addressing his army before the invasion:

‘The war will be won or lost on the beaches. We’ll have only one chance to stop the enemy and that’s while he’s in the water... struggling to get ashore. [...] Believe me, Lang, the first twenty-four hours of the invasion will be decisive... for the Allies, as well as Germans, it will be the longest day’ (Ryan, 1967, pp. 27-28).

The subsequent stanza of the song, depicting atrocities of the war, offers us another ground for drawing similarities between the content of the book and the lyrics of the song:

The rising dead, faces bloated torn  
They are relieved, the living wait their turn  
Your number’s up, the bullet’s got your name  
You still go on, to hell and back again (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006).

Those words comprising the horrid presentation of carnage of the invasion and the narrative of the book presents the readers with a plethora of similar depictions of a growing number of massacred soldiers:

He landed with a crash in one of the trees. Around him men were being machine-gunned to death. There were shouts, yells, screams and moans (Ryan, 1967, p. 117).

As Renaud watched, ‘about half a dozen Germans emptied the magazines of their submachine guns into him and the boy hung there with his eyes open, as though looking down at his own bullet holes’ (Ryan, 1967, p. 117).

Within the first few minutes of the carnage at Dog Green one entire company was put out of action. Less than a third of the men survived the bloody walk from the boats to the edge of the beach. Their officers were killed severely wounded or missing, and the men, weaponless and shocked, huddled at the base of the cliffs all day (Ryan, 1967, p. 173).

There was a tremendous explosion and the boat disintegrated. It seemed to Davis that everyone in it was thrown into the air all at once. Bodies and parts of bodies landed all around the flaming wreckage (Ryan, 1967, p. 174).

A tank, buttoned up for protection and thrashing wildly up the beach to get out of line of fire, ran over the dead and the dying (Ryan, 1967, p. 192).

However, despite the overwhelming atrocities of war, the soldiers of the Allied Forces are not left hopeless and without any reward for their sacrifice of lives. After having being massacred while trying to restore freedom from Nazi regime and dignity for the oppressed, the soldiers, presented as the fierce Vikings, are promised Valhalla for their struggle. Bruce Dickinson sings in the next stanza of the song that “Valhalla waits, Valkyries rise and fall / (...) we will prevail” (Smith, Harris, Dickinson, 2006). It is therefore important and reassuring that the lyrics of the song offers a powerful dose of hope for those who have sacrificed their most precious parts, their own lives, offering them in return the places in Odin’s Valhalla, the place located within Asgard, “the place to which fallen warriors are led by the Valkyries and where they are cared for by them” (Schuppener, 2022, p. 14), the place where they continue to fight every day and if killed or injured come back to health to fight the next day.

## Iron Maiden's "When The Wild Wind Blows" and Raymond Briggs' *When the Wind Blows* (Tomasz Kivak<sup>1</sup>)

Raymond Redvers Briggs, born on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1934, was a famous British writer, illustrator and cartoonist. In line with Hahn, Raymond "wanted to be a cartoonist, and went to Wimbledon School of Art, then to the Slade. Discovering that he had no talent for painting, he began to illustrate books while still a student" (2015, p. 93). Growing up in during World War II, and later living through the Cold War, had a pronounced effect on Briggs and his art. Although his works were focused primarily at children, Briggs had a talent of expressing serious and emotional themes that deeply resonated with audiences of all ages. His children's picture book, *The Snowman* (1978), won many awards and brought him international fame, despite being entirely wordless. Although more serious themes were always present in his art, from 1980 onwards Briggs started to focus on more mature content, while still maintaining his child friendly art style. That year he created *Gentleman Jim* (1980), a story revolving around everyday life of a working-class couple, the Bloggs that "showed Briggs moving away from a strictly child readership (as he had perhaps begun to do in *Fungus the Bogey-man*; its hero is an attendant in a gentleman's public lavatory who turns highwayman" (Hahn, 2015, p. 93). In 1998 he created *Ethel & Ernest* (1998), a graphic novel that serves as a presentation of his parents, telling the story of their lives from their first meeting in 1928, to their deaths in 1971 and this "was followed by another children's book, *Ug* (2001), about a stone-age boy attempting to invent soft trousers" (Hahn, 2015, p. 93).

*When the Wind Blows* by Raymond Briggs is a graphic novel published in 1982. Written during uncertain times at the height of the Cold War, it tells the story of an elderly couple, as they live during a nuclear war. The main characters are Jim and Hilda Bloggs, who appeared in his previous work *Gentleman Jim* (1980). According to Hahn, in his graphic novel "Briggs uses his comic-strip style to devastating effect as he shows what would be the real result, for plain, ordinary people like Jim and his wife Hilda, of nuclear war" (2015, p. 93). Although the novel starts in a light-hearted and comedic way, satirizing the concept of a nuclear conflict in a style of a children's comic book, with time it slowly transforms into a realistic and bleak vision of what it is like to "survive" a nuclear attack. The story starts a short while before the nuclear attack, when the main characters prepare for the incoming apocalypse, and ends when they both die of radiation sickness a few days after the attack. Throughout its run, the novel touches on multiple topics.

The first of those is obviously nuclear warfare. The graphic novel portrays the devastating impact of nuclear war on ordinary people, emphasizing pointless cruelty of armed conflicts and the senselessness of nuclear war in particular. Through the eyes of Jim and Hilda, the readers witness consequences of political decisions made far away from the realities of war, and the everyday people affected by the conflict. At the beginning the couple thinks the war will be just like any other before, where bad things

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happen but they will persist through the hardships and survive. But soon they are confronted with the overwhelming threat of societal collapse and deadly radiation. Raymond Briggs does not hesitate to go into the morbid details as the couple loses hope and succumbs to radiation sickness. The novel presents a powerful and touching anti-war and anti-nuclear proliferation message that is still relevant today.

The subsequent theme that is delineated in the novel is governmental incompetence. The truth is that inadequacies of government instructions created during the Cold War as means of preparing civilians for a nuclear exchange are repeatedly highlighted in the story. Not only were many of them clearly nonsensical, but a variety of them were also often contradictory, causing even more confusion among the already panicking populace. Many of the ridiculous guidelines which the couple follows come directly from these kinds of government issued instructional pamphlets. As the couple obediently follows these instructions, their trust in authority is progressively undermined by the harsh reality of their situation. In the end they are left to die alone, as no rescue from the government ever comes. The narrative underscores the devastating effects of governmental incompetence on lives of ordinary people. Hence, the novel can serve as a cautionary tale about the dangers of overreliance on the authorities during times of crisis. In order to support this fact, it is necessary to include assertion voiced by Dawn Stobbart who, while analysing the content of the novel, rightly asserts that “Briggs denounces the UK government’s Public Service strategy that was supposed to help the British population survive a nuclear war”. Stobbart also adds that “Briggs uses this medium to denounce the role of weapons, war, and the government, whilst drawing the reader into the personal story of one couple, using techniques specific to the comic medium to do so, including the adherence to, and the subversion of common picture book to tell and adult narrative” (2021, p. 460).

The graphic novel focuses upon naivety and ignorance as well. Those themes constitute a part of the narrative, reflecting the vulnerability of the protagonists, and the entire general population, in the face of a nuclear crisis. The Bloggs do not fully comprehend the situation they found themselves in, whether because of ignorance or because of denial. The magnitude of the threat posed by nuclear warfare overwhelms them, and they do not realize how dire the situation is until it is too late. Their unwavering trust in government advice and their adherence to outdated notions of safety underscore their innocence and naivety, just as real people idealistically choose to believe that the government has control over everything, which obviously is not true. In the graphic novel the readers are often confronted with the question if the “The Powers That Be” really know what they are doing.

*When the Wind Blows* copes with the theme of love as well. With the nuclear apocalypse as a backdrop, the themes of affection and marital care are presented as a beacon of hope and resilience. Jim and Hilda’s enduring love transcends the direst of circumstances. Their unwavering commitment to each other becomes a source of strength and hope as they grapple with the devastation wrought on by the nuclear war. Through their sweet and wholesome interactions and shared memories, Briggs portrays love as a powerful force capable of providing comfort and meaning in the face of unimaginable tragedy. Despite their physical and emotional weaknesses, Jim and Hilda’s affection for each other shines brightly, offering a glimmer of humanity in their darkest hour.

Despite its simplicity and shortness, *When the Wind Blows* is a hard-hitting piece of social commentary on nuclear warfare and its effects on ordinary people. Briggs' novel focuses on a realistic and down to earth story, concentrating entirely on a single elderly couple spending their final days together, in what remains of their home. There are no flashy action scenes and implausible heroes who save the day, just bleak reality, and a slow death from radiation. In the conclusion to the book entitled *The Trauma Graphic Novel*, Andrés Romero-Jòdar maintains that "in graphic novels, this turn to ethics left no space for the simplistic reactionary world of superheroes, and favoured the creation of works that question the essence of being human and values of contemporary Western societies". The researcher continues his thought by adding that "stories belonging in this trend tend to avoid action-laden simplistic plots, widening the scope to the creation of alternative narratives like Raymond Briggs' *When the Wind Blows* (...). Adapting a confessional and intimate tone, these deeply subjective stories turn into explorations of memories and emotions (...) [and] the global atmosphere of trauma" (2017, p. 167).

This sense of bleak hopelessness and trauma is likewise present in the lyrics of Iron Maiden's song "When the Wild Winds Blow" that appeared on their fifteenth studio album "The Final Frontier" in 2010. The song is a very close retelling of Briggs' novel, with each verse describing couple's actions at various points in the story. In line with Pilkington,

The inspiration for the song is the book of the same name by Raymond Briggs, a graphic novel telling the moving and allegorical tale of an ordinary couple who hear there is likely to be a nuclear catastrophe and he prepares a shelter while she goes about her normal days' routine, preparing tea and the like. After the bomb goes off, they emerge from the shelter and look back over their lives as they are eradicated (2020, p. 130).

While Iron Maiden is known for their heavy, action filled songs, this work of theirs is much more sombre. It starts with the titular wind blowing, which gradually changes into a calm melody. Just like in the novel, the opening is calm before the storm. The fifth verse picks up the tempo, transitioning into louder and harsher metal, as the lyrics express the rising tension and frustration of the situation the characters have found themselves in. The bridge and subsequent instrumental break between verses 9 and 10 act as an almost equivalent of the flashpoint of the attack, with lyrics clearly describing the exact moment of the explosion, and the following break serving as a representation of a nuclear detonation. The next three verses describe the days immediately after the attack when the couple waits in their shelter for rescue that never comes. With the final instrumental break, the song winds down for a slower and sombre ending, which reveals that the couple did not survive. The song does not end with a bang, but a whimper. Just like with a real nuclear conflict, all the tension and action end with nothing, but mindless death and destruction. When it is all done, all that is left is the wind blowing over the empty wasteland. It is significant to add here that, as stated by Jake Brown, this song "was signalled out for particular praise," and he continues his acclamation that "*Classic Rock* declared that it 'brilliantly evokes the mundane horror of Raymond Briggs' celebrated apocalypse tale with a series of grim but gripping twists and turns, delicate melodic gear-changes and enough atmosphere to sink one of Bruce Dickinson's beloved jumbo jets'" (2011, p. 65).

The beginning of the song clearly mirrors the start of the story, when Jim comes back from work and asks Hilda if she heard the warning of an incoming war in the news. In the song it is presented in such a manner:

Have you heard what they said on the news today?  
Have you heard what is coming to us all?  
That the world as we know it will be coming to an end  
Have you heard, have you heard? (Harris, 2010).

and in the graphic novel in the following way:

- You seem a bit down, dear  
- Yes, well-been reading the papers in the Public Library all the morning.  
- Oh those things! Full of rubbish. I never look at them. Except The Stars.  
- We must keep abreast of the international situation, ducks – The decisions made by The Powers That Be will get to us in the end.  
- Politics and Sport, that's all they're full of  
- It could affect us all- The Ultimate Determent an' that.... – They say there may be a pre-emptive strike, dear  
[...]  
- It looks as if there's going to be a war, dear (Briggs, 1986, p. 6).

Despite the serious subject matter, the tone early on in the story is quite light and comedic, a device that will be used later on as a contrast with the overwhelmingly dark and bleak final moments of the novel. Nevertheless, despite hilariousness of the style, we can detect that Jim is gravely anxious that the threat of war can be genuine, and his emotions are mirrored in the next stanza of the lyrics of Iron Maiden's song:

He sees them in the distance where the darkened clouds roll  
He could feel tension in the atmosphere  
He would look in the mirror see an old man now  
Does it matter, they survive somehow? (Harris, 2010).

Significantly, the colourful and comedic scenes of the Bloggs preparing for the attack are interspersed with much darker and enigmatic shots of various weapons of war. These include missiles on a distant plain (Briggs, 1986, pp. 9-10), bombers in a distant sky (pp. 15-16), and submarines in distant ocean (pp. 19-20). These shots painted in dark and menacing colours are used to build up tension and remind the readers how serious the situation really is, despite the satirical tone of the early pages.

The song of Iron Maiden is therefore attempting to replicate the feeling of someone who has to face the imminent threat of an apocalypse. The character is looking at the sky, tense and afraid, looking out for the incoming attack. He then stares into a mirror and wonders if he has what it takes to survive, and if it even matters if he and his wife survive. These are the kinds of thoughts that can be rushing through the mind of someone who is placed in this predicament. And they are visualized in the song in the following manner:

As he stares across the garden looking at the meadows  
And wonders if they'll ever grow again  
The desperation of the situation getting graver  
Getting ready when the wild wind blows (Harris, 2010).

Coming back to the graphic novel, the readers can observe that after the attack is over, the couple, who spent some time in their makeshift shelter, decides to leave the house to see the effects of the nuclear explosion. They soon notice that the plants, including grass and their vegetable garden, are all dead. The heat and radiation released by the attack killed everything in their surrounding area. This is the point when the couple start realizing how bad their situation really is and it is presented in such a manner in the narrative:

- The leaves have all gone off the apple tree, ducks
- Oh yes. What a shame
- Still, it will be lovely in the Spring
- It is Spring, dear
- The heat has affected the hedge, love
- The beans look a bit shriveled
- And I think the lettuces have evaporated
- [...]
- The grass looks a funny color
- [...]
- The Road's gone all funny. Seems to have melted a bit.
- I expect that's why the milkman's late. He's got stuck somewhere.
- I wonder if there's a proper War on? I wonder who's winning? (Briggs, 1986, p. 35).

Just like in the novel, the fragments of the song presented below are meant to highlight the highly destructive nature of nuclear warfare on the environment. Conventional bombs are fully capable of bringing death and destruction on a scale similar to an atom bomb, but radiation and nuclear fallout create a whole new dimension to the devastation caused by nuclear weapons. The ability to render an area uninhabitable for decades, if not centuries, is something only a nuclear bomb can accomplish. Those parts of the song are as follows:

There will be a catastrophe the like we've never seen  
There will be something that will light the sky  
That the world as we know it – it will never be the same  
Did you know, did you know?

He carries everything into the shelter, not a fuss  
Getting ready when the moment comes  
He has enough supplies to last them for a year or two  
Good to have, because you never know



He's nearly finished with the preparations for the day  
He's getting tired that'll do for now  
They are preparing for the very worst to come to them  
Getting ready when the wild wind blows

They've been preparing for some weeks now  
For when the crucial moment comes  
To take their refuge in the shelter  
Let them prepare for what will come (Harris, 2010).

The lyrics of the song return to time right before the attack when the couple is making their final preparations. It once again focuses on the exceptional nature of a nuclear war, claiming it to be a catastrophe "The like we've never seen". It also accentuates the world-changing nature of such conflict since, as mentioned earlier, the damage from this kind of war would affect the world for many years, even decades and the lyrics then move on to describe preparations done by the couple. Unlike in the novel, where the Bloggs expect the crisis to last for two weeks at the most, here, in the lyrics they prepare for a year or two. While Jim naively has faith in government and its promise that everything will be over soon, the characters in the song are not blinded by their trust in authorities.

In the novel, while Jim is taking the situation very seriously and follows the governmental guidelines without questioning them, Hilda is much more sceptical. She repeatedly opposes the more extreme measure undertaken by Jim, such as using a bucket instead of a toilet. She believes the whole situation is blown out of proportion and she is not as convinced as Jim of the usefulness of all the guidelines he is following. And it is presented in the following manner:

- Nice dinner dear
- (On the radio) THE PRIME MINISTER... MADE A STATEMENT THIS AFTERNOON IN VIEW OF THE DETERIORATING INTERNATIONAL SITUATION... WARNING THE COUNTRY... PREPARATIONS ARE UNDER WAY... OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES... FALLOUT SHELTERS... THREE DAYS' TIME...
  - CRUMBS!
  - What's the matter dear? Have you burned yourself?
  - This is it, ducks! This is really it!
  - Another sausage dear? I shouldn't worry too much. It'll probably all blow over
  - Three days! Blimey! Three days!
  - Language, James! Language! (Brigg, 1986, p. 7).

Significantly enough, although she underestimates the threat they are in, Hilda is not wrong in doubting Jim's preparation methods. He blindly and uncritically follows the governmental guidelines, despite the fact that it is obvious they will not help much during the actual attack. Still, he is much more concerned about the preparations than Hilda.

- What on earth are you putting the food in there for?
- Well, that's where it's got to be
- But why can't it stay in the larder and fridge?
- Because we must not emerge for 14 days of the National Emergency
- You're not saying we've got to stay in that thing for 2 weeks?!
- Well, yes dear. Ours not by reason why... We must do the correct thing [...]
- And what about the toilet?
- Well, we'll have to have a potty or something
- I can tell you now, James Bloggs, that I am going to go upstairs in the proper manner
- But you mustn't emerge dear. Not for the 14 days of the National Emergency (Briggs, 1986, p. 14).

Just as the radio announces that the attack is imminent, Jim tries his best to reason with Hilda and convince her to go to their shelter. When it does not work, he forcefully drags her into the shelter mere moments before the actual attack, barely saving both of their lives. Despite the seriousness of the situation, the argument between Jim and Hilda is presented in a hilarious way:

- (On the radio) WE ARE INTERRUPTING THIS PROGRAMMING FOR AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT. AN ENEMY MISSILE ATTACK HAS BEEN LAUNCHED AGAINST THIS COUNTRY. IN JUST OVER THREE MINUTES
- God Almighty, ducks! There's only three minutes to go!!
- Oh dear, I'll just get the washing in.
- COME BACK YOU STUPID FOOL AND GET IN THE SHELTER!
- How dare you talk to me like that. James!
- SHUT UP AND GET IN!
- There's no need to forget our manners just because there's a war on
- SHUT UP I'M TRYING TO LISTEN!
- I've never heard such language in all my life
- FOR GOD'S SAKE SHUT UP!
- Oh dear! I've left the oven on
- GET IN! GET IN! GET IN!
- The cake will be burned (Briggs, 1986, p. 22).

Significantly, the similar situation is analysed in the lyrics of the song:

They said there's nothing can be done about the situation  
They said there's nothing we can do at all  
To sit and wait around for something to occur  
Did you know, did you know?  
They tell us nothing that we don't already know about  
They tell us nothing that is real at all  
They only fill us with the stuff that they want  
Did you know, did you know?

Can't believe all the lying all the screens are denying  
That the moments of truth have begun can't you see it on the TV?  
Don't believe them in the least bit  
Now the days of our ending have begun (Harris, 2010).

Here the song addresses the topic of government propaganda present in mass media, which is used to normalize the state of constant threat of nuclear cold war. People in power attempt to present themselves as mere victims of the situation, forced to build more nuclear weapons because of the danger from the enemy. The general populace is made to be apathetic to the constant peril of nuclear war, to accept the fact that at any time the world may come to an end as status quo. The next section of the song refers to people like Jim and Hilda's waiting for the attack:

He sees the picture on the wall it's falling down upside down  
He sees a teardrop from his wife roll down her face saying grace  
Remember times they had they flash right through his mind left behind  
Of a lifetime spent together long ago will be gone

They make a tea and sit there waiting  
They're in the shelter feeling snug  
Not long to wait for absolution  
Don't make a fuss, just sit and wait (Harris, 2010).

Early on after the attack Jim and Hilda try to maintain a positive attitude despite the dreadfulness of their situation. They attempt to live their lives the same way as they used to do before the war. While waiting for rescue, the couple passes time by drinking tea, sunbathing, and talking to each other. They reminisce about their lives before war, and discuss what may be happening in the outside world. However, this starts changing when they run out of supplies, mostly water:

- Put the kettle on will you, ducks?  
- There's no water, dear  
- Oh no, of course. Just have the have milk then  
- That pint has gone bad, dear. The fridge has been off...  
- Oh heck! Well... black coffee, then  
- There's still no water, dear  
- Well, what are we going to drink? Eh? EH? WHAT ARE WE GOING  
TO DRINK FOR GOD'S SAKE?  
- Don't shout dearest  
- I'm sorry, love – I'm just terribly thirsty (Briggs, 1986, p. 40).

Hilda is the first to suffer from radiation sickness, but it does not take much time before Jim is also affected. While Hilda starts to panic, seeing both of their bodies literally falling apart, Jim tries to calm her down and keep her spirits up. It is presented in such a manner in the novel:

- Oooer! My Gums are bleeding! I thought there was a funny taste  
- Shrinking of gums causing ill-fitting dentures. That's what that is. Better go to the dentist when the emergency has rescinded  
- There was blood when I went to the toilet this morning.

- Yes, me too. Piles that is, Hovaloyds. A common complaint in middle-aged people like ourselves. I'll pop down the Chemist' when the crisis pales into insignificance – get some of those suppositories
- Oh dear, I think I'm going to be sick...
- There, there ducks. All better now... Don't upset yourself, love. Don't cry. I expect it's due to the vibration (Briggs, 1986, p. 40).

As far as the end of the song is concerned, it is compatible with the end of the graphic novel only in one detail. Although both the readers and the listeners are presented with the vision of couples dying, in the song two people are dead because, mistaking earthquake for a nuclear attack, they have committed mutual suicide taking poison, and it is presented in the following way:

Say a prayer when it's all over  
Survivors, unite all as one  
Got to try and help each other  
Got the will to overcome

When they found them, had their arms wrapped around each other  
Their tins of poison lying nearby their clothes  
The day they both mistook an earthquake for the fallout  
Just another when the wild wind blows (Harris, 2010).

In the book, on the other hand, exhausted and suffering from radiation poisoning, Jim and Hilda decide to rest in their make-shift shelter that, in the due time, will be their final resting place. The couple lies down together, dressed in used potato bags. Worn as a desperate protective measure against radiation, they will serve as their body bags. With all hope lost and devoid of any other options, the couple starts praying:

- Shall we pray, dear?
- Pray!
- Yes
- Crumbs! Who to?
- Well... God, of course
- Oh I see... yes... if you think it would be the correct thing ...
- It can't do any harm, dear
- OK- Here goes- er... - Dear Sir~
- No, that's wrong
- How do you start?
- Oh God...
- Our Help in Ages Past
- That's it! Keep it up
- Almighty and Most Merciful Father... er...
- That's good
- Dearly Beloved...
- We are gathered... - er... Unto thee – I shall fear no evil thy rod and thy staff comfort me all the days of my life er... - Lay me Down in Green Pastures – I can't remember any more... (Briggs, 1986, p. 43).

As for the final lines of the novel, they are taken from “The Charge of the Light Brigade”, a famous poem, analysed earlier in this book, describing a charge performed by a British cavalry against Russian forces during the Crimean War.

- Oh yes... Into the valley of The Shadow of Death...
- No more love... no more...
- ...rode the Six hundred... (Briggs, 1986, p. 43).

In many ways this historic charge is an adequate analogy to the nuclear conflict described in Briggs’ graphic novel that refers not only to a military conflict, but also to meaningless and self-destructive violence for the sake of Powers That Be. While the poem celebrates the charge as an example of bravery and chivalry, the attack was ultimately a great failure. Not only did it fail to accomplish any military goal, it also caused the light brigade to suffer many casualties. At its heart, it was a suicide attack. The cavalry knew they are going to die. In the same vein, there is no better word to describe a nuclear conflict than suicidal. The doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction guarantees that both sides of a nuclear exchange are going to lose. There is no winning in a nuclear war, just like a charge of light cavalry had no chance of succeeding against entrenched enemy positions. The soldiers of the light brigade were ordered by their commanders to sacrifice their lives for some strategic higher goal, just as the elderly Bloggs, and the all other civilians, were forced to sacrifice their lives so that the people in power could attain some greater abstract goals. In both cases, nothing was achieved, but death, and suffering.

## Conclusions

Our team project entitled “Literature and heavy metal music: A comparative analysis of literary motifs in lyrics of the heavy metal band Iron Maiden and the practical guide for lyricists implementing literary motifs” underscores the profound interconnectedness between heavy metal music and the realm of literature. Through an in-depth examination of Iron Maiden’s lyrical content of 11 songs that are influenced on or even based upon the content of literary works, we have arrived at several compelling conclusions that can be drawn here.

**Artistic fusion:** Our project highlights the intricate fusion of literature and heavy metal music, allowing for creation of powerful narratives evoking intense emotions. Iron Maiden’s lyrics, steeped in literary motifs, mythological concepts and historical events, exemplify how heavy metal musicians can draw inspiration from classical and contemporary literary works. We found out that Iron Maiden have been proficient at doing that, incorporating a plethora of literary tropes in their songs. And since we have analysed only 11 songs, the truth is that we have explored approximately one-third of Iron Maiden’s songs whose lyrics incorporate literary motifs and tropes. Therefore, this publication can function as a starting point for further analyses of this fusion of literature and heavy metal music.

In the exploration of the intertwining realms of literature and heavy metal music, our project delves into a captivating journey of artistic fusion, particularly evident in the comparative analysis of literary motifs in the lyrics of Iron Maiden’s songs and a practical guide for lyricists. Through a meticulous examination, several conclusions emerge, illuminating the profound connections between these seemingly disparate forms of expression.

Firstly, our project underscores the remarkable symbiosis between literature and heavy metal music, revealing how both media convey profound messages and evoke powerful emotions. By dissecting the lyrical content of Iron Maiden’s songs, it becomes evident that literary motifs do serve as a rich tapestry enabling artists to craft narratives that resonate deeply with audiences.

Furthermore, our project illuminates the transformative potential of artistic fusion, highlighting how the amalgamation of literary motifs within heavy metal lyrics transcends conventional boundaries, fostering a unique and immersive experience for the listeners. We found out that this fusion has not only enriched the thematic depth of heavy metal music but has also served as a bridge between disparate artistic realms, inviting audiences to engage with complex ideas and narratives in innovative ways.

Moreover, the comparative analyses that were undertaken in our project shed light on the role of interpretation in artistic expression, showcasing how literary motifs can be re-imagined and recontextualized within the realm of heavy metal music to convey distinct perspectives and worldviews. Through the lens of Iron Maiden’s lyrics and a practical guidance offered to lyricists, our project underscores the dynamic nature of artistic interpretation, emphasizing the multiplicity of meanings that emerge when literature and music converge.

Additionally, our project accentuates the transformative power of artistic fusion, demonstrating how the synthesis of literature and heavy metal music engenders a rich tapestry of meaning and emotion. By bridging the gap between these two seemingly disparate forms of expression, artists are empowered to create immersive narratives that transcend conventional boundaries, inviting audiences on a journey of exploration and discovery. In essence, our project serves as a testament to the enduring resonance of artistic fusion, highlighting its capacity to inspire, provoke, and captivate in equal measure.

**Cultural resonance:** By analyzing the thematic parallels between Iron Maiden's lyrics and literary works, our project emphasizes the cultural resonance of heavy metal music. Through references to iconic literary figures, historical events, and philosophical concepts, we discovered that Iron Maiden for many years have been engaging with broader cultural discourses, enriching their music with layers of meaning. The comparative analyses of the lyrics of Iron Maiden's songs have revealed intriguing insights into the cultural resonance of literature within the realm of heavy metal music.

Through an examination of literary motifs, mythology and history it becomes evident that Iron Maiden's lyrics are indeed replete with layers of cultural references. These motifs have not only contributed to the thematic depth of their music but have also established a profound connection with the listeners who have been drawn to the interplay between literature and heavy metal.

Moreover, a practical guide for lyricists provides a roadmap for aspiring songwriters to leverage literary motifs effectively in their own compositions. By analyzing the techniques employed by Iron Maiden and offering practical advice on implementation, our guide can serve as a bridge between the domains of literature and music, empowering artists to create works that resonate deeply with cultural themes and narratives.

Our project underlines the enduring influence of literature on heavy metal music and highlights the importance of cultural resonance in shaping artistic expression. By exploring a variety of influences of literature upon heavy metal, the listeners can gain a deeper appreciation for the multifaceted nature of artistic inspiration and the ways in which music can serve as a conduit for cultural exploration and interpretation.

**Creative synergy:** The development of our practical guide for lyricists represents a synthesis of literary techniques and musical expression. By providing aspiring lyricists with tools to incorporate literary motifs into their songwriting, our project encourages a deeper exploration of themes and narratives within the metal genre, enhancing the richness and complexity of lyrical content.

The project, delving into the rich tapestry of literary motifs within the lyrics of Iron Maiden's songs and an useful guide for lyricists, has illuminated an intriguing nexus between literature and heavy metal music. One of the most striking findings was the creative synergy present in the utilization of symbolism, allegory, and mythological references. Iron Maiden, renowned for their epic storytelling and thematic depth, have been mirroring the timeless narratives found within classical literature. Meanwhile, a convenient guide for lyricists provided a roadmap for aspiring writers to harness these literary motifs effectively, underscoring the enduring relevance of such techniques across artistic disciplines.

Moreover, the exploration of themes spanning from existential angst to historical epics showcased how literature and heavy metal converge to explore the human condition in all its complexities. This shared thematic landscape has not only enriched the lyrical content of the genre but has also served as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling in all its possible forms.

Importantly, our project underscores the transformative potential of creative synergy, where the intersection of literature and heavy metal music yields narratives that transcend boundaries and ignite the imagination of the listeners. By bridging the gap between these seemingly disparate realms, we can develop a genuine appreciation for the multifaceted nature of artistic expression and the myriad ways in which it shapes our understanding of the world. As we continue to explore the interplay between literature and music, we are reminded of the boundless possibilities that emerge when creativity knows no bounds.

**Cross-disciplinary approach:** Through comparative analyses, our project fosters a dialogue between literature and heavy metal music, transcending disciplinary boundaries and advancing a deeper admiration for both art forms. By examining how literary motifs have been manifesting in Iron Maiden's lyrics, our project illuminates the multifaceted nature of artistic inspiration and the diverse ways in which creative influences intersect and intertwine.

Our project demonstrates the power of cross-disciplinary dialogue to inspire creativity, deepen understanding, and construct new avenues for artistic expression. By exploring the intersection of literature and heavy metal music, we gained insight into the ways in which diverse cultural influences have shaped our artistic landscape, and the potential for collaboration to break down boundaries and forge new paths forward.

**Cultural evolution:** Ultimately, our project underscores the dynamic evolution of cultural expression, showcasing how Iron Maiden's music has been serving as a vehicle for literary exploration and interpretation in the contemporary landscape. By celebrating the interplay between literature and heavy metal, our project, we believe, contributes to a broader understanding of the enduring relevance of both media in shaping cultural discourse.

Our project offers insights into the cultural evolution of both literature and heavy metal music. Through an examination of the lyrical content of Iron Maiden's music and the development of a guidebook for lyricists, this study underscores the dynamic interplay between literary motifs and musical expression within the heavy metal genre.

Moreover, our project underscores the role of heavy metal music as a platform for cultural critique and exploration. Through their lyrics, Iron Maiden have been engaging with themes of power, rebellion, and existentialism, inviting their listeners to reflect on societal norms and values. In doing so, they have considerably contributed to the ongoing evolution of cultural discourse, challenging conventions and sparking dialogue on issues ranging from politics to personal identity.

The comparative analyses presented in our project illuminate the rich tapestry of influences shaping both literature and heavy metal music. By examining the intersection of these two artistic forms, we gained valuable insights into the cultural evolution of society at large. Moving forward, continued exploration of these themes promises to deepen our understanding of the dynamic relationship between art, music, and cultural identity.



Finally, our project illuminates the profound interconnectedness between heavy metal music and literature. Through our analyses of Iron Maiden's lyrics and the development of a practical guide for lyricists, our project highlights the cultural resonance and creative synergy that define the dynamic intersection of literature and heavy metal music.

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University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz, Poland

I am an undergraduate student at the University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz. This is my first scientific publication. I am keen on heavy metal music, rock music and many more genres. I am also fond of fantasy books, fan fiction but I enjoy reading older literary works as well. I am very curious about Japanese culture, including history and tradition.

### **Tomasz KIWAK** (student, 3<sup>rd</sup> year of English Philology)

University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz, Poland

I am an undergraduate student at the University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz. This is the first academic text I have ever worked on. I have an interest in art, primarily digital art and interactive storytelling, and in technology. I enjoy reading non-fiction books and fantasy, as well as listen to alternative rock, nu metal and independent music. In my free time I like drawing and modify computer games.

### **Adrian SAJEWICZ** (student, 3<sup>rd</sup> year of English Philology)

University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz, Poland

I am a certified screenwriter who graduated from the AMA Film Academy in Kraków. I am currently a student of English Philology. This is my first published article, but I have already made a couple of short films based on my own texts. I am a huge film fan, with a great knowledge of films, I am also literature lover, and one of my biggest interests is film adaptations of books and, more recently, games, and vice versa. I am also a history buff and a gym rat.

**Aleksandra SAJEWICZ** (student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Applied Linguistics in Business)

University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz, Poland

I am a student of Applied Linguistics in Business. This is my first publication. I am a bookworm and love modern books, but older and more classic novels are what I love the most. Jane Austen is my favourite author. I also love old rock music and even have a Nirvana tattoo.

**Maksymilian TOTOŚ** (student, 3<sup>rd</sup> year of English Philology)

University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz, Poland

I am currently a student of the English Philology at University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz. My interests vary from literature and other forms of art to foreign mythologies (especially the Greek and Egyptian ones) and philosophies of the Far East. I am also keen on psychology, mainly the analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung.



*Photography 1.* The photo of the participants of the project (from the left: Tomasz Kiwak, Kacper Horowski, Maksymilian Totoś, Aleksandra Sajewicz, Adrian Sajewicz, Jarosław Giza).

Source: own photo.