



Research Article

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Fusions of Folk, Rock and Metal: Týr's "Modern Versions" of Faroese Ballads¹

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Abstract

The article discusses fusions of folk and rock music with regard to the pagan / progressive metal band Týr and their relation to traditional Faroese ballads. An overview depicts diverse relationships to traditional music in general and to ballads in particular in Týr's musical output up to their *Valkyrja* album (2013). An empirical analysis focuses on how said fusion is reflected in the melody, text, riffs and rhythm of Týr's version of "Regin smiður" (Regin Blacksmith). The final section discusses the relation of traditional ballads and the sentimental rock ballad in the track "The Lay of Our Love" (2013), allowing for a sociocultural embedding of the two distinct types of rock ballad.

Introduction

Rock musicians have been creatively engaging with traditional ballads since the 1960s, reinterpreting them and combining them with elements of rock. In the wake of the American and British folk revivals, musicians like Joan Baez, Bob Dylan and the band The Byrds in the USA, along with such bands as Fairport Convention in the United Kingdom, began performing traditional music with electric rock-band instruments and introducing stylistic elements from rock music. Their models came from various traditional genres; with Fairport Convention playing dances like jigs and reels, and also ballads like "Matty Groves" from the authoritative edition of English and Scottish ballads by Francis James Child (no. 81)². The music ethnologist Britta Sweers usefully applied the term "fusion" to the study of such hybrids³, and I shall apply this

term in the present study to a more recent phenomenon, namely the rock-music transformations of traditional Faroese ballads by heavy metal band Týr. The band, whose members come from the Faroe Islands themselves, provides evidence that folk-rock fusions take place within Scandinavian ballad tradition, a factor of renewed relevance in the early 21st century. It is also noticeable that Týr makes an important contribution to the present-day cultural life of the islands not only within the heavy metal scene but from the point of view of the Faroese public, to judge by the website of the Faroese tourist bureau. Until recently, this offered a Sound Gallery with typical Faroese sounds, beginning with the traditional ballads and continuing under the heading "Modern versions of the ballads" with a three-line sketch of "Viking Metal Band" Týr plus promo photo⁴.

¹ This article was first published in German as "Fusionen aus Folk, Rock und Metal: Zu Týrs 'modern versions' färöischer Balladen", in: Annegret Heitmann, Katharina Yngborn (eds), "Rider ud saa vide": Balladenspuren in der skandinavischen Kultur, Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach 2016, pp. 249-276.

² Fairport Convention, *Liege & Lief* [first release 1969], remastered, CD, Universal Island Records 2002. See Britta Sweers, *Electric Folk. The Changing Face of English Traditional Music*, Oxford/New York 2005, pp. 3, 174f. Joan Baez released two double albums with ballad recordings mostly from the 1960s: *The Joan Baez Ballad Book*, Vanguard 1972, and *The Contemporary Ballad Book*, Vanguard 1974; the latter also with compositions by Bob Dylan, partly in band arrangements; her version of "Matty Groves", in contrast to Fairport Convention's, does without rock elements.

³ Britta Sweers, *Electric Folk*; ead., *Die Fusion von traditioneller Musik, Folk und Rock – Berührungspunkte zwischen Populärmusikforschung und Ethnomusikologie*, in: Helmut Rösing et al. (eds.), *Musikwissenschaft und populäre Musik. Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme*, Vol. 19, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, pp. 169-186.

⁴ Visit Faroe Islands, <http://www.visitfaroeisland.com>, as consulted in 2015; in the meantime, the website has changed.

In the international heavy metal scene across Europe and North America, Týr is currently recognized as one of the best known professional bands in the genres of Pagan Metal or Viking Metal and - with the genre description clearly pointing to stylistic fusion - Folk Metal⁵. Founded in Copenhagen in 1998, the band was initially known on the Faroes with a rock version of the ballad "Ormurinn langi" at Prix Føroyar in 2001⁶. Their early albums were released on the leading Faroese label Tutl, which distributes Faroese music of all conceivable kinds. Since 2006 Týr has released its music through international distributors, initially with Austrian heavy metal label Napalm Records, from 2013 with Metal Blade Records, one of the largest international heavy metal labels with head offices in the USA and in Germany. An important element in the band's prominence within heavy metal culture was provided by its frequent appearances on tour and at festivals in Europe and North America⁷. Týr's album *Valkyrja* took top places in international music charts as soon as it came out in October 2013. It can therefore be claimed that Týr has been instrumental in disseminating Faroese ballads and making them accessible to an international audience, at least within heavy metal culture, which represents a vigorous branch of popular music culture in the early decades of the 21st century.

Týr's relevance in the heavy metal context is due not only to the popularity of the band within this culture but also to the presentation of its Nordic identity and the use of elements from Norse mythology and heroic saga, which is already evident from the fact that it has taken its name from a Norse god. Its interest in Old Norse mythical content links Týr with a current within heavy metal that can be traced back at least as far as Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song" (1970), which then developed into a trend in the 1990s under the influence of the power metal band Manowar in the USA and the Swedish black metal band Bathory. This trend has continued to

this day and has attracted bands from Northern Europe in particular and from countries further afield. The emergence of the sub-genres Pagan Metal and Viking Metal are intimately associated with this trend.

My approach to Týr's transformations of Faroese ballads is informed by a musicological perspective and an interest in various phenomena of musico-textual intertextuality and intermediality⁸. I see a need for research in the field of rock music and heavy metal genres in relation to the links with cultural traditions and with mythological and literary heritage⁹. That folkloric elements played an important part not only in folk rock or electric folk but also for hard rock bands like Led Zeppelin and representatives of 1970s progressive rock, which have shaped the heavy metal genre, is a theme well represented in the research literature¹⁰. Týr is undoubtedly among the metal bands currently active that most noticeably adopted early prog style, and Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" (1971) must still be considered the model for the fusion of folk ballad style and hard rock.¹¹ Nevertheless, the presence of a certain stylistic continuity is not sufficient to explain the particular aesthetic processes followed by Týr. The association of traditional ballads and ballad types in popular music is the very element that has hitherto received little attention in academic debate.¹² Thus the question of Týr's ballad transformations promises to break new ground in a number of fields. For this reason, I am placing my focus upon the analysis of contentual and aesthetic references and their place in the interaction between genres. It would undoubtedly also be of interest to examine from a Scandinavianist perspective Týr's relationships with Faroese ballads in the context of Faroese culture. This would however require appropriate field research that proved not to be feasible within the scope of this study and would in any case go beyond the issues to be resolved here.

⁵ In accord with standard classifications within popular music studies I use the term Heavy Metal as an umbrella term for the entire metal genre, seen as a sub-genre of rock music and subdivided in turn into a series of subordinate sub-genres, among them Pagan Metal, a description used more or less interchangeably with Viking Metal. The complications that these genre boundaries inevitably cause cannot be considered in detail in the present study. For a sociocultural survey of pagan metal and the location of the band Týr in this sub-genre see Deena Weinstein, Pagan Metal, in: Donna Weston/Andy Bennett (eds.), *Pop pagans. Paganism and popular music*, Acumen 2013, pp. 58–75.

⁶ For the band's history, see the entry on Týr in *Encyclopaedia metallum*, <http://www.metal-archives.com> and the band's website, <http://www.tyr.fo>.

⁷ That is shown by such sources as the article on pagan metal in a major US music magazine: Jon Wiederhorn, *Stairway to Heathen*, in: *Revolver* (April 2009), pp. 60–64.

⁸ See for example Katja Schulz/Florian Heesch (eds.), "Sang an Aegir". *Nordische Mythen um 1900*, Heidelberg 2009.

⁹ The prime source remains Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil. Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Middletown, Connecticut 1993, pp. 151–160, even if there is a need for further observations and distinctions. In respect of lyrics, see for example various case studies in Roman Bartosch (ed.), *Heavy metal studies. Vol. 1: Lyrics und Intertextualität*, Oberhausen 2011.

¹⁰ See for example Susan Fast, *In the Houses of the Holy. Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music*, Oxford/New York 2001; Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics. English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*, New York, Oxford 1997.

¹¹ Cf. Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil*, pp. 158f.

¹² That research into traditional ballads and pop-music ballads (jazz, rock etc.) is largely separate is shown by the entries for them in standard reference works: Lajos Vargyas et al., *Ballade*, in: *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart (MGG). Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, founded by Friedrich Blume, second, revised edition, ed. by Ludwig Finscher, Sachteil, Vol. 1, Kassel 1994, cols. 1118–1157; James Porter et al., *Ballad*, in: *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, last consulted December 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01879>.

The following study proceeds in three stages. In the first place I give an overview of the diverse relationships to traditional music in general and to ballads in particular in Týr's output of music up to their *Valkyrja* album (2013). In this connexion I refer briefly to the aspects of the Faroese ballad tradition relevant here and explore some specific forms of aesthetic reference in Týr. In the second stage I give key examples of various levels of ballad transformation in detail as found in "Regin smiður". In the final section I discuss the stylistic evolution of the band with reference to its departure from traditional ballads and its adoption of the sentimental rock ballad, in this case "The Lay of Our Love" on the *Valkyrja* album. This allows important conclusions to be drawn concerning the sociocultural embedding of the two distinct types of rock ballad.

An Overview: Faroese Ballads in Týr's Music Repertoire

The Faroese ballads known as *kvæði* form an important part of traditional Faroese culture. Some of these are "folk ballads" that were long written down only as an aid to memory and can in their historical development be traced back with some certainty as far as the late Middle Ages.¹³ It will be seen that the Faroese ballad tradition, upon which the band Týr draws, encompasses more than the anonymous "folk ballad" and extends to works by named lyricists. For this reason, but also on grounds of terminological exactitude, I refer here to traditional culture rather than folk culture, given that the reference to "folk" or "the people" has come in for just criticism on account of its false romanticism or its ideologically loaded implications.¹⁴ The special character of Faroese ballads in comparison with other ballad traditions is to be found in the fact that essentially, they were danced. Marianne Clausen, who only a few years ago issued a volume of tunes to the canonical Faroese ballad (text) collection CCF [Corpus Carminum Faeroensium], sums up the situation as follows: "The Faroese *kvæði* is a dance-song - Faroese dance is a song-dance. The three components: words, melody, and dance, comprise a whole and none of the three can stand alone".¹⁵ The texts and tunes were long handed down by word of mouth; all ballads were sung to a simple chain dance (*Føroyskur dansur*), the basic

steps of which correspond to the *branle simple*.¹⁶ The closeness of the link between song and dance as perceived by islanders even in the first half of the 20th century is well documented in Jóannes Patursson's *Kvæðabók* (1945): "When men sit down to chant, they are not chanting correctly unless the dance, the chanting and the steps are heard as a fully blended undercurrent in this seated chanting, as lively and compelling as though the verses were being danced on the floor."¹⁷ Ballads were traditionally danced for the most part as part of festivals such as weddings or New Year celebrations; folk groups now play a key part in keeping up the tradition. Video recordings made available on the internet allow glimpses of *kvæði* performances. There have also for many years been phonographic recordings of Faroese festivals or performances by folk groups.¹⁸ Even if such recordings cannot offer a visual impression of events, they always furnish the rhythmical framework of the dance, represented by the sound of stamping feet. Ballad transformations played an important part at the very start of Týr's career as a band, though they are only a modest part of the band's total output. Of the 67 songs that have previously appeared on a total of seven albums, I have succeeded in identifying 15 that had a clear reference whether at the musical or at the textual level to Faroese ballads (Table 1). It should be noted that further possible balladic references are not to be ruled out. It is often difficult to provide unequivocal proof of reference to traditional music in particular. The liner notes of each album give the author and source of each song, but many of these are limited to traditional practice in their country of origin, such as "Faroese trad." This only represents a difficulty from a philological perspective, however, as offered in this section of the present study. It would be as inappropriate to criticize Týr for their imprecise approach to tradition as it would be with any other representatives of popular culture. Suffice it to say that their appropriation of sources follows the principle of bricolage, that is to say, significance is established less by reference to the original or traditional environment of the source material and more from its reinterpetive transfer into new contexts.¹⁹ Even if Týr continues to attach a certain significance to its links with the tradition, their form of appropriation is primarily intended to generate a product for the present day.

¹³ See the introduction by Mortan Nolsøe, Faroese Balladry. Revised translation, in: CCF, Vol. 8, pp. 17–29.

¹⁴ Here I also follow the ethnological model of Britta Sweers, which she applied to an example of Latvian pagan metal in: Der lettische Pagan Metal. Eine ethnomusikologische Quellenkritik und Diskursanalyse, in: Florian Heesch/Anna-Katharina Höpflinger (eds.), Methoden der Heavy Metal-Forschung. Interdisziplinäre Zugänge, Waxmann 2014, pp. 101–116.

¹⁵ Marianne Clausen, Faroese dance, in: CCF, vol. 8, p. 57.

¹⁶ On traditional Faroese dance see Andrea Susanne Opielka, Färöische Tanzspiele: Herkunft, Verbreitung, heutige Tradition. Studien zu einer alten Volkstanztradition, Saarbrücken 2009.

¹⁷ Quoted from Mortan Nolsøe, Faroese Balladry, p. 17.

¹⁸ For recordings of "Regin smiður" see such sources as the gramophone records Chants et danses des Îles Féroé, Arion 1978; Kvad-dans från Färöarna, Caprice 1978; more recently on CD, e.g. in Føroyskur Dansur/Traditional Ballad Dancing In The Faroes, Vol. 11–15, Tutl 2009.

¹⁹ The concept of bricolage coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss was introduced to the research of popular culture by Dick Hebdige and carried over into the field of reference to literature, history and mythology in heavy metal by Walser (Running with the Devil, pp. 151–160); see also my article Nordisch – germanisch – deutsch? Zur Mythenrezeption im Heavy Metal, in: Dietrich Helms/Thomas Phleps (eds.), Typisch deutsch. (Eigen-)Sichten auf populäre Musik in diesem unserem Land, Vol. 41, Transcript 2014, pp. 127–141, here p. 140f.

Table 1: Faroese ballads (text and music) in Týr's albums up to 2013. The titles are in ascending chronological order of album release and in sequence of tracks within each such album.

Ballad, source (number in CCF, TSB, or other edition)	Title of the track by Týr	Album by Týr
»Ólavur Trygvason (Ormurin langi)«, text: Jens Christian Djurhuus, CCF 215 / Sverri Egholm (ed.), Nýggja Kvæðabókin, vol. 1, Tórshavn 1996, pp. 91–103	»Ormurin langi«	<i>How Far to Asgaard</i> , 1st ed. Tórshavn: Tutl 2002, 2nd ed. Eisenerz: Napalm Records 2008 ¹
»Nornagests ríma«, CCF 4, TSB E 2	»hidden« track in »How Far to Asgaard« (1st ed. of the album) / »Styrisvøglurin« (2nd ed.)	ibid.
»Ólavur Riddararós«, CCF 154, TSB A 63	»Ólavur Riddararós«	<i>Eric the Red</i> , 1st ed. Tórshavn: Tutl 2003, 2nd ed. Eisenerz: Napalm Records 2006
»Sjúrdar kvæði (Regin smiður)«, CCF 1, TSB E 51	»Regin smiður«	ibid.
»Torsteins kvæði«, CCF 99, TSB E 110	»Torsteins kvæði«	<i>Ragnarok</i> , Eisenerz: Napalm Records 2006
»Grímur á Miðalnesi«, CCF 55, TSB E 111	»Grímur á Miðalnesi«	ibid.
»Gandkvæðið Tróndar«, text: J.H.O. Djurhuus, Yrkingar, 2 nd ed., Copenhagen 1923, pp. 54–55	»Gandkvæði Tróndar«	<i>Land</i> , Eisenerz: Napalm Records 2008
»Zinklars Vise«, text: Edvard Storm, Edvard Storms samlede Digte, Copenhagen 1785, pp. 42–145	»Sinklars vísa«	ibid.
»Fípan fagra«, CCF 48, TSB E 159	»Fípan fagra«	ibid.
»Gátu ríma«, CCF 17, TSB E 34	»Gátu ríma«	ibid.
»Lokka táttur«, CCF 13, TSB E 114	»Lokka táttur«	ibid.
»Geyti Áslaksson«, CCF 30, TSB E 14	»Tróndur í gøtu«	<i>By the Light of the Northern Star</i> , Eisenerz: Napalm Records 2009
»Dvørgamoy IV (Ása Dvørgamoy)«, CCF 8 D, TSB E 152	»Turið Torkilsdóttir«	ibid.
»Ellindur bóndi á Jaðri«, CCF 45, TSB D 368	»Ellindur bóndi á Jaðri«	<i>The Lay of Thrym</i> , Eisenerz: Napalm Records 2011
»Grindavísan«, text: Christian Pløyen [1803–1867], Grindavísan, 2nd ed., Tórshavn 2004; Sverri Egholm (ed.), Nýggja Kvæðabókin, vol. 2, Tórshavn 1997, pp. 167–175.	»Grindavísan«	<i>Valkyrja</i> , Eislingen / Agoura Hills: Metal Blade Records 2013

¹ The second edition includes the bonus tracks »Ólavur Riddararós« and »Styrisvøglurin« which have been published earlier on the single record Ólavur Riddararós, Tórshavn: Tutl 2002 and on the album *Eric the Red*.

Among the 15 ballads listed are eleven medieval examples, most of which are assigned by TSB [Types of Scandinavian Ballad] to the heroic type, one (“Ólavur Riddararós”) to the type with supernatural material, one (“Ellindur bóndi á Jaðri”) to chivalric balladry. The emphasis in the field of heroic ballads overlaps with Týr’s main thematic interests in general, that is to say, material that is in close relationship with the heroic tales of the Icelandic *foraldarsaga* (saga of ancient times) and Norse mythology. In terms of the TSB typology, this emphasis is principally due to the circumstance that the greater part of the heroic ballad type consists of West Scandinavian ballads “mainly of Norwegian or Faroese types”.²⁰ The fact that Týr draws on not a single ballad of the “legend” type - that is, with Christian content - is hardly surprising in view of the band’s pagan orientation and lyrics. Not all pagan metal bands give religious grounds for their membership of the genre, but Týr’s musicians certainly do.²¹

Týr has not only adapted medieval ballads; the band has also arranged ballads from modern times, beginning with “Ormurin langi” by Jens Christian Djurhuus (1773-1853) and concluding to date with a Danish ballad by bailiff Christian Pløyen (1803-1867) named “Grindavísan” about the traditional Faroese hunt for the long-finned pilot whale [modern Danish *langluffet grindehval*]. On the album *Land*, Týr combines two poems by J.H.O. Djurhuus (1881-1948) with traditional Faroese music; the first poem, “Gandkvæði Tróndar”, is sung to a more modern Faroese ballad tune not given in CCF.²² The poem by Edvard Storm (1749-1794) entitled “Zinklars Vise”, a title translated in Týr’s liner notes to *Land* as “The Ballad of Sinclair”, is like “Grindavísan” an example of the Danish-Faroese cultural transfer under Danish suzerainty.²³ According to Hjalmar Thuren and Hakon Grüner-Nielsen, the editors of *Færøske Melodier til danske Kæmpeviser* (1923),²⁴ the singing of Danish songs - with local variations - was part of the Faroese tradition. In this case the original poem is augmented with the refrain (in the text variant sung by Týr) “Vel opp før dag, de kommer vel over den hede” [well before day, they come over the heath], which appears in similar form in the Danish ballad “Greve Genselin” (Count Genselin, DgF 16, TSB E 12).

The fifteen named Týr tracks are supplemented by several others for which the liner notes state that traditional melodies have been adapted to lyrics written by band members, mostly by Heri Joensen. The band has also added completely new material to its repertoire, writing words and music itself. The relationship between ballad transformations and other tracks within an album may be illustrated by the example of *Eric the Red* (2003/2006), the album that contains the ballads “Regin smiður” - to be examined

more closely in the next section - and “Ólavur Riddararós”. These are joined by another traditional Faroese song (“Stýrisvøllur”) with new lyrics, the traditional Danish song “Ramund hin unge”²⁵ (the boy Ramund) and the well known Irish song “Wild Rover”.²⁶ The other five on the ten track album are the band’s own compositions (“The Edge”, “Dreams”, “Rainbow Warrior”, “Alive”, “Eric the Red”). It may be observed - without going into detail about every album - that successive albums offer varying amounts of traditional music. The album *Land* (2008) is the one that contains the most ballads, as shown by the summary in Table 1, and also the strongest links with tradition. Later albums feature fewer ballads and less traditional music in general. The present study is essentially concerned with Týr’s stylistic fusion of ballads and heavy metal. For the overall picture, it is important to bear in Ragnarok album mind that the ballads adopted by Týr are not always found in a stylistic mix but in individual cases as samples of recordings of traditional ballad performances, inserted into the tracks in various ways. “Nornagests ríma” can be heard from Týr in a traditionally performed version lasting almost ten minutes but it appears neither in a track list nor in liner notes, lying “buried” in the final track of *How Far to Asgaard* after several minutes of silence have followed the end of the last listed song.²⁷ “Grímur á Miðalnesi” is to be found on the *followed the end of the last listed song* in the form of an ethnographical recording, given in the liner notes as “performed by brothers Albert Djurhuus (1912-1999) and Martin Djurhuus (1914-1985). Recorded in 1966 by Mortan Nolsøe. Reproduced with kind permission from relatives.” The Djurhuus brothers were two experts in traditional ballad performance practice, while Mortan Nolsøe is one of the key Faroese ballad researchers. The same tune can be found in Marianne Clausen’s transcription as Variant FKL 55,2 in CCF, Vol. 8; it too is dependent on a recording of Albert and Martin Djurhuus, in this case from 1964. On Týr’s album the immediately following track is “Wings of Time”, a metal version of “Grímur á Miðalnesi”. The ethno-phonographic sample is thus contrasted with an example of style fusion. A further form of montage occurs in the opening track of the *Land* album, the above mentioned “Gandkvæði Tróndar” after J.H.O. Djurhuus’ poem with the almost identical name “Gandkvæðið Tróndar”. A traditional performance of the ballad - with song and stamping dance steps - can be heard softly in the background. In the foreground, guest artist Hanus G. Johansen recites the complete Faroese text; an arrangement of the ballad melody for string instruments is audible as a third, intermediate layer.³⁰ After the end of the recitation, lasting about two and a half minutes, Týr’s band instruments take over from the strings and play the tune for over a minute and a half in heavy metal sound. Empirical analysis of

²⁰ TSB, p. 17.

²¹ Deena Weinstein, Pagan Metal, in: Donna Weston/Andy Bennett (eds.), *Pop pagans. Paganism and popular music*, Acumen 2013, pp. 58–75, here p. 70; Weinstein gives an overview of the complex and altogether important aspect of religion in music, which cannot be considered in detail in this article.

²² For the tune, I am grateful for the advice of Andrea Susanne Opielka. The second poem by Djurhuus is “Ver sterk mín sál” (in J.H.O. Djurhuus, *Yrkingar*, 2., enlarged edition, Copenhagen 1923, p. 7), which is combined in the track “Land” with the much-quoted stanza 76 from the Edda song “Hávamál” (in English translation) and with lines written by Heri Joensen.

²³ Týr uses 8 of 20 stanzas from Storm’s poem: stanzas 1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20.

²⁴ Here quoted from CCF, Vol. 8, Tillæg A, p. 4.

²⁵ Ramund”, no. 222 in Werner H. Abrahamson et al. (eds.), *Udvalgte danske Viser fra Middelalderen, efter A.S. Vedels og P. Syvs trykte Udgaver og efter Haandskrevne Samlinger*, Vol. 4, Copenhagen 1813, pp. 334–340; of the 24 stanzas, Týr uses these five: 1, 6, 7, 19, 24.

Empirical analysis of a ballad transformation: “Regin smiður”

The track “Regin smiður” will illustrate a specific case of how Týr goes about the transformation of a Faroese ballad. There are several reasons for the selection of this particular example. In the history of the band, “Regin smiður” is one of the first ballad transformations released by Týr; Eric the Red, on which it is performed, is the first of Týr’s albums to have been (re-)released on a label outside the Faroes and this wider distribution introduced the band to a wider international audience.³¹ With “Regin smiður”, the ballad “Ólavur Riddararós” and the other tradition-related tracks mentioned above on Eric the Red, the band presented their characteristic fusion of folk and metal on the international scene. There was also a video clip to “Regin smiður”, in other words it was this very ballad, with its audiovisual format crucial to the distribution of popular music, that enabled Týr to reach a wider audience through internet video portals; the video clip also appeared on the multi-label compilation Pagan Fire as a significant example of current pagan/Viking metal.³² Where the Faroese ballad tradition is concerned, “Regin smiður” and the other two Sigurd ballads have often attracted particular attention, not so much from the point of view of Faroese tradition as from an external perspective. In respect of the widespread interest in Old Norse literature on the heavy metal scene, “Regin smiður” ultimately represents a striking example of the relatively rare circumstance in which the narrative of the song relies not on the otherwise frequent mythological elements but on material from the Norse heroic saga.

The change of genre from a traditional ballad to a heavy metal song results in a number of substantial differences. To the extent to which the ballads can still be seen today as part of an interac-

tive, community-based practice, they are changed by Týr into the performance of a band, whether for an audience or for an album track with electronically produced sound. The conversion of traditional music into rock was always seen even in its relatively simple form as a massive transformation, as is abundantly evident from the notorious “scandal” of Bob Dylan’s appearance with electric guitar and band at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. This “electrification” raises the basic volume level of folk or traditional music, detaching it from its interactive functions (everyone sings/plays/dances) and turning it into a performance of music, where sound is paramount.³³ In accordance with a model by Allan Moore it can be stated that the traditional unaccompanied ballad has several layers of sound added to it by Týr, whose instrumental line-up is typical of heavy metal, consisting as it does of two electric guitars, electric bass and percussion.³⁴ It must not be forgotten that the dance - a necessary part of the tradition - always provides its own rhythmical layer of sound, because it is integral to the performance that the dance steps should generate noise. In the arrangement for band, this layer is lost or is replaced by other rhythms in the percussion. In the context of the genres Progressive Metal, Folk Metal and Pagan/Viking Metal, between which Týr stylistically circulates, it is noticeable that unlike many others, the band uses no folk instruments³⁵. Bearing in mind that they are drawing on a tradition of Faroese folklore that largely dispenses with instruments, this seems entirely logical. Where metal sound is concerned, it must be noted that it is not solely dependent on the use of instruments, being effectively based on the application of technology.³⁶ Apart from electric amplification, that includes sound effects such as reverb, the distortion of guitar sounds and studio processing techniques, such as compression, that generate a high basic volume level in the overall sound. Central aspects of the rock-music transformation are

²⁶ On older versions of “Wild Rover” see Peter Kennedy (ed.), *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland. A Guidebook to the Living Tradition of Folksinging in the British Isles and Ireland*, London 1975, p. 633; on the more recent popularizations of the song see Brian Peters, *The Well-Traveled “Wild Rover”*, in: *Folk Music Journal* 10 (2015), no. 5, p. 609–636.

²⁷ What song the last track of the album is named after depends on the release. In the first release it is “How Far to Asgaard”, in the second “Styrisvölurin”. See also Laurent Mandrile: TYR – Nornagest Ríma, Youtube, 19 June 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qp8xUnJGJw&feature=Playlist&p=68761871DFD97CD7&playnext_from=PL&index=15, last consulted: 30 November 2015.

²⁸ See the short biographies of the Djurhuus brothers in CCF, Vol. 8, pp. 687, 706.

²⁹ The album booklet includes an English translation by Anker Eli Petersen.

³⁰ The liner notes describe the string quartet – violin, viola, cello and double-bass – as played for the recording by guest musicians Heiðrun Petersen, Pól Nolsøe Jespersen, Tóri Restorff and Edvard Nyholm Debess.

³¹ Týr’s first album *How Far to Asgaard* was not re-released by Napalm Records till two years after *Eric the Red*.

³² *Pagan Fire*, CD and DVD, Donzdorf/Hawthorne: Nuclear Blast 2008.

³³ Cf. Dietrich Helms, *Ein bißchen Frieden hören. Vom Krieg und der Befriedung der populären Musik*, in: Hartmut Lück/Dieter Senghaas (eds.), *Vom hörbaren Frieden*, Frankfurt a.M. 2005, pp. 575–599, here pp. 584–586.

³⁴ Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text. Developing a Musicology of Rock*, 2nd ed., reprint, Aldershot / Burlington, VT 2007, p. 33. Moore’s basic model of rock music analysis subdivides rock sound into four “layers” (1. rhythm layer, 2. low register, 3. high register incl. voice, 4. harmonic layer located between 2 and 3). It must not be forgotten that traditional ballad performances always feature a rhythmical layer: the sound of dancing feet.

observable in the vocals. The interactive element of the traditional Faroese ballad performance consists of the *skipari* (one or more “skippers”) starting every verse anew and interpreting it in accordance with the narrative, with those who know the words joining in at any time and everyone singing the refrain.³⁷ Týr too have a lead singer and a collective; the difference is that this is a fixed structure with a soloist - the front man Heri Joensen, whose voice is prominent in the foreground - and a vocal backing group, which enters (only) in the refrain and regularly sings in two parts at the end of each. Another difference from traditional performance practice is that Joensen as lead singer articulates clearly and plainly throughout with only minor variations in dynamics and tone colour, whereas traditional singers take greater liberties and show more irregularity. Joensen’s clear, straightforward delivery of the tune fits well into the sound typical of the genre, as heavy metal in general places greater value on precision in the overall sound than on variable dynamic or articulatory emphasis. At the same time, it is noticeable that Joensen does not necessarily sing with the hoarse voice typical of rock, in contrast to such exponents as the band’s first singer, Pól Arni Holm, who can be heard for instance on the early album *How Far to Asgaard* in the ballad “Ormurin langi”. Where his timbre is concerned, Joensen is not substantially different from traditional or folkloric singers.

Another fundamental aspect that I consider to be noteworthy relates to the status of the ballad as artefact. As such, a traditional Faroese ballad exists only in its performative state, as an event marked by a particular performance in which text and melody can be changed in numerous ways. In so far as the available recordings on audio discs identify themselves as documentation of such a traditional performance, they capture the event phonographically as a sequence frozen in time, but do not challenge its essential nature as an event. As a track on a rock album with appropriate sound production, the ballad congeals into a finished artefact. Live performances have no influence on this, given that in the metal genre, live sets are generally played without improvisational excursions. Týr’s transformation thus renders “Regin smiður” as a fixed construct that did not hitherto exist in that form.

Melody

These fundamental observations on change of genre lead me in turn to comment upon concrete aspects of the transformation of melody and text and upon the newly added instrumental parts with particular regard to riffs and rhythm. Melody and text represent the strongest prima facie evidence of shared ground between traditional ballad and metal version. As stated, Týr’s transformation embodies the fixed choice of one among many traditional variants in text and melody. Where the latter is concerned, the catalogue of melodies in CCF for “Regin smiður” lists a total of 24 variants; of these, FKL 1,1,14 may be regarded as the one which bears the closest similarity to Týr’s version (Music Example 1). The refrain shows the two tunes to be identical except for the leap of a fifth added at the end of the traditional version. The verse begins in the same way in each version and displays the same basic characteristics despite some superficial divergence. In the first and second lines of the text, the melody falls from the fifth note (b’) to the keynote (e’) and returns to its starting-point; in the third line, the melody again rises to the dominant, then climbs another fourth to the upper octave of the keynote (e’), rising more modestly to its climax (f#’), only to fall back by stages to the starting note (b’) in the fourth line of the verse. The melody line is thus distinguished by its symmetrical structure, in which the first line is mirrored in the second and paralleled in the fourth line, having been transposed by an interval of a fourth, so that the starting point is also the point of departure and plays a pivotal role. The refrain “Grani bar gullið av heiði” (Grani bore the gold away from the heath) has a decidedly different rhythm from the verse with its almost constant quavers, and its crotchets - fitting the speech intonation: “Gra-ni bar gul-lið av hei-ði” - provide an alternation between short and long notes. The melody of the refrain is characterized by its rising and falling thirds (b’-d’, b’-g’, g’-e’). The refrain too can be regarded as having its innate symmetry, since its fourth line represents a return of the first, with the oft-repeated formula “Grani bar gullið av heiði”, which is thus sung twice as often as there are verses.

³⁵ The track “Victory” on the Ragnarok album features folk instruments, which are however given a stage presence in the manner of diegetic music, or much in the form of a sample, similar to the voices of the Djurhuus brothers on the track “Grímur á Miðalnesi” on the same album.

³⁶ Cf. Duncan Williams, Tracking timbral changes in metal productions from 1990 to 2013, in: *Metal Music Studies* 1 (2015), no. 1, pp. 39–68.

³⁷ Cf. Marianne Clausen, Faroese dance, p. 75.

Vil-jið tær nú lý-ða á Me-ðan eg man kvø-ða Um teir ri-ku kon-gar-nar Sum
eg vil nú um rø-ða Gra-ni bar gul-lið av hei-ði Brá hann si-num bran-di av rei-ði
Sjúr-ður vá á or-mi-num Gra-ni bar gul-lið av hei-ði

Music example 1: Stanza 1 and refrain of “Regin smiður” in Týr’s version. Transcription FH.

The characteristic feature of this refrain can thus be perceived subconsciously, which will be the case especially from the perspective of Týr’s non-Faroese listeners. If one is familiar with the Faroese ballad tradition, however, the refrain is far more recognizable, as it occurs both in the other two equally extensive parts of the Sigurd ballad (“Sjúrðar kvæði”) and in several other ballads, in which the rhythmical and melodic variants are so limited that recognition is possible without difficulty. Ethnographical methods could be employed to allow a description of the extent to which such resemblances remain in the aural memories of Faroese people. Here it will suffice to observe that in the context of the Faroese ballad tradition, the refrain displays a characteristic stylistic element reaching far beyond the ballad of “Regin smiður”.

The characteristic sound of the ballad tune and in particular of its refrain is shaped in particular by its tonal material, specifically by its use of the Dorian mode, which is distinguished from the “normal” minor-key scale by its use of the raised sixth (here, counting from the keynote of e, c#). In some traditional versions and also in the second voice added by Týr, the seventh note of the scale is occasionally raised (here: d#), which then sounds less modal, corresponding as it does to the melodic minor. This tendency to raised sixths and sevenths is found in many ballads set in a minor key. Interestingly enough, it is also a distinguishing feature of Týr’s style, when one hears the band in the context of its genre. In rock and heavy metal, after all, the melodic minor with its leading-note seventh is heard relatively seldom, with an observable tendency to the “flattened seventh”; such scales, in which the seventh note of the scale is a minor seventh away from the keynote, are correspondingly widespread, whether in blues scales or for instance in the Aeolian or Doric mode.³⁸ Subject to this proviso, it is the case that the folk elements in Týr’s metal version of at least the ballad “Regin smiður” are evident both in the melodic pattern and in the harmony.

Týr’s transformation takes the same keynote (e) as the transcription of the ballad, for which there are a number of reasons,

even if a direct allusion to it is also intended. The transcriptions of the melodies in CCF, Vol. 8, are generally standardized in respect of their key, to make it easier to compare different variants. In practice, various keynotes are adopted, particularly as the ballads are traditionally sung without instruments that are dependent on particular moods and feasible keys.³⁹ From the point of view of the rock band Týr, on the other hand, the key of E minor may suit the band’s instrumental line up, since that key is simply a good one for the guitar. Subject to this proviso, it is the case that the folk elements in Týr’s metal version of at least the ballad “Regin smiður” are evident both in the melodic pattern and in the harmony.

Text

A song needs words. Given the vocal accord of traditional melody and the Faroese words that catch one’s attention in a rock context, the origins in folklore of Týr’s “metal” song are readily apparent. The band’s musicians have shortened the traditional text to eight stanzas - an abridgement that is as substantial (given that the original runs to 130 stanzas, more or less, according to the variant) as it is appropriate to the change of genre. Scores of verses lasting nearly an hour⁴⁰ would simply not fit into the style of heavy metal; the short version lasting over six minutes is about average for a Týr-track and falls into the range usual for (pagan) metal music. To judge the more specific implications of text reduction, the original must be considered. It stands to reason that the text should in the first place be compared with the nine versions given in CCF; it will be evident, however, that the eight stanzas selected are most nearly similar to the widely disseminated variant from V.U. Hammershamb’s *Færøiske Kvæder* (Copenhagen 1851), without entirely corresponding to this or any other version. A further variant is to be found in the collection of ballads and songs (“Kvæðir og vísur”) on the website of the Faroese folk group Fótatraðk (<http://www.fotatra.dk>). Save for minor deviations, this matches the lyrics sung by Týr and may thus be identified with reasonable certainty as their source text. It can well be imagined that this choice suited

Týr because it came from a source that was readily accessible and what is more, is directly associated with Faroese tradition. More precise information about the origin of the conveniently ready-to-print ballad texts will be sought in vain, but this will have been of little concern to the musicians; in the scope of the present study, this aspect must be left unresolved. Like Hammershaimb's, the text variant in question comprises 131 stanzas; at times, however, the two texts noticeably diverge from one another. Týr quotes stanzas

1, 13, 20 (identical with 51), 38, 27, 93, 95 and 106; rather than selecting a particular self-contained excerpt, the band makes up a mosaic of verses spread throughout the entire text. Coherence is given by the refrain following each verse and by the opening stanza typical of the ballad genre (not only on the Faroes), setting the stage for the story and thus providing a narrative framework for the text that Follows⁴¹.

Table 2: Faroese lyrics of „Regin smiður” and English translation

[1] Viljið tær nú lýða á Meðan eg man kvøða Um teir ríku kongarnar Sum eg vil nú um røða	Will you now listen Whilst I will sing About the rich kings That I will now speak of
[Refrain] Grani bar gullið av heiði Brá hann sínum brandi av reiði Sjúrdur vá á orminum Grani bar gullið av heiði	Greyfell carried the gold away from the heath He swung his sword in wrath Sigfried [sic] defeated the dragon Greyfell carried the gold away from the heath
[13] Hundings synir í randargný Teir skaðan gørdur har Eitur var í svørinum Teir bóru móti mær	Hundings sons at war, They did damage there Poison was in the sword, They carried against me
[20] Fávnir eitur ormurin Á Glitrarheiði liggur Regin er ein góður smiður Fáum er hann dyggur	Fafnir is the name of the dragon That lies on the Glittering Heath Regin is a good blacksmith To few is he faithfull
[38] Hann var sær á leikvøllum Imillum manna herjar Rívur upp eikikelvi stór Hann lemjir summar til heljar	He was on fields of play rages amongst men Tears up large oak trunks he maims some to Hel
[27] Eystantil undri heyginum Ið dreingir eyka tal Dimmur er hesin dapri dagur Niður í mold at fara	On the eastern side under the mound where heroes grow in numbers Dark is this sad day down in the mould to go
[93] Har komm maður á vøllin fram Eingin ið hann kendi Síðan hatt á høvdi bar Og finskan boga í hendi	A man stepped forward upon the field Noone knew him He had a wide hat on his head and a Finnish bow in his hand
[95] Har komm maður á vøllin fram Hann vá við eggjateini Eyga hevði hann eitt í heysi Knept var brók at beini	A man stepped forward upon the field raging with his sword He had one eye and his trouser legs were buttoned
[106] Ormurin er skriðin av gullinum Tað man frættast víða Sjúrdur setist á Granar bak Hann býr seg til at ríða	The dragon has slithered of the gold it is rumoured widely Sigfried seats himself on Greyfells back he prepares himself to ride

³⁸ Cf. Esa Lilja, *Theory and Analysis of Classic Heavy Metal Harmony*, Helsinki 2009, in particular pp. 152–175, in relation to the flattened seventh, Lilja makes reference to an article by Allan Moore.

³⁹ For instance, the different recordings of “Regin smiður” on the gramophone record *Kvad-dans frá Färöarna* (Caprice 1978) diverge from the keynote e in opposite directions: one is in d (Nólsoyngar), one in f (Sumbingar).

⁴⁰ For example, the recording of “Regin smiður” in traditional form by the group *Dansifelagið í Havn* runs for over 53 minutes; see *Føroyskur Dansur/ Traditional Ballad Dancing In The Faroes*, Vol. 11–15, Tutl 2009.

⁴¹ Faroese and English text from the booklet to Týr, *Eric the Red*.

Beyond the framework provided by the opening stanza and the refrain, the content of the selected verses leaves them in a loosely defined relationship falling well short of a coherent narrative. The montage may seem hard to appreciate if one does not have at least a general idea of the heroic tale of Sigurd/Siegfried (Faroese: Sjúrdur), incited by Regin the smith to slay the dragon Fafnir, who guards a hoard of gold - a legend that is handed down in the Icelandic *Völsunga saga* and in several songs from the Edda.⁴² Against this background, Týr's eight-verse song may be understood as a series of portraits depicting the central figures of the tale. One striking omission is that of the complex involving Sjúrdur's mother Hjördis, which is developed at length in the traditional versions, but completely ignored here. Equally striking in view of the extreme abridgement is that two whole stanzas are taken over to tell the saga's tale of how Odin gave Sigurd an important clue to outwitting the dragon.⁴³ Odin is not explicitly mentioned here, but can be identified by his broad-brimmed hat (stanza 93) and his one-eyed appearance (stanza 95), if one is familiar with Norse mythology.⁴⁴ It may thus be said that Týr's international audience are confronted with an archaic-looking text that, despite being given an English translation in the booklet, assumes a good deal of background knowledge of Norse mythology and the heroic saga if its hidden meaning is to be deciphered. Týr's success and the wide distribution of their ballad transformation shows that this is not a handicap for heavy metal fans in the wider world beyond the Faroes. In the first place it may be assumed that at least a part of the Viking and pagan metal audience possesses the appropriate specialist knowledge; secondly, and even more significantly, metal tracks like this one can be read in many different ways, which do not necessarily depend on an understanding of every detail or of their interpretation as elements of a particular oral tradition or of a connected narrative.⁴⁵ That means that the text can recede into the background at its cognitive level when the words are sung, all the more so if the focus is placed upon the parameter of sound. In this regard, the change of genre from folk to rock in the reception of the music takes place in the form of a displacement of attention to the disadvantage of the text and in favour of the added instrumental lines and the total complex of sound resulting from the studio production. Not that this means, on the other hand, that the text could be treated as completely interchangeable. The crucial importance of song lyrics within metal culture is evident from the comprehensive online collection at dark-lyrics.com, which is constantly being added to by fans; to the best of my knowledge, it has no counterpart in other genres of popular music. The decisive factor seems to be that the text should correspond to the conventions of the genre in respect of theme and language,

which can be seen in particular by reference to individual markers. This may be illustrated by reference to Robert Walser's analysis of the equally puzzling lyrics to Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven", a song that has proved a benchmark for the combination of folk and rock. As the celestial stairway of the title already suggests, much of the song remains obscure and disconnected; even so, its central subjects are described in a vocabulary that evokes an archaic world close to nature with magical and ritual elements.⁴⁶ Likewise, Týr's version of "Regin smiður" introduces a doughty questing hero on horseback with great bodily strength, rich kings, a hoard of gold, a dragon to be slain, a war fought with swords, a blacksmith and the above mentioned mythical one-eyed figure with hat and crook; this series of medieval to fantastic elements is studded with legendary names like Sjúrdur, Grani, Hunding, Regin and Fáfnir. So it is beyond dispute that the subject-matter here is taken from an archaic legendary saga with elements of mythology and fantasy. Any criticism of the massive reduction in length as impairing the narrative coherence of the tale would be beside the point; the whole purpose of the song in the context of its genre is to satisfy the necessary conventions and offer enough points of entry for an audience with a keen interest in the Middle Ages, mythology or fantasy.

Riffs

At the commencement of this analysis I referred to the substantial change necessarily brought about by the change of genre from traditional ballad to metal track, particularly in respect of its acoustics. This is not just a question of what instruments and sound equipment is being used but also, what is being played on the instruments. One of the most important features of the heavy metal style is its use of riffs, defined by Richard Middleton as "short rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic figures repeated to form a structural framework". Riffs essentially entered heavy metal from blues rock. In this case, they are mostly executed by one or two distorted electric guitars in combination with bass and drums; they frequently shape the form of a song and often determine its character - to the same extent as, or even more strongly than the tune being sung. The first stanza of "Regin smiður" is built on a riff that seems to be developed directly from the melody: the steady rhythm (here notated in quavers) is adopted throughout; the melodic starting-point is middle b from the song tune, from which the four next higher notes of the underlying scale (Doric, keynote e) are introduced alternately. Because the notes are muted⁴⁸ and played without accentuation, the riff is heard as a discreet, steadily pulsating accompaniment to what is sung.

⁴² See Klaus von See et al., *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*. Vol. 5: Heldenlieder (Frá dauða Sinfjötla, Grípisspá, Reginsmál, Fáfnismál, Sigdrífumál), Heidelberg 2006.

⁴³ Hammershaimb gives only one Odin stanza (no. 94): "Har kom maður á vøllin fram,/ eingin íð hann kendi,/ eygi hevði hann ett í heysi,/ finskan bóga í hendi."

⁴⁴ See Rudolf Simek, *Lexikon der germanischen Mythologie*, 3., fully rev. ed., Stuttgart 2006, p. 310.

⁴⁵ See in this respect my article *Nordisch – germanisch – deutsch?*

⁴⁶ See in this respect my article *Nordisch – germanisch – deutsch?*

⁴⁷ Richard Middleton, *Form*, in: Bruce Horner/Thomas Swiss (eds.), *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, Malden, Mass. 1999, p. 143; see the discussion at Dietmar Elflein, *Schwermetallanalyse. Die musikalische Sprache des Heavy Metal*, Bielefeld 2010, p. 73; cf. also Esa Lilja, *Theory and Analysis of Classic Heavy Metal Harmony*, pp. 154–157.

⁴⁸ Using the "palm-mute" technique, the guitar strings are muted with the tip of the little finger of the playing hand; here, in the first verse of "Regin smiður", the variable muting is relatively intense.

Music example 2: Verse 1 of “Regin smiður” in Týr’s version with guitar riff. Transcription FH.

The instruments come through more strongly at the end of the refrain that follows each verse and lead into another riff that accompanies the following verses. The strings are scarcely muted, to bring out the strongly distorted guitar sound. The alternation in the first riff between a steady low note and various higher notes is maintained; the low note is now low E, the keynote of the scale and also the guitar’s bottom note, which lends the riff more weight, more “heaviness”. The intermediate upper notes are strongly stressed, highlighting the riff’s hitherto merely latent off-beat character. The

characteristic nature of the riff, clearly evident in its rhythm, also comes out in the rapid repetitions of the low note (here represented as semiquavers) on every second crotchet beat in the bar. In their harmonies, the notes combine into a sound typical of metal, a “power chord”, occasionally in combination with the flattened seventh. Combined with the rhythm, this is the sound that makes the riff “rock”; the sharp distortion and the dense, bass-heavy overall sound make it into a metal riff.

Music example 3: Verse 2 of “Regin smiður” in Týr’s version with guitar riff. Transcription FH.

It is this second riff in particular that boosts the metal quota in Týr’s stylistic fusion; other features typical of the genre subsequently appear, namely a virtuoso guitar solo and the use of a double-bass element in the drums. All the same, it would be too much of a generalization to describe Týr’s style as metal with traditional texts and melodies. It would be more accurate to say that the band’s metal style is closely associated with the received traditional melodies or its own newly composed tunes. The riffs play a remarkably minor part in this. As was shown, the riffs are in this case largely developed out of the melodic material. A look at the music’s form confirms that the song is primarily structured from components that in turn are primarily defined by their melodic content, with the riffs assigned a mainly accompanying role. The introduction consists of a quasi-improvised instrumental ornamentation of the verse tune,

accompanied by an electronically modified pedal point on middle b and a number of percussive accents. This leads to the first and the following three verses with the two riffs used in the way described. Before the second group of four verses, there is an instrumental interlude in which a melody - played on a guitar - is again prominent; the interlude ends with a virtuoso guitar solo. Played after the last verse as an Outro, the tuneful instrumental passage (without solo) ends the piece. If one examines Týr’s total output, one will be sure to find individual tracks in which metal-typical riffs play a larger part, for instance in the ballad “Ólavur Riddararós” also on the *Eric the Red* album. Overall, however, Týr’s style can be described as decidedly melody-oriented, implying that the traditional elements within the style fusion retain a leading role.

Forecast: Two Types of Rock Ballads

Analysis of “Regin smiður” has shown by example that Týr’s transformation of a traditional Faroese ballad has generated a fusion that is stylistically congruent with pagan or Viking metal respectively and with folk metal and progressive metal, while also revealing its debt to the ballad tradition in a number of ways including the composition of guitar riffs and instrumental breaks. In the course of this analysis, I have concentrated on auditive aspects of style. In the interests of completeness it is important to note that affiliation with a genre is also marked by other aspects such as the visual and the performative and by the sociocultural environment in which the music takes place.⁵¹ In the metal context, Týr’s music is accepted as part of the metal genre not only on account of stylistic features but ultimately because it fits the expectations of metal culture in its performances, its clothing, the visual layout of its albums and its placement on the metal scene. The “ballad” metal that Týr offers in “Regin smiður” and other ballad transformations is embedded, as was shown in the first section of this study, in a total staging that consists of transformations of other traditional musics alongside original songs newly composed by the band. Even so, certain features observable in connexion with ballads recur in other Týr products. These include the pronounced melodic orientation of the song forms, the predilection for frequent time-signature changes, the characteristic, targeted use of the melodic minor key (with raised seventh) and the integration of archaic elements of Norse mythology and legendary saga ascribed to the Viking era into its lyrics and into visual depictions - a full discussion of which would be beyond the scope of this article - such as cover artwork and video clips. It would probably be an exaggeration to describe the ballads as the most important background to all this, but they undoubtedly make a major contribution to the whole.

At the start of this survey, I referred to predecessors in the fusion of rock music and traditional music. In the context of current combinations of folk and heavy metal, Týr’s transformations of Faroese ballads are not a novel 21st-century phenomenon but take their place in a long tradition of rock ballad transformations nearly as old as the genre of rock itself. In a rock context, however, another conception of the ballad predominates, the expectation being that a ballad will usually be a slow, sentimental (love) song, which need have nothing to do with folklore or with the narrative concept of a poem that tells a story. It would stray too far from the main theme to consider the historical development of this ballad type, shaped by the popular American music of Tin Pan Alley, but it certainly has antecedents in musicals and vaudeville, going back to the English ballad opera. In the present case, this ballad type is relevant not only to distinguish it from the type of ballad metal discussed here but also because Týr - not to put too fine a point on it - has evolved in recent years from the one type to the other. As already noted, the references to Faroese ballads and to traditional music in general have declined since the band’s fifth album. *Valkyrja* (2013), the slow-love-song ballad type is represented on the track “The Lay of Our Love”.

My article concludes with a number of observations on this development in the repertoire of the band, which is ultimately evident in its use of the two contrasting rock ballad types. I find this relevant not only in the sense of a forward-looking contextualization in the overall rock music environment but also because these ballad types are associated with particular cultural valuations of their own. The slow ballad, often dismissed as “schmaltz”, is at risk of being written off as kitsch on account of its sentimentality. As Richard Middleton has shown, the various genres of popular music are associated with distinct gender connotations.⁵² Within the “gender map” of popular genres, the ballad (that is, the sentimental type) is closest to the “femininity” pole, whereas - discounting ballad compilations and the like marketed under the label “Kuschel-Rock” (cuddly rock) - genres like rock and blues are located at the “masculinity” pole. Such stereotypical associations draw on aspects of content and style and on social aspects such as the fact that the ballad genre attracts more female musicians than the more masculine genres. Even if the tendency to reinforcement of such stereotypes is in urgent need of deconstruction, it is often observable that such cultural distinctions as genre categories operate on the basis of gender dualism, that is to say, within male and female hierarchies. In Týr’s ballad “The Lay of Our Love”, some of these stereotypes find confirmation. The song revolves around the sentimental topic of longing, but the female perspective is well represented, vocally and in a video clip with the singer Liv Kristine Espenæs Krull, who has already recorded a string of similarly sentimental pieces with her band Leaves’ Eyes, featuring her in Viking garb, and who now duets with Joensen.⁵³ It may be that the still relatively rare appearance of femininity in a metal context, which underlies the whole concept of the Valkyrie album, just happens to coincide with the band’s change of label from the medium-sized Napalm Records to Metal Blade Records, one of the largest companies internationally active in the recording of music assigned to the heavy metal genre. This too seems to confirm a widespread gender stereotype according to which the cultural spearheads regarded as authentic frequently distance themselves from the supposedly female mainstream. It is not my intention that stereotypical assessments of the sentimental ballad as schmaltzy, effeminate mainstream music should in any manner or form be perpetuated, but I do consider it important to observe that it is remarkably easy to succumb to such stereotypes in the case of Týr. Particularly as the striking transfer from one ballad type to the other tends to reinforce such a point of view, given that it might readily be asserted that the adaptation of Faroese ballads in contrast to the sentimental English-language love song is evidence of an intense involvement with traditional culture in music and speech, demonstrating authenticity and also serving to support appropriately high-flown expectations among the recipients of such ballads. Ultimately, we ourselves as ballad researchers are called upon to consider the impact of such stereotypes, to avoid branding the tendency to the sentimental out of hand as cultural degeneration, especially since the imbalance between the two ballad types is also reflected in the state of the research, which is clearly in favour of the traditional type.

In point of fact the stereotype-weighted contrast is all the less viable when one takes a closer look at “The Lay of Our Love”. The subject-matter and the arrangement as a female-male-voice duet in leisurely tempo do possess a clearly sentimental character. That said, the song fits seamlessly into Týr’s stylistic continuum. Even if Joense’s text addresses the topic of yearning and sad farewell in general human terms for much of the time, he combines this with antique words like “lay” (as in the title) and “ode”, also alluding to homage due to heroes in “an ode to the fallen” and indications of a cold or autumnal climate (“leaves were falling”, “cold winds”). Once again then, as ever with Týr, the song is set in a mythical, Viking-era landscape, reinforced both in the context of an album to be understood as a concept album and planned around the theme of the Valkyrie, and equally in the video clip to the song, set in a bleak landscape and depicting appropriately clad actors (man and woman) and a huge stone monument in the form of one of the Fates, a female figure who dramatically comes to life. It is obvious on the musical level that the song does not employ the typical verse-chorus form like many conventional rock ballads, being in strophic form throughout, thus in line with the form of the traditional ballad. The music’s source is given in the liner notes as “Faeroese/Danish trad., Heri Joensen”, which at least allows the supposition that the strophic form is directly taken over from the traditional source text. An-

other unusual feature is the 13-bar length of the verses, so elegantly combined with the slow rhythm and a very long lead-in (lasting half a bar) to each verse that there are no breaks, only a lingering between holding on and pressing forward. Here too the band refrains from expressing their characteristic rhythmical refinements. In conclusion one may affirm that even in Týr’s most recent evolution towards sentimental ballad style, the fusion of metal and traditional ballad has left its traces.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

⁵¹ Cf. Franco Fabbri, *A Theory of Musical Genres. Two Applications* (1982). Philip Tagg’s website, <http://tagg.org>, last updated on 07.01.2006, last checked on 13.10.2013.

⁵² Richard Middleton, Authorship, Gender and the Construction of Meaning in the Eurythmics’ Hit Recordings, in: *Cultural Studies* 9 (1995), pp. 465–485; see my comments on the article in Florian Heesch/Katrin Losleben (eds.), *Musik und Gender. Ein Reader*, Vol. 10, Cologne 2012, pp. 226–228.

⁵³ “Elegy”, for example, in: *Leaves’ Eyes, Vinland Saga*, Napalm Records 2005; “My Destiny” in: *Leaves’ Eyes, Njord*, Napalm Records 2009.