

## SUMMARY

The work *View of the World in Heavy Metal Culture* is an attempt to reconstruct the vision of the world contained in various texts of metal music culture. Heavy metal represents a counting for over fifty years current of popular culture, widely associated and crystallized at the turn of 1960s and 1970s, which is derived from rock, a musical genre characterized by a strong, aggressive sound based on distorted sound of electric guitars and an intense drum beat. The term „heavy metal”, used in my doctoral dissertation, is a collective term referring to the discussed phenomenon as a whole, hence including all the sub-genres of metal music.

The heavy metal message has a three-code structure. The network of symbolic meanings are constructed on sound, verbal and visual level. However, within this triad the primacy is given to the sound element, that is music, but two other components remain in a close and inseparable relationship with it. The components of heavy metal message are adjusted on intuitive basis, which allows one to talk about its bricolage structure. In metal music narratives a form and content determine each other in a particularly intense way.

When talking about heavy metal, we are talking primarily about a certain genre, both music and more broadly popular culture, which explains a strong formal and content degree of conventionalizing a heavy metal message. Among researchers of the metal music culture, there is a general agreement that heavy metal narratives revolve around an experience of power, the condition and the guarantor of which is a set of transgressive practices, to which metal music makers reach. Heavy metal builds its world of symbolic meanings mainly based on components that are strongly anchored in the space of broadly understood culture including its extensive fragment of popular culture. As heavy metal in its essence is based on references, borrowings, travesty, that is, in short, transformations of other cultural texts belonging mainly to the space of cinematography and literature but also often derived from traditional culture – we can talk about it as a genre that in the field of constitutive practices refers to intertextual strategies.

The fundamental category for the heavy metal vision of the world is undoubtedly horror. Heavy metal horror narratives are mostly songs, i.e. works of words and music, in which heavy metal creators make abundant use of structural and plot patterns constituted on the basis of literary and film horror. These inspirations have clear reflection in the lyrics of heavy metal works that intensively exploit the topoi of supernatural horror, including especially vampire themes as well as elements of gore horror aesthetics, which specialty is to

image the content revolving around the destruction of human body. Transformations of the last kind are the domain of formations representing extreme metal scenes, mainly death metal. Behind the texts saturated with content, which function as fear provoking, follows the musical layer of metal songs. Metal bands in their own compositions also often refer to the tradition of music, which illustrate horror movies deriving a set of conventional patents from its fearogenic potential.

Obviously, the allusive game with horror films takes on a special dynamics in the area of heavy metal music video, as the formula most closely related to the film. Possibility to activate meanings related to the category of horror, belonging to the visual level of heavy metal communication is opened by the situation of a metal music concert. The flagship example of these meanings carriers used by many artists is a heavy metal mask that comes in the form of makeup as well as a material object.

The horror category is also represented by a large part of heavy metal narratives circulating around satanic subject matter and symbolism, references to which can both represent a transgressive gesture of entering a „higher level of horror” or function as an instrument of contestation of Christian values, as it is in the case of representatives of the trend referred to as black metal.

Not less extensive field of conventional symbolic meanings for heavy metal are occupied by narratives embedded in themes and aesthetics of war. As with heavy metal references to horror category, military heavy metal discourses constitute in works mainly related to the subject of war. This subject appears to be an extremely rich resource of meanings for heavy metal with a potential to transform them into something attractive from the point of view of heavy metal convention, formal and content schemas. Potential of this kind reveals musical compositions inspired by cavalry battles, exposing one of the emblematic for metal music rhythm evoking a gallop of a horse unit. The load of tonal weight and severity are revealed by the pieces inspired by tank battles. A similar logic governs the composition of pieces devoted to aviation combat which contain conventionally solemn formula as well as means of expression. Even the form of vocal parts, performed in high registers, evoke associations with an upward direction, symbolically following the content of the lyrics.

There is an obvious sort of „tangent point” to metal music narratives based on the aesthetics of horror under the sign of gore as some compositions expose a motif of mutilation

and destruction of human body taking place under conditions of war. A very wide range of possible interpretations towards quasi-military meanings is determined by the subject of an image creation of heavy metal culture participants. The issue of heavy metal clothing occupies an important place here, both in its readable version as a stage costume for metal musicians as well as a conventional „metalhead” uniform, which is both a metal musician and its fan.

A vast space of meanings, extremely important in the context of a heavy metal vision of the world are references to the distant past. The prime example of messages from this field are heavy metal ideas about the ancient world revealed in many transformations of motifs commonly associated with this space-time continuum. Also in the case of heavy metal inspirations derived from ancient Greece and Rome, sometimes revealing features of a specific Egyptomania and references to the world of ancient Egyptian culture, a significant role is played by a „mediator” between the ancient world and heavy metal imaginations on the subject – the film. Similarly to heavy metal horror narratives, as well as to a large extent military, we are dealing here with a kind of double transformations. In the space of heavy metal discourses constructed on the basis of imaginations about the ancient world we may also notice, identifiable in the area of heavy metal horror and war narratives, the leitmotif of images of the human body disintegration. We recognize it in the field of descriptions of antiquity, brutal battles, as well as in the area of heavy metal imaginations revolving around mummification practices, the basis of which was characteristic of Egyptian ancient culture representative - the fear of human body decomposition.

A significant role, among the conventions that construct the heavy metal vision of the world, is played by references made towards the pre-Christian period of native cultures. Practiced mainly by Scandinavian bands, representing the black metal scene, gestures of the ancestral culture glorification contributed to separation within this scene and creation of pagan and, or Viking metal. Similarly as it was in case of messages based on satanic threads, which in a strongly ideological version were broadcast by black metal artists, making them an instrument in the fight against Christianity, also idealistic ideas about the cultures of pagan ancestors became for many, mainly Scandinavian and Slavic bands, a tool of radical denial of Christianity.

Incorporating elements of native culture made by heavy metal artists into their work is a clear sign of heavy metal globalization phenomenon. A significant example of such an artist

operating in this field is a former leader of Sepultura band and the present leader of Soulfly formation, Max Cavalera. This Brazilian musician has been combining the means of expression typical of metal music with the content and formal elements derived from Brazilian culture since the mid-1990s, represented by its immigrants and indigenous people in figures of the Amazon Indians.

It is not difficult to notice that when reproducing the horror narratives which are based on references to literary and film works from a distant or more recent past, constructing military discourses and finally moving towards visualizing based on imaginations about the ancient world, heavy metal revolves around the category of the past. This one is strongly correlated with meanings relating to transience and death in its existential dimension. These issues, as fundamental from the point of view of human condition, occupy an important place in space of the heavy metal message, stimulating the reflection on ultimate issues of almost all representatives of heavy metal sub-genres. Representatives of doom metal, as specialists in playing with symbolism related to the category of transience and death, pay particular attention to formal content and coherence of the message.

In view of the fact that heavy metal is a popular cultural phenomenon, which started the sixth decade of its existence, it should not be surprising that one may notice more frequent and more intensive reproduction within the genre, motivated by sentimental and nostalgic reasons, (auto)allusive and (auto)quoting messages that manifest the attitude of glorification and celebration that heavy metal represents towards its own past.

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