FOLIA 357

Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia de Cultura 14(3) 2022

ISSN 2083-7275

DOI 10.24917/20837275.14.3.2

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The Variety of Similarity: Hungarian High Literature, History, and Folklore in the Lyrics of Dalriada

Introduction

Among the diverse elements that make up the metal scene, folk metal, more than any other genre, gathers much of its lyrical and/or visual inspiration from national history and cultural heritage. As many genre-defining acts originate from Northern Europe (either the Germanic countries or Finland), the subgenre of Viking Metal is the most well-researched field to date (see the works of Karl Spracklen or Imke von Helden, Spracklen 2015 and 2020; von Helden 2010 and 2017). Nevertheless, folk metal bands from other regions similarly draw from their national heritage, history, and mythology.[1] Although many Northern metal bands are primarily interested in pre-Christian mythologies (Granholm 2011: 530–531), the importance of national epics like the Kalevala in Finland is also significant in certain cases (compare: Kärki 2015).

In this article, I analyze the lyrics of Dalriada, a Hungarian-style folk-power metal band with an intense interest in Hungarian culture and historical tradition. The band's lyrics coalesce around romanticized elements of Hungarian history and tradition, centering the nation's violent past while also stressing the constructed or imaginary nature of historical heritage (Spracklen 2020: 19–21). First, I introduce the band and contextualize the group within both regional and international scenes. In doing so, I also discuss the lyrical traditions of both folk and power metal and situate Dalriada's oeuvre in relation to these genres. The second, longer portion of the article focuses on multiple verbal manifestations of the band: the name of the group, the album titles, and song lyrics. Concerning lyrics, I center my analysis on the band's orientations to their mother tongue and national heritage.

[1] A great case study can be found in Spracklen (2015: 370–371) that highlights the Irish folk metal band Cruachan and their conscious interest in local Irish topics. I also published a study in 2017 on Mesopotamian, Israeli, Roman and Romanian cultural heritage that may provide insight. Compare: Fejes (2017).

The Band and the Setting

In 2003, in Sopron, on the Western borderlands of Hungary, the founding members of Dalriada created the band out of the ruins of a previous group they had started in 1998. Most details about the band are available both in Hungarian and English on their Facebook page.[2] Therefore, here I will only highlight the most important points of their story to date. The band consists of seven members: Laura Binder, vocals; András Ficzek, guitars and vocals; Mátyás Németh-Szabó, guitars; István Molnár, bass; Gergely Szabó, keyboards; Ádám Monostori, drums and harsh vocals[3]; and Ádám Csete, folk instruments.

Dalriada maintains a distinctive folk metal image: romanticized clothing made of animal fur (compare with promotional material from bands like Аркона, Turisas, Skyforger, etc.) and use of traditional garments typical of the 19th century Hungarian countryside and the occasional use of folk instruments. The band's self-presentation on stage and promo shoots follow established Northern European patterns of using nature as scenery, this stressing the group's connection to folklore (von Helden 2017: 104–108, 144; Dornbusch, Killguss 2005: 109–111). There have been many personnel changes over the years thanks both to turnover in some positions and to the later addition of keyboards and folk instruments. Since 2009, Dalriada has collaborated with the folk band Fajkusz Banda both in the studio and in numerous live performances. This leads to a central question: what kind of music does Dalriada play? The easiest answer is, of course, folk metal. But given the band's heavy/power metal roots, it may be more accurate to categorize Dalriada as a power metal-driven folk metal band. The problem of defining folk metal is an ongoing issue that is beyond the scope of this study.[4] However, I simply want to make it clear at this point that the music I examine here is connected to at least two branches of the metal family tree.

All of Dalriada's lyrics are in Hungarian. It is easy to see why a folk metal band would choose to work in their mother tongue (note for example critically acclaimed bands such as Korpiklaani, Moonsorrow, Finntroll, and Skyforger). However, for the purposes of this study, I will translate the lyrics into English. This allows for focusing on small but important details that may be obvious for a native listener but are much less so for those unfamiliar with the Hungarian language and culture who might only encounter Dalriada's lyrics in translation.[5] The career of the group is an ever-ascending star on the sky map of Hungarian metal. They have produced

[2] Dalriada Facebook page is available here: https://www.facebook.com/Dalriadahu/about_details (access: 27.06.2022).

[3] The band uses three different vocal styles, namely clean female and male vocals and harsh vocals. Issues surrounding the choice of vocal style is a musicological problem beyond the scope of the current study.

[4] For more details, see the problem of "Mittelalter Metal" in Germany addressed by Dobschenzki (2015: 114).

[5] Compare the approach of Imke von Helden (2017) in her monograph using translations of Norwegian lyrics to make them accessible for non-Norwegian speaking readers.

fourteen records, including a demo, ten full-length albums, and three compilation releases, all unique in their own way.

In part, this article seeks to illuminate the lyrical interests of folk and power metal. Decades ago, Deena Weinstein suggested that the dichotomy between "Dionysian" and "Chaotic" types of metal lyrics is not sufficient without sub-classification (2000: 35–43). Moreover, according to *The Metal Archives* (https://www.metal-archives.com), a well-known source of material for all metal studies scholars, we see that both power and folk metal bands' lyrics often coalesce around literature, fantasy, history, mythology or simply "storytelling". It is this fundamental interest in reinterpreting the past that is a key element in my analysis. There is an expectation that Dalriada is an authentic folk metal band with an exclusive interest in Hungarian folklore and history. This way, I suggest their lyrical content occupies a new, sub-category in the big umbrella-like system of Weinstein's "Chaotic" realm. Most of the music and all the lyrics of Dalriada are written by vocalist and guitarist András Ficzek (alongside Laura Binder, the only founding members in the band's current line-up). I was able to interview him in September 2018 (personal communication, September 6, 2018), and I refer to information gathered during this interview throughout this article.

Some Notes on the Method

I employ a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach as I provide close readings of lyrics rather than a statistical analysis of Dalriada's overall lyrical output. Fiske (2010) suggests that the textual products of popular culture can be read and analyzed in the same ways as those of high culture (2010: 83–101), paving the path for us to use a close reading approach based on theories by Stanley Fish (1980) and Wolfgang Iser (1972) on interpretive communities and the reading process. I focus on the lyrical subject matter and frame of interpretation of Dalriada's music while also addressing the metal community's expectations concerning the verbal. In this aspect, I regard the folk and power metal community as two separate entities with different cultures of taste, especially regarding literacy. Stanley Fish suggests that an interpretive community is defined by patterns of "reading" and interpreting both literature and the non-textual world in accordance with a system of rules received from the community itself (1980: 147–173). For example, young adults' interpretation of a certain piece of literature would differ from that of the older generation, as the two have different tastes, experiences, interests, etc., that will lead each to divergent reception of the same artifact. Proceeding from this notion, metal subculture is a distinct interpretive community with distinct yet related subgenres (e.g., folk metal, power metal, black metal, etc.). This sort of categorization, in part, defines the verbal aspects of Dalriada's music. On the other hand, an individual layer may also be present, following the methodology of Wolfgang Iser (1972). The phenomenological process of reading focuses on the individual's own inner method of interpretation. Two such layers of interpretation, the community's expectation and the individual's own world, are relevant for the study of Hungary's rich cultural heritage of history, high literature and folk tradition(s).

The Textual Layers of Dalriada

Layer 1: The Band's Name and the Concept of Album Titles

A band's chosen name is perhaps the first textual layer where we may encounter a band. With Dalriada's founding in 1998, they were first known as Echo of Dalriada with the "Echo of" dropped in 2006. On first impression, the name seems to evoke the ancient kingdom of Dál Riata that flourished in present-day Scotland and Northern Ireland in the 6th and 7th centuries. This Celtic connection suggests a neo-Pagan revivalesque vibe, especially given that the band's first folk/heavy metal demo included some literary references to Celtic history (see below). According to András Ficzek, however, the name of the band does not have anything to do with this. The elements of the word Dal and Riada make a composite expression: *dal* means 'song' in Hungarian, while *riada* is a romanticized, old form of *riadó* meaning 'warning'. Thus "Dalriada" is a neologism in the Hungarian language playing with the idea of music that serves as a warning in dangerous times. In light of Hungarian history and literature, this interpretation suggests a certain historical nostalgia, even without considering what the music sounds like. In summary, the first layer is identified: a warlike scene is established, with a slight Hungarian flavor.

The second layer concerns the sequence of album titles. The albums released so far by Dalriada follow a consistent pattern based upon the Wheel of the Year (an annual cycle of festivals observed by modern Pagans), with each album named according to the succession of old, Romanticized Hungarian names of the months (compare "Jeles napok"). This is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table no. 1: Old Hungarian names for the months and album titles of Dalriada.

Name of Month	Old Hungarian name(s)	In English	Romantic (19th century) name	In English	Album titles
January	Boldogasszony hava/Tél hava	Month of Blessed Mary/Month of Winter	**Fergeteg hava**	Month of Storm	**Fergeteg (2004)**
February	Böjtelő hava/Télutó hava	Pre-Lent Month/ Post-Winter Month	**Jégbontó hava**	Month of Ice-crusher	**Jégbontó (2006)**
March	Böjtmás hava/Tavaszelő hava	Post-Lent Month/Pre-Spring Month	**Kikelet hava**	Month of Springtime	**Kikelet (2007)**
April	Szent György hava/Tavasz hava	Month of Saint George/ Month of Spring	**Szelek hava**	Month of Winds	**Szelek (2008)**
May	Pünkösd hava/Tavaszutó hava	Month of Pentecost/ Post-Spring Month	**Ígéret hava**	Month of Promise	**Ígéret (2011)**
June	Szent Iván hava/Nyárelő hava	Month of Saint John/ Pre-Summer Month	**Napisten hava**	Month of the Sun God	**Napisten hava (2012)**
July	Szent Jakab hava/Nyár hava	Month of Saint James/ Month of Summer	**Áldás hava**	Month of Blessing	**Áldás (2015)**
August	Kisasszony hava/**Nyárutó hava**	Month of Virgin Mary/ Post-Summer Month	Új kenyér hava	Month of New Bread	**Nyárutó (2018)**

September	Szent Mihály hava/**Őszelő hava**	Month of Saint Michael/Pre-Autumn Month	Földanya hava	Month of Mother Earth	**Őszelő (2021)**
October	Mindszent hava/Ősz hava	Month of All Hallows/ Month of Autumn	Magvető hava	Month of the Sower	–
November	Szent András hava/ Őszutó hava	Month of Saint Andrew/Post-Autumn Month	Enyészet hava	Month of Decay	–
December	Karácsony hava/Télelő hava	Month of Christmas/ Pre-Winter Month	Álom hava	Month of Dream	–

I focus my analysis on the second, fourth and sixth columns; the other three columns are present to help understand the differences and similarities in English. First, the old Hungarian names (first recorded in the early Modern era when Hungarian spread widely as a written language) are represented only in one case (the similar names are highlighted with bold typesetting); in all other cases, the 'Romantic' forms of the names are used. The "Romantic (19th century) name" column contains the month names inspired by the national romantic movement of the 19th century. In this regard, this calendar is known today as the "Szekler calendar", referring to the name of a highly respected Hungarian-speaking minority in Transylvania, in present-day Romania (Constantin 2012: 26–42). The problem of the Szeklers and their origin will be explored later, but for now, I only refer to the phenomenon as telling of Dalriada's interest in national romanticism. Just as album titles follow the Wheel of the Year, so do the lyrics also thematically center on the theme of each month in one way or another. This suggests a Pagan or at least naturalistic, traditionalist attitude. Neo-Pagan religious beliefs and the neopagan movement aiming to return to the purity of Nature (especially in connection with Germanic neo-Paganism) have greatly impacted popular culture, including metal (Dornbusch, Killguss 2005: 97–124). Only three of the band's recordings depart from this system, including *Arany album* (2009), *Mesék, álmok, regék* (*Tales, dreams, legends*, 2015), and *Forrás* (*Spring* or *Well*, 2016), which are all compilations including various covers, re-recordings or live performances.

Layer 2: Dalriada's Relation Towards the Mother Tongue

All the lyrics written by András Ficzek are entirely in Hungarian. Most folk metal bands refuse to write songs in English. Rather they choose to follow the rich, expressive power of their mother tongue. Famous examples include Moonsorrow of Finland and Skyforger of Latvia, both of who only use English in their band name. In this way, Dalriada, Moonsorrow, Skyforger, and other such bands share a similar approach toward language. Ficzek states that one element in the authenticity of a Hungarian folk metal band is situated in its use of language. Such bands do not necessarily expect to reach a broad international audience. As such, the audience for many folk metal bands is limited to those who share the band's native language; thus only indirect internationalization is likely for such folk metal groups thanks to their choice to use local or regional languages.

Dalriada's second and third albums, *Jégbontó* (2006) and *Kikelet* (2007) provide some interesting points for analysis. *Jégbontó*, their second full-length effort, aimed to reach an international audience as rough English translations are contained in the CD booklet. The translations are indeed rather raw, as they bear no sign of professional translation: their only purpose is to make the Hungarian language–often regarded as obscure by outsiders–more decipherable. In this regard, the 2008 album *Land* by the band Týr parallels such an approach as the original Faroese lyrics are given English translations in the album insert. In these cases, we see that bands aim to remain authentic in using their native languages, but they are also aware that this choice is problematic for reaching a wider international audience (compare Einar Selvik's thoughts on problematic lyrical matters at The Quietus: Wardruna Interview (Cory 2017). As such, they strike a compromise by providing translations in a widely understood, essentially international language that provides an entryway for non-native speakers to grasp the lyrical content of the music. Meanwhile, the back cover of the album features a complex amalgam of languages as the song titles are listed in English, Hungarian, and in an archaic Hungarian runic typesetting.

Kikelet features a decidedly different strategy regarding the use of written language, though ultimately meaning is still mediated through translation. On the album insert, the lyrics are similarly structured in two columns. In one column is the familiar Hungarian language rendered in Latin typeset. However, in the other column is the same Hungarian lyrics, this time written in the old Hungarian runic alphabet as had appeared on the back cover of *Jégbontó*. Instead of aiming to reach an international audience with English translations as before, here Dalriada instead uses a dead alphabet, largely unfamiliar to their Hungarian audience, to make an introspective turn, in the process reinforcing their links with national folklore, cultural heritage, and language. In this way, Dalriada doubles down on the romantic-nostalgic authenticity that lay in the use of their mother tongue. This, of course, has some impact on the band's reach. As Dayal Patterson suggests, the limited popularity of a band must be understood at least in part as resulting from Dalriada's uncompromising use of language (2013: 310–319). The reasons behind Dalriada's orientation to language are now clear.

Layer 3: Dalriada's Relation Towards National History and Heritage

The main textual corpus of Dalriada's lyrics largely focuses on: 1) national history; 2) romantic high literature; and 3) Hungarian folklore. We might also include a fourth "miscellaneous" grouping, including songs that do not fit into these three categories. A systematic analysis of all of Dalriada's songs is beyond the scope of the present study. Rather, I use selected examples to illustrate the primary mechanics of Dalriada's lyrics and, in doing so, also situate Dalriada on the map of both power and folk metal.

Dalriada's lyrics largely emerge from the band's understanding of certain historical events and cultural theories. Dalriada's songs often center on the origins of origin of the Hungarian people. Academic historiography in states that the ancestors, the so-called "Magyar tribes" (Magyar is the endonym of Hungarians) arrived in the

Carpathian Basin around the year 896 and systematically conquered it, led by seven chieftains (Kristó 2006: 48–67). The father of the leading chieftain was Álmos, who is the main figure and narrator in Dalriada's song "Amit ad az ég (Álmos búcsúja)" ("What the Sky gives [The Farewell of Álmos]", 2015). Traditionally viewed as a shaman, warrior chief, and sacral leader (Kristó 2006: 76), Álmos foresees the destiny of his children with a prosperous kingdom forged by blood and iron in the West, far from the steppes where the tribes originate. This notion fits conventional academic opinions about the migration of Magyars to present-day Hungary (e.g., Kristó 2006; Györffy 1988). On the other hand, an alternative history that suggests a tentative kinship between the Huns and the Magyars is explored in at least two of Dalriada's songs, "Égnek ostora" ("The Scourge of the Sky", 2008) and "Hadak útja" ("The Road of Hosts, Ígéret", 2011). Such a kinship is historically unproven yet based on medieval Hungarian historical manuscripts, such as *Gesta Hungarorum* (Györffy 1988: 72–73). Of course, the brotherhood of the Huns and Magyars has an ethnographic layer, which contains an indirect relation, blooming from the Scythian and other Iranian influences gathered during the long migration of the Magyar tribes (Kristó 2006: 37–47). "Égnek ostora" focuses on the great king of the Huns, Attila, characterizing him in a familiar Romantic manner: the Scourge of the Sky, sent forth by God to punish an empire. Being a great warrior himself, Atilla is imagined in terms of typical steppe imagery, surrounded by falcons and a large host of cavalry (Bóna 1993: 57–92). The Roman Empire is never specifically named in the song, yet it is alluded to in general terms as Attila builds his empire. "Hadak útja" touches on another problematic topic, the question of Szekler kinship with Hungarians and Huns. Szekler people live mostly in the territory of modern-day Romania in the region of Transylvania. Since the Middle Ages, Szeklers have been regarded as being related to the Huns, and thus to Magyars and Hungarians (Kristó 2002: 31). According to a local legend, Prince Csaba, the last Szekler ruler, and his cavalrymen ascended to the Milky Way on the Road of Hosts but will return when his people are in mortal danger (Benedek 2015). Dalriada refers to this precise story in their song, placing the Szekler hero within the Hungarian context once again, serving the purpose of claiming Szekler identity as part of Hungarian national heritage.

Besides the mythical past of the nation, marginal medieval historical figures can also be found in the lyrics of Dalriada. "Árpádházi Margit balladája" ("The Ballad of Margaret of the Arpads", 2006) focuses on a lesser-known historical figure, Margaret of the Arpads, not the well-known Saint Margaret. The song's storyline is set in 1204 when a palace revolt took place and the Latin crusaders captured the city of Constantinople once again (Ostrogorsky 2001: 345, 353–354). The ballad depicts the grief of the Hungarian princess sinking into despair at the downward spiral of Byzantine power. She looks for refuge in her homeland, which she was never to see again. The marginal yet tragic story of Margaret is a great example of Ficzek and Dalriada's deep interest in Hungarian history.

In terms of Hungarian national heritage, perhaps the greatest inspiration for Dalriada is the long period of Ottoman occupation. I have selected six songs in this regard: "Hunyadi és Kapisztrán nándorfehérvári diadaláról" ("The Triumph of Hunyadi and Capistrano at Belgrade", 2012), "Kinizsi mulatsága" ("The Feast of

Kinizsi", 2011), "Szondi két apródja, Part 1" (2006) and "Part 2" (2007) ("The Two Pages of Szondi, Part 1" and "Part 2") and "Thury György balladája" ("The Ballad of György Thury", 2018). I have ordered these songs to follow the chronology of historical events rather than the songs' release dates.

The Ottoman period of Hungarian history is generally understood as an era of constant struggle for the survival of the nation as it hoped to avoid succumbing to the superpowers on the borders: the emerging Hapsburg dynasty and the Ottoman Empire.[6] The wars that were meant to restore the integrity of Hungary after the defeat at the battle of Mohács (1526) and the capture of the capital Buda (1541) were nationwide efforts led by Christian leaders against the infidel aggressors (Sinkovics 1985b: 220–221). One of the greatest victories over the Turkish troops was fought by the leaders János Hunyadi and Giovanni Capistrano at the walls of modern-day Belgrade, in Hungarian known as Nándorfehérvár. The siege took place in 1456 and to celebrate the Christian victory, the pope enacted the ritual of ringing church bells at noon to commemorate the triumph (Engel, Kristó, Kubinyi 2001: 211–212).[7] Dalriada's prayer-like provides some details of the siege and the success of the defenders, asking for the Lord to help the Hungarian nation to endure. The narrator of the song speaks from the perspective of a contemporary of Hunyadi. While the song is somewhat nostalgic, on another level, the song also suggests that these sorts of historical heroes are the ones we still need today. Judging by the contemplative manner expressed in other examples of Dalriada's music, the song does not recount actual historical details. Rather, it stands as an interpretation of historical facts, as in the case of the Finnish metal scene and "history culture" (Kärki 2015: 131–137).

"Kinizsi mulatsága" ("Kinizsi's Feast") recalls the great victory of Hungarian troops over the Ottoman army at Kenyérmező in 1479 (Engel, Kristó, Kubinyi 2001: 259–261). At the time, Pál Kinizsi was one of the leaders of the Hungarian army. Today, he is regarded as a legendary historical hero with Hercules-like status. Dalriada once again reimagines historical events in this song by making Kinizsi's victory an even greater achievement than it actually was. The title and lyrics of the song suggest that the battle was mere entertainment, an easy feat for such a powerful warrior who vanquishes the Ottomans for fun. This, Dalriada suggests, is a true Hungarian hero. Likewise, the "Ballad of György Thury" once again centers on a legendary military hero from the Ottoman period. Thury is known as the "Hungarian El Cid" regarding his efforts in the reconquest of the then Pagan-occupied territories of Hungary. Dalriada's song commemorates his bravery and tragic death at the hands of the Turkish army using the traditional ballad, a genre historically used to sing tragedies and elegies.[8] The mood of the ballad reflects the bravery of those who know that they are doomed to die in battle but do so anyway, serving as an example for all patriots. The lyrics work to encourage such warriors and arm them meta-

[6] The notion of a long period of historical struggle is fertile ground for metal lyrics (e.g., Weinstein 2000: 35–43).

[7] The edict of pope Callixtus III ordered all Europe to commemorate the siege by belling at midday that is a custom in Hungary present day as well.

[8] Thury's death occurred in 1571, close to the fortress of Kanizsa, a long-held fort and key location in controlling South-West Hungary (Sinkovics 1985a: 605).

phorically with the powers of thunder and storm, referring to the passing of these natural forces when their work is done.

Another important ballad covered by the band is "Szondi két apródja" ("The Squires of Szondi"). The original text of the song was composed by János Arany, one of the most important romantic-era Hungarian poets (Keresztury). The folkloristic romanticism of János Arany is best displayed in his ballads that were inspired by original folk material (Benedek 1970: 10–22). "Szondi két apródja" is one of the most well-known pieces written by Arany, remembering the capture of the castle of Drégely by the Ottomans in 1552. The excerpt below may paint a better picture of the song's atmosphere:

> The ruins of Dregel have sunk in the clouds
> The setting sun peers back, fight-worn is its red gaze,
> opposite, a gentle green-grassed hill of mounds
> with a spear and a flag that the wind frays.
>
> Two youths are kneeling with lutes in their hands
> – looks as if there were a cross struck to the spear's stem –
> with victory shouts, proud Ali cheers his bands
> and he dances and praises and feasts them.
>
> [...]
>
> Go good father Marton, this is my response:
> Szondi never wanted mercy from your master –
> from the hands of Jesus flow true mercy's fonts;
> it's to Him I commend the disaster!
>
> [...]
>
> Szondi fought with thousands! Alone, he, and in vain!
> Holding off the ruin with his own back merely –
> armies fell in droves by his mighty sword slain
> in his left hand his hauberk shone fiercely...
>
> True... He fought like Rustem' – it can't be denied –
> though his knees and sinews by our guns were broken,
> true... I saw the fight... But stop! Ali will chide,
> and his wrath must not vainly be woken!
>
> Like crops fell the corpses, the Turks fell or fled,
> littering the valley like landfill all gory.
> He stood on the blood-soaked peak of his death
> and awaited his own end with glory.[9]

[9] For the full, bilingual text of the ballad please visit: https://www.visegradliterature.net/works/hu/Arany_J%C3%A1nos-1817/Szondi_k%C3%A9t_apr%C3%B3dja/en/1972-The_two_pages_of_Szondi (acccess: 05.08.2022).

György Szondi parallels György Thury, not just in their names but in their heroic manner towards the overwhelming enemy. Dalriada's first big hit was a cover of the important Arany ballad of Arany "A walesi bárdok" ("The Bards of Wales")[10] which revolves around a marginal historical event in medieval England. Edward I, also known as "Longshanks," was infamous for his cruelty in uniting the islands of Britain and Ireland. Moreover, after the war of 1282–1283, he purged the Welsh bards who refused to sing his praises (Elton 1992: 70–71). As Arany's poem suggests, this story parallels the situation of the Hungarian people under Hapsburg oppression during the second half of the 19th century (Benedek 1970: 90). Dalriada's cover of this ballad is included on the compilation *Arany album* (a pun since Arany means 'gold' in Hungarian, making the work's title *Golden Record*) that contains only musical interpretations of Arany ballads. Besides historical pieces, there is also included a series of tragic folk stories on the album, which some teachers often use to teach about Arany's poetry.

The last thematic set of three examples of Dalriada's songs demonstrates the band's contrasting orientations to Hungarian folklore. "Táltosének" (2007) praises the old Hungarian shaman tradition. A *táltos* is a person who bears all the traits of a shaman: gifted with visions, experiences dream-voyages, and is an expert in healing and ritual practices (Kovács 1982: 168–169). The final verse of the song focuses on the táltos as a necromantic channeler, an ability that encompasses one's whole existence from life to death. "A Nap és Szél háza" ("The House of Sun and Wind", 2008) is another example of a musical reimagining, but this time of a folktale rather than historical events. The origin story of the Pleiades constellation (in Hungarian *fiastyúk* or "mother bird with sons") speaks of eight sons changed into ravens and scattered around the world who are later reunited in the sky with their mother as the constellation (Bakos 2008), using the "smallest child" motif well-known to European folklore. Dalriada's lyrics follow the general storyline of the original folktale:

> There was a poor woman and her seven sons
> She went for day labour day-by-day
> One day she got nothing but
> a jar of milk
>
> She bid the seven sons:
> That little milk is their only food.
> No one should drink it
> But should be increased with wheat.
>
> The woman comes home in the evening, and there was no milk
> In her anger, she said to her sons:
> As now you have eaten all the milk,
> Become seven ravens!

[10] For the full, bilingual text of the ballad please visit: https://www.visegradliterature.net/works/hu/Arany_J%C3%A1nos-1817/A_walesi_b%C3%A1rdok/en (access: 05.08.2022).

[...]
Now the shaman-boy is on his route
Looking for his brothers
He visited the House of Sun and the House of Wind
At last, Wind said what to do

Mill torments their bodies, but they do not die
Spill your blood in their food.
The curse of the seven sons is broken thus
They will remain together forever

Eight stars shine upon the sky
They may shine until the world stands still
Woman, if she comes out on a summer night
Looks up and sees her eight sons together.[11]

More than just a folktale, the story centers on notions of Hungarian kinship. The story comes from Moldova where the *csángó*s (a relative of Hungarian tribes) live.[12] Such kinship stories provide an important great perspective on Carpathian Hungary and its ethnographical heritage.

The final folkloric example is "A dudás" ("The Bagpiper", 2012). Originally a folk song of medieval origin, "The Bagpiper" tells the tale of a musician who gains musical virtuosity by making a deal with the devil. Since Goethe's *Faust*, such a scenario is well known in popular culture, and here we see it again as the story suggests that the bagpiper could only learn how to play his instrument by descending to Hell (Isenberg 1986). Dalriada's cover of "The Bagpiper" draws an interesting, if ironic, connection between learning to play the bagpipes and playing metal music. All bagpipes are difficult to play (the Hungarian version included), and metal music has cultivated a sense of virtuosity all its own. As such, Dalriada's version of "The Bagpiper" makes metaphorical equivalence to the bagpiper's selling his soul and the perennial perception that metal music is a tool of Satan. Interestingly, a bagpiper has been part of Dalriada's personnel since the recording of the album *Napisten hava* (2012) (for the topic of musical diversity within metal please see the case study of Keith Kahn-Harris 2010: 95–104).

Apart from thematic material, the actual composition of Dalriada's lyrics is also of interest. The first example is "Búsirató" ("Mourner of Sorrow", 2018). Several folk songs' lyrics are stitched together in this piece and the song cleverly pairs two of these texts in dialogue with one another. In the performance, one text is sung with a woman's voice, while the other is performed with male vocals. The woman sings of banished love and curses her former lover. Meanwhile, a man sings of his decision to join the Hussar regiment to embark on a military career. The texts that Dalriada uses here are taken from separate and distinct folk songs. As such, they originally have nothing to do with one another. Yet, in the band's ingenious arrangement, the texts

[11] For the Hungarian lyrics please visit: https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Dalriada/Szelek/192701 (access: 05.08.2022).

[12] For more information, see Klára Sándor.

are melded together to generate new meaning in that the female and male narrators' fates are now intertwined. For example, we now understand that the banished lover is indeed the man who runs off to join the cavalry. Another excerpt for illustration:

> Beat the one, God, the heart that loves two or three
> Embraces one, laughs with the other, as many he sees as many he loves,
> But I only love one, and suffer so much,
> Nobody's companion, nobody's curse I will be no more!
>
> I thought until I live, I would not suffer sorrow,
> But I joined you in that, I live my days in sorrow,
> But it will have an end, I had enough,
> It is over now, let the wind take my mournful sorrow!
>
> [...]
>
> I told you not to love me,
> Like you, I only love with my two arms,
> Love one who has horse and a chariot,
> Let sorrow kill you with him!
> Love one who has horse and a chariot,
> Let sorrow kill you with him!
>
> The Hussars pass by our house,
> My sweet mother, I will join them,
> I will be the first captain,
> That three years is nothing.
> I will be the first captain,
> That three years is nothing.[13]

"Galamb" ("Dove") from 2006 also uses portions of folk songs. The song is set in the Ottoman period when the song's hero is set to battle the Pagans. Anachronistically, however, the hero refers to the national tricolor of Hungary. This is historically inaccurate since the tricolor flags of European countries emerged much later after the French Revolution. This could be called romantic anachronism, as the patriotic feelings are elevated with a national symbol that is projected back to the most heroic age of Hungarian history, providing an epic aura for the setting of the song.[14]

Conclusion

The songs I have discussed in this paper provide only a glimpse into the complete oeuvre of Dalriada. I have described some representative examples that are meant to illustrate larger patterns that pervade the entirety of their work. In conclusion, three questions arise:

[13] For the Hungarian lyrics please visit: https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Dalriada/ Ny%C3%A1rut%C3%B3/677622 (access: 05.08.2022).

[14] Compare the similar treatment of Viking history and literature in Viking metal (von Helden 2010: 257–264).

1) Is Dalriada a (neo)Pagan band? In the manner of Eluveitie, Týr or Bathory it is perhaps incorrect to say that Dalriada is specifically Pagan as my analysis shows that the band's primary interest lay in a Hungarian heritage inclusive of both Pagan and Christian references. Many pre-Christian "Magyar" figures (shamans) and mythological topics are covered in Dalriada's music. Yet, important home-defending wars that often pitted Christians against the Ottomans are given equal space. Thus, it is not the religious interest of the narratives but the topics themselves that constitute Dalriada's song texts.
2) Is Dalriada a romantic metal band in the manner of many examples of "Pagan romanticism" from contemporary Europe? Yes, Dalriada follows the path of other groups driven by 19th-century ideals, for example, bands like Eluveitie, In Extremo, Leaves Eyes, etc. The aim to recreate, reinterpret or even actualize national history is a well-observed concept within metal music, here having an impact in Hungary as well.
3) Does Dalriada use their music to preserve and popularize Hungarian traditions? Yes, their original goal was to revitalize lost folklore. Two key motifs in the band's output are, first, the problem of authenticity in the use of the Hungarian language; and, second, the need and willingness to revive almost-forgotten elements of national history and Hungarian ethnography. Dalriada is a romantic band with no overt religious or political sentiments apart from purely celebrating their homeland's heritage, traditional values, and history.

Dalriada is a rising star on the international scene. After many years of work in Hungary, the group has achieved great success not just in Europe but also on the other side of the Atlantic and even in the Far East with a short tour in Japan. Dalriada's work is clearly rooted in Hungarian material, but it also demonstrates a great variety of subject matter and methodology in the preservation of culture.

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Abstract

This article comprises a case study of the lyrical program of the Hungarian folk metal band Dalriada. I employ a close reading based method that relies on ideas drawn from reception studies, metal studies, history and literary studies toward an understanding of Dalriada's reinterpretation of elements of Hungarian history (e.g., Medieval figures, the period of Ottoman occupation), folk traditions (e.g., folk songs) and high literature (the works of János Arany). I conclude by discussing some common patterns in these interpretations that run through Dalriada's overall output.

Różnorodność podobieństwa. Węgierska literatura wysoka, historia i folklor w tekstach Dalriady

Niniejszy artykuł stanowi studium przypadku programu lirycznego węgierskiego zespołu metalowego Dalriada. Przeprowadzono badania metodą *close reading*, które opierały się na ideach zaczerpniętych z badań nad recepcją, metal studies, historii i literaturoznawstwa w celu zrozumienia reinterpretacji elementów węgierskiej historii przez zespół Dalriada (np. postaci średniowiecznych, okresu okupacji osmańskiej), tradycji ludowych (np. pieśni ludowe) i literatury wysokiej (dzieła Jánosa Arany'ego). W interpretacjach zauważono pewne wspólne wzorce, pojawiające się w całym dorobku artystycznym grupy.

Keywords: Hungarian high literature, Dalriada, folk metal, Hungarian history, folklore

Słowa kluczowe: węgierska literatura wysoka, Dalriada, folk metal, historia Węgier, folklor

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