

The Struggle Within: An Analysis of Metallica Song Lyrics

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ABSTRAKT

Cílem této práce je identifikovat klíčová témata a motivy textů thrash metalové skupiny Metallica. Úvodní kapitoly se věnují představení skupiny Metallica a její tvorby společně s žánrovým zařazením. V následující části se práce věnuje analýze textů jednotlivých alb a rozpoznání motivů v nich zachycených. Závěrečná část práce shrnuje klíčová témata a hodnotí vývoj textů v průběhu kariéry skupiny.

Klíčová slova: Metallica, thrash metal, víra, sociální problémy, protestsong, drogy

ABSTRACT

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to identify the key themes and motifs of the thrash metal band Metallica. The first chapters are devoted to the introduction of the band and its musical production together with its genre classification. The following part of the thesis contains the lyrics analysis of the individual albums and the identification of the motifs. The final part summarizes the key themes and motifs and evaluates the development of the lyrics during the band's career.

Keywords: Metallica, thrash metal, faith, social problems, protestsong, drugs

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 9 |
| 1 METALLICA AND THE GENRE OF THRASH METAL | 11 |
| 1.1 Thrash metal | 13 |
| 2 LYRICS ANALYSIS | 15 |
| 2.1 Ride the Lightning | 17 |
| 2.2 Master of Puppets | 19 |
| 2.3 ... And Justice For All | 23 |
| 2.4 Black Album | 25 |
| 2.5 Load / Reload | 28 |
| 2.6 St. Anger | 30 |
| 2.7 Death Magnetic | 32 |
| 2.8 Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct | 35 |
| 3 SUMMARY OF KEY MOTIFS AND THEMES | 38 |
| CONCLUSION | 40 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 41 |

INTRODUCTION

A rich crazy Danish boy meets an insecure American, raised in a religious environment. An egoistic, but talented boy responds to an ad in the newspaper and joins the two. Together, they successfully persuade a remarkable San Francisco born descendant of hippies, who becomes the fourth member of the band. An egoistic boy is soon dismissed and replaced with a skillful half-Filipino. Thirty six years later, they still hang out together. Only instead of the San Francisco boy, who had passed away during an accident, there is a half Mexican, half Native American. They are called Metallica.

Since the foundation of the band in 1981, Metallica became one of the most successful bands in music history. The band has sold over 110 million records¹ and still does not seem to stop. This thesis is dedicated to this significant band - the first chapter introduces the band members and explains the history of the band, then the origins of the genre are described along with main features.

The main part of the thesis is dedicated to the lyrics analysis. As the band members matured from wild teenagers, with an inclination for fast and aggressive music, to the experienced musicians in their 50s, the lyrics have also undergone radical changes. At the beginning of their career, Metallica was mainly interested in enjoying what they were doing as much as possible. The lyrics of the debut album *Kill 'Em All*, celebrating the specific way of life, soon transformed into more sophisticated matters represented namely by *Ride the Lightning*, which set the tone for other bands adopting the newly created genre named thrash metal. Wall states that according to Lars Ulrich, the name for the genre was introduced in music magazines. "We didn't call it thrash; we'd never even heard the term till we started reading about it in British magazines like *Kerrang!*. It was like, we're thrash metal? Okay, it sounded cool..."² The following albums *Master of Puppets* and ... *And Justice For All* represent probably the most creative era of the band in terms of lyrics, putting an enormous emphasis on the public affairs happening at that time. The following album *Metallica* brought a dramatic change in lyrics, that was later applied to *Load* and *Reload* albums, too. The situation surrounding the recording of *St. Anger* and its influence

¹ See Stephanie Bunbury, "Metallica's Story of Ego and Indulgence: Metallica Through the Never." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, last modified October 11, 2013. <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/metallicas-story-of-ego-and-indulgence-metallica-through-the-never-20131010-2vauu.html>

² Mick Wall, *Enter Night: A Biography of Metallica* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 44.

on the lyrics is analyzed as well, along with *Death Magnetic* and the most recent album *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct*. The key motifs are summarized in the last chapter of the thesis.

Due to the author's field of study, only lyrics are analyzed. The lyrics for the analysis are drawn from the booklets of the particular albums.

1 METALLICA AND THE GENRE OF THRASH METAL

The origins of Metallica date back to the early 1980s, when the guitarist James Hetfield replied to an ad in the local Los Angeles music free-sheet, *The Recycler*. The ad was written by the drummer Lars Ulrich, who was looking for band members with similar taste for music. However, the first meeting between the two young music enthusiasts in May 1981 did not herald any sign of the possibility of founding a band that would one day become famous all over the world. The only thing that these two had in common was the love for a similar music genre.

As Wall has indicated, Lars Ulrich was born on December 26, 1963 in Gentofte, Denmark, into a wealthy family. Thanks to his father Torben who was a successful tennis player, Lars experienced traveling all over the world during his childhood. Torben Ulrich was an all-round talented person, interested in music and various forms of art and therefore a very influential figure for his son. Despite the fact that Lars was the only child of this rich family, he was highly independent since an early age. In 1980, the family moved to Los Angeles and the following year, Lars met a guy who later became the front man of Metallica.³

Brannigan and Winwood report that the childhood of James Alan Hetfield can be described as the exact opposite to what Lars Ulrich had experienced. James was born on August 3, 1963 in Los Angeles to the family of Christian Science followers. This faith refuses encountering with science and medicine, believing that the prayer is sufficient enough to heal illnesses. James repeatedly expressed the influence of that faith in his life in several Metallica songs. The divorce of his parents at the age of 13, followed by his mother's death three years later, is another example of a struggle during his adolescence.⁴

Wall concludes that regardless to the differences between the liberal, open-minded upbringing of Lars Ulrich and the difficult background of James Hetfield's adolescence, in October 1981, the two of them founded a band and named it Metallica. Lars Ulrich and James Hetfield were joined by a bass guitarist Ron McGovney and a lead guitarist Dave

³ See Mick Wall, *Enter Night*, 10-11.

⁴ See Paul Brannigan and Ian Winwood, *Birth School Metallica Death* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), 9-12.

Mustaine and with this line up, the band released their first demo tape *No Life 'Till Leather*, containing six songs that would later appear in the debut album *Kill 'Em All*.⁵

At the end of the year 1982, the bass player Ron McGovney was replaced by Cliff Burton who impressed both Lars Ulrich and James Hetfield when they saw him perform on the stage with the band called Trauma.

Clifford Lee Burton was born on February 10, 1962 in Castro Valley, California. Dowe and Ewing argue that since the early age, Clifford enjoyed reading and music. However, he started to play the bass guitar after the death of his brother Scott at the age of 13. He soon outgrew his teachers and after the short existence of his first band called EZ-Street, he joined another band Trauma. His apparent talent and his typical playing style attracted the attention of Metallica's main figures, who were not satisfied with McGovney's qualities as a bass player. After four months of persuasion from Hetfield and Ulrich, Burton finally agreed to join the band under the condition that they move from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Unlike the rest of the band, Burton had studied classical music, therefore his contribution played an important role in the development of the band's music.⁶

With Cliff on board, the band started to prepare for recording of their debut album. However, during the travel across the United States, Hetfield and Ulrich decided to release the lead guitarist Dave Mustaine from the band. David Scott Mustaine was born on September 13, 1961 and grew up in a similar environment as James Hetfield, coming from an incomplete family. His alcoholic father was the reason why he spend his childhood mainly with his mother, moving from one place to another, trying to break away from his father. Wall reports that unlike Hetfield, Mustaine was an egoistic and self-confident young man who did not hesitate to go into a conflict whatever it may cost.⁷ Mustaine's unpredictable behavior and extensive drinking was an ongoing issue, and unfortunately prior to the *Kill 'Em All* recording, the situation got out of control. Despite his indisputable qualities as a guitar player, the band decided to find a replacement. Mustaine was given a bus ticket to San Francisco and he later founded his own band, named Megadeth. As Wall has pointed out, even though that Mustaine's new band became very successful, it has never reached the same popularity as Metallica and for many years, Dave Mustaine

⁵ See Wall, *Enter Night*, 41-43.

⁶ See Malcolm Dome and Jerry Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica* (New Malden: Chrome Dreams, 2007), 29-34.

remained bitterly disappointed over the circumstances that accompanied his exit from the band.⁸

Kirk Hammett, the guitarist from the band Exodus, born on November 18, 1962 quickly replaced Mustaine and Metallica started recording the album *Kill 'Em All*.⁹ This lineup stayed unchanged until 1986, when Cliff Burton died in a road accident while on the tour in Sweden. The band decided to continue with a new bassist, Jason Curtis Newsted.

Jason Curtis Newsted, born on March 4, 1963 in Battle Creek, Michigan, started to play the bass guitar as a teenager. As McIver perceptively states, after Newsted's family moved to Phoenix, Jason joined the band Flotsam and Jetsam which was greatly influenced by Metallica. Newsted himself was a Metallica fan, so when the unfortunate twist of the events occurred, he decided to join the band without any hesitation. Despite the fact that Newsted fit well into the band as a musician, he experienced a lot of bullying from the remaining band members in what was probably their way of coping with Burton's tragic death. However, Newsted took it as a part of the process and regardless of that, he spent 14 years with the band before he left it in January 2001.¹⁰

The last personnel change up to this date occurred in 2003, before finishing the recording of *St. Anger*. A former Suicidal Tendencies bass guitarist, Robert Trujillo, was selected to fill the void after Newsted departure in 2001. Born on October 23, 1963 in Santa Monica, California, the new bassist possessed similar attributes as Cliff Burton. As Wall has indicated, Trujillo played exclusively with his fingers instead of using the plectrum and he had also studied jazz music before he became a full time musician. Before joining Metallica, Trujillo played with various high profile bands and musicians, such as Suicidal Tendencies, Infectious Grooves and Ozzy Osbourne.¹¹

1.1 Thrash metal

Metallica belongs among the first bands associated with the term thrash metal. As Pillsbury has indicated, this sub-genre can be characterized by a typical aggressive sound of guitars, fast tempo of the songs and raw singing. The energy and the tempo of the music originate

⁷ See Wall, *Enter Night*, 35-38.

⁸ See Wall, *Enter Night*, 64.

⁹ See Dome and Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica*, 71-73.

¹⁰ See Joel McIver, *Justice for All: The Truth about Metallica* (London: Omnibus, 2004), 26.

¹¹ See Wall, *Enter Night*, 225-26.

from the hardcore variants of punk, but the complexity of the music and the orientation, especially towards the precise guitar performance, is what classifies it under the genre of heavy metal music rather than punk.¹² As Weinstein pointed out, the lyrics often describe chaos, injustice and various problems of the society.¹³ Weinstein argues that there are four most notable American bands connected with the origins of this genre – Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer and Anthrax.¹⁴ Walser points out that apart from Anthrax, the other three bands come from San Francisco’s Bay Area, which is considered as the cradle of thrash metal.¹⁵

¹² See Glenn Pillsbury, *Damage Incorporated: Metallica and the Production of Musical Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 7-11.

¹³ See Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 50-51.

¹⁴ See Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 288.

¹⁵ See Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 14.

2 LYRICS ANALYSIS

Metallica's debut album *Kill 'Em All* was released in 1983 and became very popular among musical public. However, it does not display such qualities as in the later Metallica albums – the sound is raw with plenty imperfections, the music is not very sophisticated and as Wisniewski points out, the lyrics are mostly celebrating the “metal” way of life.¹⁶

The opening song “Hit the Lights”¹⁷ already contains example of that in the very first lines: “No life ‘til leather / We’re gonna kick some ass tonight,” referring to leather clothes that are historically associated with metal music, along with the long and wild hair, a feature that is easily recognizable at first sight. The following lines “When our fans start screaming / It’s right, well alright” emphasize the importance of the connection with the fans and their mutual appreciation. The final lines “When we start to rock / We never want to stop again,” referring to the attitude of the musicians and their will to play only and as much as possible, are repeated at the end of every stanza in this song, creating a bridge before the chorus. “Hit the lights” is repeated three times and it further elaborates on the previous lines, expressing the desire to switch off the lights and start the concert.

The second stanza continues to address the listeners with the opening lines “We know our fans are insane / We’re gonna blow this place away,” stressing the power of the band’s performance in the second line. The following lines “With volume higher / Than anything today, the only way” describe another important feature of early Metallica music – an extraordinary high level of noise. The third stanza is in accordance with the previous stanzas, but actually goes one step further in the lines “With all out screaming / We’re gonna rip right through your brain,” which clearly exaggerates the music effects on the listeners. The second part of the following line “We got the lethal power / It’s causing you sweet pain, oh sweet pain” continues in the same vein with the oxymoron “sweet pain.”

Similar motifs, celebrating this particular lifestyle, can be found throughout the whole *Kill 'Em All* album. The theme of “Whiplash”¹⁸ is very similar to “Hit the Lights,” but the comparison shows that it contains a story of one concert. In the first stanza, the lyrics start with “Late at night, all systems go / You’ve come to see the show,” after that the

¹⁶J. Jeremy Wisniewski, “The Metal Militia and the Existentialist Club,” in *Metallica and Philosophy: A Crash Course in Brain Surgery*, ed. William Irvin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 57.

¹⁷ Metallica, “Hit the Lights,” *Kill 'Em All*. Recorded May, 1983, Rochester, New York, Vertigo, 1999, CD.

¹⁸ Metallica, “Whiplash,” *Kill 'Em All*. Recorded May, 1983, Rochester, New York, Vertigo, 1999, CD.

description of the event itself begins. The final stanza is dealing with the life on the road, typical for music artists: “The show is through, the metal’s gone / It’s time to hit the road,” explaining the common routine of concerts and describing the features of it in the lines “Hotel rooms and motorways / Life out here is raw.”

Among the majority of songs that are connected to the new wave of music and are similar to each other, there is one song that stands out. As Dome and Ewing state, the song “The Four Horsemen”¹⁹ is inspired by a Biblical story from the Book of Revelation, 6:1-8, about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse that bring the divine punishment to the Earth.²⁰ The first stanza starts with the line “By the last breath the fourth winds blow / Better raise your ears,” introducing the scene where the apocalypse is about to come. The following lines “The sound of hooves knock at your door / Lock up your wife and children now” send the warning to the sinners and further intensify the depressing mood before the final lines of the first stanza call to the action, stating “It’s time to wield the blade / For now you’ve got some company.” The chorus of the song describes the arrival of the four horsemen – “The Horsemen are drawing nearer / On leather steeds they ride / They’ve come to take your life,” followed by the lines expressing the two possible outcomes of the situation – “On through the dead of night / With the Four Horsemen ride / Or choose your fate and die.”

The second stanza begins with the lines “You have been dying since the day you were born / You know it’s all been planned / The quartet of deliverance rides” describing the inevitability of the situation, with the act of death submitted not as a punishment, but more like a redemption. The following lines “A sinner once, a sinner twice / No need for confession now / ‘Cause now you’ve got the fight of your life” confirm the previous statement, expressing that there is no need to repent. Labeled as sinners, the only possible outcome is to face an ultimate clash with the horsemen.

After the second repetition of the chorus, the tempo of the song changes and the lyrics start to describe the Four Horsemen. The first of them is presented by the lines “Time / Has taken its toll on you / The lines that crack your face,” describing the natural human process of aging and its visual effects on individuals. The rider of the second horse represents

¹⁹ Metallica, “The Four Horsemen,” *Kill ‘Em All*. Recorded May, 1983, Rochester, New York, Vertigo, 1999, CD.

²⁰ See Dome and Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica*, 63.

scarcity of food in the following line: “Famine / Your body it has torn through / Withered in every place.” This line contains the description of body damaged by the lack of nutrition. The third rider symbolizes a fatal epidemic disease as a punishment for previous acts or possibly sins, described in lyrics as “Pestilence / For what you’ve had to endure / And what you have put others through.” Finally, the fourth rider brings the ultimate solution, “Death / Deliverance for you for sure / Now there’s nothing you can do” that is again viewed as the inevitable liberation from suffering.

The last stanza of the song is dedicated to the conflict with the horsemen. Starting with “So gather ‘round young warriors now / And saddle up you steeds / Killing scores with demon swords,” the lyrics urge young men to prepare their horses and start executing the large number of sinners. Together with the expression of certainty by swinging the hammer down as it happens in court, there is also a description of the warriors’ equipment: “Now is the death of doers of wrong / Swing the judgment hammer down / Safely inside armor blood guts and sweat.”

There is also possibility of another meaning of the song that would suit more to the context of *Kill ‘Em All* album. Dome and Ewing report that the four horsemen could be also identified with the four band members and their conquest of the world through the music.²¹ However, an analysis of the following album’s song “Fight Fire With Fire” suggests that the idea of apocalypse was interesting enough for the young metal band, therefore the double meaning of “The Four Horsemen” was probably not intentional. The Biblical undertone of the song is undeniable, although the band’s interpretation of the Bible is not accurate. The first rider in the song lyrics is labeled as Time that is originally not one of the four biblical horsemen.

2.1 Ride the Lightning

The second album *Ride the Lightning* was released one year after *Kill ‘Em All*, however the lyrics are much more sophisticated in comparison with the previous album, showing the band’s development not only as writers of music, but also of lyrics. The album starts with the song “Fight Fire with Fire,”²² presenting a theme partially connected to the previously

²¹ See Dome and Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica*, 63.

²² Metallica, “Fight Fire With Fire,” *Ride the Lightning*. Recorded February and March, 1984, Copenhagen, CD.

analyzed “The Four Horsemen.” Dome and Ewing state that this song expresses the concerns of apocalypse caused by humankind, although this time not by the committed sins, but by the thirst for vengeance using advanced technologies.²³

The first stanza begins with the lines “Do unto others as they’ve done to you / But what the hell is this world coming to.” This immediately expresses the concern regarding the planets’ future if the approach “eye for an eye” will continue. The following lines “Blow the universe into nothingness / Nuclear warfare shall lay us to rest” specify the worry, addressing the nuclear threat. After the short stanza, the chorus follows: “Fight fire with fire / Ending is near” and “Fight fire with fire / Bursting with fear” with the shout of “We all shall die” coming next, in what is nothing but description of the nuclear bomb effects. The lyrics then continue to describe the theme: “Time is like a fuse, short and burning fast / Armageddon’s here, like said in the past,” where the connection to “The Four Horsemen” is visible. Again, the lyrics include the Biblical reference and also the last lines of the song are similar to “The Four Horsemen,” because the Armageddon is as inevitable as the apocalypse: “Soon to fill our lungs, the hot winds of death / The gods are laughing, so take your last breath.” The additional description of what follows the nuclear explosion is mentioned in the first part of the line.

The following analyzed song “For Whom the Bell Tolls”²⁴ was inspired by a novel of the same name, written by Ernest Hemingway in 1940. The song starts with the lines that are straight away describing the specific settings during a wartime: “Make his fight on the hill in the early day / Constant chill deep inside,” where the listener can experience not only the morning start of the operation, but also the soldiers’ feelings described as “constant chill deep inside.” The following lines “Shouting gun, on they run through the endless grey / On they fight, for they are right, yes, but who’s to say?” add further information about the setting in the first part, using personification in order to describe the sound of guns and the metaphorical expression “endless grey” might refer either to the previously mentioned morning time or more probably, to the smoke that is usually present at battlefields, whereas the second part starts questioning the fight itself, asking the question of who is to say that the soldiers are right in their fight.

²³ See Dome and Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica*, 60.

²⁴ Metallica, “For Whom the Bell Tolls,” *Ride the Lightning*. Recorded February and March, 1984, Copenhagen, CD.

The following lines express more doubts about the fighting: “For a hill, men would kill, why? They do not know / Suffered wounds test their pride.” It is evident from this particular line that the soldiers do not know why they are ready to kill. The final lines of the first stanza are trying to describe the psychological state of the remaining five injured soldiers that managed to stay alive while the battle was still going on: “Men of five, still alive through the raging glow / Gone insane from the pain that they surely know.”

After the simple chorus of “For whom the bell tolls / Time marches on / For whom the bell tolls,” a second stanza starts with the lines “Take a look to the sky just before you die / It’s the last time he will,” depicting the proximity and inevitability of the incoming death. The following lines “Blackened roar, massive roar fills the crumbling sky / Shattered goal fills his soul with a ruthless cry” compare the external reality of the battle, full of human screaming and the sound of bombing to the internal processes of the soldier, whose hopes of achieving the goal are utterly dashed. The soldier’s confusion can be also seen in the following lines: “Stranger now, are his eyes, to this mystery / He hears the silence so loud,” that in the second part suggests that something significant happened and affected him, e.g. explosion of grenade or bomb nearby. The second stanza finishes with the lines “Crack of dawn, all is gone except the will to be / Now they see what will be, blinded eyes to see” that seem to depict the following morning when there is no fight anymore and the only thing left is the will to live. But as the second part suggests, it is the moment when the soldiers finally realize what happened in the past twenty four hours.

As Dome and Ewing indicate, the motif of faith is represented in the lyrics of the song “Creeping Death” that is inspired by the Biblical story from the Book of Exodus.²⁵ The lyrics of “For Whom the Bell Tolls” were the most sophisticated Metallica text at the time in perspective of both form and also the meaning. Considering “Hit the Lights” or “The Four Horsemen” lyrics from the previous album, the level of “For Whom the Bell Tolls” lyrics is much more advanced and represents a considerable progress achieved during only one year that separates these two albums.

2.2 Master of Puppets

Metallica released their third album *Master of Puppets* in the year 1986 and it is considered to be one of the most influential albums of the band. In particular, the title song “Master of

Puppets”²⁶ has gained a cult status and even though it is considered a masterpiece primarily due the musical point of view, the lyrics are also remarkably sophisticated. The song starts with the lines “End of passion play, crumbling away / I’m your source of self-destruction,” that according to Pillsbury seem to depict the person struggling with the drug withdrawal symptoms.²⁷ In the second part, the drug itself is the cause of the suffering.

The description of the drug use continues in the following lines “Veins that pump with fear, sucking darkest clear / Leading on you deaths’ construction,” the element of fear is added to display the feeling more precisely. The drug is described as the “darkest clear,” possibly meaning that it is a sample of high quality with no additional substances – therefore the word “clear” – that comes hand in hand with the adjective “darkest,” symbolizes the effects of the drug, ultimately leading to what is described in the second part as the participation in the user’s own death.

The stanza is finished with the lines that stimulate to try the drug: “Taste me you will see / More is all you need,” immediately describing the creation of addiction. The feeling is further developed in the following lines “You are dedicated to / How I’m killing you.” Then the bridge before the chorus follows, speaking to the drug user: “Come crawling faster / Obey your master,” where the drug is given the name “master.” The effect of the drug is described in the final line before the chorus: “Your life burns faster / Obey your master / Master.” The chorus starts with the mention of the song title: “Master of puppets I’m pulling your strings / Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams,” describing the power of the drug, labeling the drug user as a puppet on a string, controlled by the master – drug, that can trick the mind and destroy the dreams. The following lines further expand the idea of the drug that is controlling various aspects of life, leading to addiction, namely in the second part: “Blinded by me you can’t see a thing / Just call my name ‘cause I’ll hear your scream / Master, master.” The second stanza depicts the life of an addicted person and the drug usage as a routine: “Needlework the way, never you betray / Life of death becoming clearer,” meaning that the needle is a natural tool in the user’s life and that the person is so committed to it that leaving it is not an option, even though the consequences of drug use are evident to him. The suffering connected with using the drug has become

²⁵ See Dome and Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica*, 40.

²⁶ Metallica, “Master of Puppets,” *Master of Puppets*. Recorded September-December 1985, Copenhagen, CD.

familiar, as expressed in the first part of the following lines: “Pain monopoly, ritual misery / Chop your breakfast on a mirror.” The second part is a clear description of a process associated with the nasal inhalations of hard drugs such as cocaine or heroin, when the dose is divided into parts – lines that are placed on a mirror or glass in order for the drug not to stick to the surface and to clean it easily afterwards.

After the second stanza and the second chorus, the song contains an interlude, where the drug addict questions his master in what is probably the revelation of how the drug actually functions: “Master, master where’s the dreams that I’ve been after? / Master, master, you promised only lies.” The “master” probably replies only with laughing over the disillusioned “puppet,” as it is expressed in the second part of the interlude: “Laughter, laughter, all I hear or see is laughter / Laughter, laughter, laughing at my cries.” This line may also contain another meaning – the laughter may be coming not from the master, but from the witnesses around reacting to the drug addict.

When the interlude is over, the instrumental part takes over the song before the final stanza, summarizing the life of the drug addict: “Hell is worth all that, natural habitat / Just a rhyme without reason.” After the short period of hope expressed in the interlude, the person has just given up and surrendered to the drug power. Even though it has no sense, a life full of pain and suffering, or “hell” as described here, is common now. The chance for a better life is not a possibility anymore and the remaining time is limited: “Neverending maze, drift on numbered days / Now your life is out of season.”

As Dome and Ewing indicate, the *Master of Puppets* album also contains a song dedicated to war.²⁸ The song “Disposable Heroes”²⁹ can be seen as the notional sequel to “For Whom the Bell Tolls.” The song starts with the lines “Bodies fill the field I see, hungry heroes end / No one to play soldier now, no one to pretend.” Numerous losses of men, willing to become heroes are described here and in the second part, the doubts are raised over the remaining soldiers, who are not motivated to fight and are not hiding it anymore, after witnessing the death of others. “Running blind through killing fields, bred to kill them all / Victim of what should said be, a servant ‘til I fall” is the description of the

²⁷ See Pillsbury, *Damage Incorporated*, 64.

²⁸ See Dome and Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica*, 48.

²⁹ Metallica, “Disposable Heroes,” *Master of Puppets*. Recorded September–December 1985, Copenhagen, CD.

prototype soldier, a tool for killing that will be sacrificed after all. Despite the fact it was not said before, it is understood as a fact.

The stanza is followed by the bridge again, leading to the chorus later. “Soldier boy, made of clay / Now an empty shell” – the soldier is not characterized as a human being, but as a thing made of something what is very common and cheap. This serves as a criticism of inhumane perception of life that is typical for war conflicts. In the second part, the soldier is even described as a machine that is not working anymore, completely lacking emotions.

This slightly changes in the following lines “Twenty one, only son / But he served us well,” but right in the next lines “Bred to kill, not to care / Do just as we say,” where apathy is shown again and is emphasized in the final lines of the bridge, stating “Finished here, greetings death / He’s yours to take away.” The chorus is an interpretation of orders from the superior: “Back to the front / You will do what I say, when I say,” this is the basic explanation of the military structure, but the second line is marginally bent into “Back to the front / You will die, when I say, you must die,” the precise interpretation of the meaning in the previous lines. The chorus is closing with the lines “Back to front / You coward, you servant you blind man,” where the superior verbally insults the soldier.

The second stanza returns back to the soldier and his thinking process. The person compares the sound of shooting to the common sound of a ticking clock, meaning that even something as loud as the guns can be left without noticing, as expressed in the lines “Barking of machinegun fire, does nothing to me now / Sounding of the clock that ticks, get used to it somehow.” In the following lines, “More a man, more stripes you bare, glory seeker trends / Bodies fill the field I see, the slaughter never ends” the soldier contests the value of military rank and those who are obsessed with it. The song also contains a short interlude, represented by the soldier’s interior monologue: “Why, am I dying / Kill, have no fear / Lie, live off lying / Hell, hell is here,” that portrays his situation perceived as hell and is finished with the shout “I was born for dying,” which shows the main idea of the last stanza.

The final stanza begins with the lines “Life planned out before my birth, nothing could I say / Had no chance to see myself, molded day by day.” The soldier is expressing the sorrow of his unfulfilled life that is the result of the compulsory military service. The idea is further expanded in the following line: “Looking back I realize, nothing have I done / Left to die with only friend, alone I clench my gun.” The main protagonist ends embittered, left only with the gun.

In comparison to its predecessor, *Master of Puppets* lyrics show the shift of interest towards social issues. Despite the fact that this theme has already partly featured in *Ride The Lightning* lyrics, *Master of Puppets* is much more dedicated to it. Whereas “Disposable Heroes” still reflects the mood of the first two albums, the title song “Master of Puppets” clearly shows that the band’s ability to write meaningful and sophisticated lyrics is evidently growing.

2.3 ... And Justice For All

In 1988, two years later after making the *Master of Puppets* album, Metallica released their fourth album ... *And Justice For All* with one change in the personnel. On September 27, 1986, a tragic bus accident happened during the *Master of Puppets* tour in Sweden, resulting in the unfortunate death of Metallica’s bass guitarist, Cliff Burton.³⁰ Over 50 musicians took part in the audition for the new bassist position and the band finally chose a former Floatsam and Jetsam member, Jason Newsted, who later revealed that he learned all the songs from the Metallica’s set list for the audition in order to impress the band.³¹

As Fudge has pointed out, from the lyrical point of view, the album mainly focuses on the theme of corruption, criticizing the establishment, especially the judiciary.³² The opening song “... And Justice For All”³³ sets the mood of the album from the start. The first lines “Halls of justice painted green / Money talking” present the motif of corruption. The lyrics further continue to depict the motif in the following lines “Power wolves beset your door / Hear them stalking” comparing the powerful individuals to the wolves hunting for their prey, as it is broadened in the next line “Soon you’ll please their appetite / They devour,” meaning that the “wolves” are not to be trusted, because they can dispose of allies right after achieving the goal and there is nothing what can be done, as expressed immediately in “Hammer of justice crushes you / Overpowered.” The political (or financial, as suggested in the opening line) power is used to defeat the justice: “The ultimate in vanity / Exploiting their supremacy.” The faith in justice is rejected in the

³⁰ See Wall, *Enter Night*, 136-39.

³¹ That Metal Show, “Jason Newsted on Metallica Audition” (video of interview), posted November 30, 2015, accessed March 22, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XngkiTAe_jI.

³² Robert Fudge, “Whisper Things Into My Brain: Metallica, Emotion and Morality,” in *Metallica and Philosophy: A Crash Course in Brain Surgery*, ed. William Irvin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 7.

chorus: “Justice is lost, justice is raped, justice is gone / Pulling your strings, justice is done,” and in its second part: “Seeking no truth, winning is all / Find it so grim, so true, so real.” The latter part of the lyrics, containing the line “Lady justice has been raped / Truth assassin,” criticize dangerous tendencies in the society that are threatening justice. The song title is a fragment borrowed from The Pledge of Allegiance of the United States: “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”³⁴

“Eye of the Beholder”³⁵ is exploring a similar theme as the previously analyzed song. As Wisnewski pointed out, the main theme of the lyrics is the limitation of freedom, specifically freedom of expression.³⁶ The song starts with the lines “Do you see what I see? / Truth is an offense / You silence for your confidence” pointing out a targeted concealment of expression for the sake of their own advantage. The following lines start again with a question, describing the control of human imagination afterwards: “Do you hear what I hear? Doors are slumming shut / Limit your imagination, keep you where they must.” This resembles the dialogue between two people, one being the doubter who is trying to point out to the other of what is happening and why it is wrong. The doubter, using critical thinking then asks “Do you feel what I feel? / Bittering distress / Who decides what you express?,” repeating previously stated confusion and further expands it: “Do you take what I take? Endurance is the word / Moving back instead of forward seems to me absurd.” The freedom as a whole is questioned in the chorus, stating “Freedom of choice / Choice is made for you my friend” suggesting that the choice was already made and these lines “Freedom of speech / Speech is words that they will bend” express that freedom of speech can be used only to an extent suitable to those in control, as it is summarized in the final chorus line “Freedom with their exception.” The protagonist distances himself from the others as can be seen in the line “Truths to you are lies to me,” expressing that he prefers to search for more alternatives, because “energy derives from both the plus and negative.”

³³ Metallica, “... And Justice For All,” ... *And Justice For All*. Recorded January-May 1988, Los Angeles, CD.

³⁴ Jeffrey Owen Jones and Peter Meyer, *The Pledge: A History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (London: Macmillan, 2010), 125.

³⁵ Metallica, “Eye of the Beholder,” ... *And Justice For All*. Recorded January-May 1988, Los Angeles, CD.

³⁶ See Wisnewski, “The Metal Militia and the Existentialist Club,” 63.

In other words, in order to form an opinion, it is needed to explore various sources across the spectrum and recognize what is biased, as expressed in the lines “penetrate the smokescreen, I see through the selfish lie.” Towards the end of the song, the protagonist expresses his wish as “I hunger after independence, lengthen freedom’s ring,” meaning that he does not want more power, money or wealth, but only freedom – and it is not specified whether it is freedom of speech or freedom of expression.

The lyrics of ... *And Justice For All* continue in addressing the social issues, but in comparison to *Master of Puppets*, the manner of the lyrics has changed. Both “... And Justice for All” and “Eye of the Beholder” express slight criticism of the establishment that did not appear in the previous albums’ lyrics. Considering the theme of ... *And Justice For All* lyrics, the album can be perceived as political, but as Pillsbury has indicated, the band members have distanced themselves from politics as such.³⁷ The motif of faith appears in the lyrics of “Dyers Eve.” The fact that the main songwriter of the band James Hetfield was raised under the influence of Christian Science, the opening lines of the song “Dear mother dear father / What is this hell you have put me through?”³⁸ may suggest that the lyrics are aimed at his parents. The lyrics on the album also feature the anti-war motif and the first music video released by the band is a clear evidence of that.³⁹ The song “One” is inspired by the film *Johnny Got His Gun* (1971) based on the 1938 anti-war novel by Dalton Trumbo that tells the story of a young boy who falls into the trap of propaganda and joins the army during the World War I, where he is severely wounded.

2.4 Black Album

A hectic tempo during the 1980s was a significant feature not only in Metallica music, but also in the process of writing and recording a new material – the band released their fifth album in 1991, just eight years after the debut *Kill ‘Em All*. The album is known under the name *The Black Album*, due to its black cover consisting only of the name *Metallica* and the drawing of a snake.

³⁷ See Pillsbury, *Damage Incorporated*, 58.

³⁸ Metallica, “Dyers Eve,” ... *And Justice For All*. Recorded January-May 1988, Los Angeles, CD.

³⁹ Metallica, “One” (music video), directed by Bill Pope and Michael Salomon, posted October 26, 2009, accessed April 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM8bTdBs-cw>.

Generally speaking, the lyrics on the album are more personal than ever before, as can be seen in the song “The Unforgiven.”⁴⁰ Fudge states that the song “expresses strong feelings of resentment over a life ruled by the imposed values of others.”⁴¹ The song starts with the line “New blood joins this earth / And quickly he’s subdued,” describing the birth of a child, whose life is immediately brought under control. The lyrics then continue explaining: “Through constant pain disgrace / The young boy learns their rules.” The listener is exposed to the struggle of a young boy, living under the influence of his parents. As the boy grows up and matures, he learns that he has done something not according to the set rules: “With time the child draws in / This whipping boy done wrong.” This mistake is transformed into the loss of his self-belief and free spirit: “Deprived of all his thoughts / The young man struggles on and on he’s known.” The young man now makes the promise to himself that he will never bow down again: “A vow unto his own / That never from this day / His will they’ll take away.” In the chorus, the lyrics are presented by a first person narrator, expressing his thoughts in “What I’ve felt, what I’ve known / Never shined through what I’ve shown,” complaining that he has never had a chance to directly express himself. The next lines contain a similar statement in “Never be, never see / Won’t see what might have been” and after the repetition of the first line of the chorus, the boy gives a name to the cause of his problem in “Never free, never me / So I dub thee Unforgiven.” The archaic word “thee” is probably used as a symbol of an archaic approach to life that he is exposed to and struggles with.

The third-person narrator again appears in the second stanza, continuing with the depiction of the struggling young man. The lines “They dedicated their lives / To running all of his” are describing the ongoing control over his life, however he still does not manage to break away from parents’ influence and that is making him sour, as expressed in the following lines “He tries to please them all / This bitter man he is.” The protagonist is fighting against what he cannot defeat during his whole life – “He’s battled constantly / This fight he cannot win” and it has made him passive – “A tired man they see no longer cares.” After all the struggles he has been exposed to since his birth, he finally reconciles and now is ready to die full of sorrow: “The old man than prepares / To die regretfully /

⁴⁰ Metallica, “The Unforgiven,” *Metallica*. Recorded October 1990-June 1991, Los Angeles, CD.

⁴¹ See Fudge, “Whisper Things Into My Brain,” 7.

That old man here is me.” After the second chorus, the song culminates with a final message from the protagonist “You labeled me / I’ll label you / So I dub thee Unforgiven.”

An interesting contrast to “The Unforgiven” can be found in the following song “Wherever I May Roam.” The song starts with “... And the road becomes my bride / I have stripped of all but pride” what can be understood as a description of a life on the road, something that was clearly well known to the band. The journey has become a partner and the protagonist is left only with the good feeling of his achievement - but because it is everything he needs, he is committed to it: “So in her I do confide / And she keeps me satisfied / Gives me all I need.” In the lines leading to the chorus, the protagonist expresses the lack of interest in the names he is given – “Rover wanderer, nomad vagabond / Call me what you will” and he has a reason for that. The opening lines of the chorus depict the freedom of expression, coming with the status he gained: “But I’ll take my time anywhere / Free to speak my mind anywhere.” This might be seen as achieving the goal from the previous song “Eye of the Beholder,” represented by the expression “I hunger after independence, lengthen freedom’s ring.” The idea of life on the road is emphasized in the second part of the chorus, “And I’ll redefine anywhere / Anywhere I may roam / Where I lay my head is home.” The second stanza starts with the metaphorical expression “... And the earth becomes my throne / I adapt to the unknown,” showing the rule over the world (of music) that was achieved by the ability to adapt in the new territory. The following lines “Under wandering stars I’ve grown / By myself but not alone / I asked no one” praise the protagonist’s own abilities and highlight the fact that the success has been achieved with no external help, just by a band of colleagues, as the phrase “by myself but not alone” could be interpreted. In the next lines, a previously analyzed song comes to mind. In “The Unforgiven” the protagonist was “subdued” and “deprived of all his thoughts,” whereas now “... And my ties are severed clean / The less I have the more I gain / Off the beaten path I reign,” and in the chorus he is “free to speak my[his] mind anywhere.”

As Wall has indicated, the goal of the album was to penetrate into the mainstream⁴² and it brought the change of the lyrics. The lyrics on *The Black Album* vastly differ from all the albums that the band has ever released before. The album has foreshadowed the direction where the band would be heading to in the following years. Both from the

⁴² See Wall, *Enter Night*, 178-82.

musical and lyrical point of view, *The Black Album* can be understood as the first product of “new” Metallica, the band that was very distant from almost anti-establishment tendencies of *Master of Puppets* and ... *And Justice for All* albums.

2.5 Load / Reload

If the tempo of music writing and recording during the early Metallica years between 1983 and 1991 was described as fast as the tempo of the actual songs, the exact opposite can be said about what followed during the last decade of the twentieth century. Metallica only managed to release two studio albums *Load* and *Reload* in 1996 and 1997 respectively. The band originally planned to release a double album, but because of the record length of the first album, they opted to release the second part as a separate album a year later. However, as the material for both albums was written together, the selected songs will be analyzed together in one section as well. From the musical point of view, the albums are moving closer to hard rock rather than initial thrash metal sound, which can be interpreted as an understandable process of calming down. The group members were no longer wild teenagers, but more thoughtful adults in their mid- to late thirties. This fact was also reflected in the lyrics.

The reflection of the change in their approach can be found in the song “Mama Said.”⁴³ Pillsbury argues that the song is about James Hetfield’s mother, but in comparison with “The Unforgiven,” the bitter tone known is gone and it is replaced by a more mature approach.⁴⁴ The opening lines show immediate appreciation of mother, “Mama, she has taught me well / Told me when I was young,” giving her son an advice and teaching him about life: “Son, your life’s an open book / Don’t close ‘fore it’s done.” The lyrics continue in remembering the mother, “The brightest flame burns quickest / That’s what I heard her say.” The son confesses his love towards the mother, but then also notes the desire of self-fulfillment, as expressed before in “The Unforgiven” – “A son’s heart’s owed to mother / But I must find a way.” The boy then asks for forgiveness from his mother, so he could move on, in the lines “Let my heart go / Let your son grow” and reach reconciliation, asking again in “Mama, let my heart go / Or let this heart be still.”

⁴³ Metallica, “Mama Said,” *Load*. Recorded May 1995-February 1996, Sausalito, CD.

⁴⁴ See Pillsbury, *Damage Incorporated*, 160-62.

In the second stanza, the son describes how he is labeled in the lines “Rebel, my new last name / Wild blood in my veins” and emphasizes the influence his mother had on him: “Apron string around my neck / The mark that still remains.” Later, he reveals that leaving home at a young age has caused a negative response: “Left home at an early age / Of what I heard was wrong.” The protagonist does not regret his decision as it was his choice after all: “I never ask forgiveness / For what I said is done.” The chorus is exploring the relationship between the mother and the son in the lines “Never I ask of you / But never I gave” where the son seems to admit his mistake that has had a lasting effect on him, based on the following lines “But you gave me your emptiness / I now take to my grave.” As the son matures, he realizes that the imperfections of the relationship will remain with him to the end of his days. Therefore, the last stanza starts with him trying to cure it and to admit his faults: “Mama I’m coming home / I’m not all you wished of me.” He confesses that a mother’s love is essential in “A mother’s law for her son / Unspoken, help me be” and regrets what happened in the past in the lines “I took your love for granted / And all the things you said to me.” Now the son is able to realize what went wrong, but it is too late: “I need your arms to welcome me / But a cold stone’s all I see.” The mother died and therefore he will not be able to ask for her forgiveness.

In a way similar to what is presented in “Mama Said,” the majority of the lyrics from *Load* and *Reload* are inspired by personal experience or feelings rather than external factors. This “don’t care” approach is even the main theme of one of the *Load* songs, “Ain’t my Bitch.”⁴⁵ The lyrics contain the lines “Headstrong / What’s wrong?” where the narrator defends his behavior of expressing no engagement in the actions that are not directly influencing him, followed by the line “I’ve already heard this song before / You arrived, but now it’s time to kiss your ass good-bye” trying to finish the unpleasant conversation or meeting, although in an impolite way. The attempt continues in an abusive way, saying “Dragging me down, why you around? / So useless” and is ultimately finished by expressing the lack of interest in the lines “It ain’t my fall / It ain’t my call / It ain’t my bitch.” The lyrics are focused on the emotional struggle in particular and are by far more intimate than the lyrics from the previous albums, where significant attention was given to

⁴⁵ Metallica, “Ain’t my Bitch,” *Load*. Recorded May 1995-February 1996, Sausalito, CD.

the problems of the society or the criticism of establishment, referring to ... *And Justice for All* in particular.

2.6 St. Anger

The controversial change of Metallica image during the *Load/Reload* era sparked a surge of reactions; therefore the expectations before the album-to-come were large. However, the release of the new album *St. Anger* in 2003 had brought even more controversy. The atypical, neglected sound reflects the bands' state during the years prior to the album release, influenced by the departure of the bassist, Jason Newsted and James Hetfield's rehabilitation of alcohol dependence, as shown in the documentary film *Some Kind of Monster*.⁴⁶ Dome and Ewing note that James Hetfield introduced the album's opening song "Frantic" at a live show in Orlando in 2003, stating "This song's about life. Like right fucking now."⁴⁷ The song "Frantic"⁴⁸ can be seen as a retrospective expression of the author's feelings, which seem to be still unresolved.

The first stanza starts with the lines "If I could have my wasted days back / I'd use them to get back on track?" and expresses the doubts whether another chance to go through the "wasted days" would lead to different results. The moral schism is expressed in the following lines "Stop to warm at karmas burning / Or look ahead, but keep on turning?," describing the faltering behavior of the man that is trying to settle his past and move on.

This uncertainty is evident in the second stanza where the narrator keeps asking questions but he probably does not want to hear the answers. "Do I have the strength / To know how I'll go?" show again the expression of doubts, that is followed by the lines with a similar tone: "Can I find it inside / To deal with what I should have known?" The narrator is questioning his strength to face the upcoming struggle while understanding that the reasons that lead him into current situations could have been prevented, provided they had been addressed earlier. After the repetition of the opening lines from the first stanza, the line "You live it or lie it!" follows accompanied by the "My lifestyle determines my death style." The first line could be interpreted as an expressive way of saying that only the one who has gone through the same journey can understand the meaning, otherwise he lies,

⁴⁶ *Metallica: Some Kind Of Monster*, directed by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky (Paramount Pictures, 2004), DVD.

⁴⁷ See Dome and Ewing, *The Encyclopaedia Metallica*, 64.

⁴⁸ Metallica, "Frantic," *St. Anger*. Recorded May 2002-April 2003, Vertigo Records, 2003, CD.

whereas the following line can be seen as an acceptance of the inevitable destiny. The bridge before the chorus “Keep searching, keep on searching / This search goes on, this search goes on” might be referring to the search for strength, as described in the first two stanzas. The chorus “Frantic tick tick tick tick tick tick tock” is repeated twice and it emphasizes the meaning of the word “Frantic” by repeating the ticking sound of the clock that could be seen as a symbol of time that has been lost, as referred to the “wasted days” in the first line. The second part of the song is structured in the same manner as the first one: “I’ve worn out of always being afraid / An endless stream of fear that I’ve made.” While in the first part the author is expressing his insecurity and regret over the wasted time, the second part reveals the fear that has been apparently surrounding him for certain period of time to the point when he has become “worn out” – however, the author admits his fault because he has made that “stream of fear.” The stanza continues with the lines “Treading water full of worry / This frantic tick tick talk of hurry,” containing the idiom “treading water” with the modification “full of worry,” used as a description of inability to move from that particular situation.

Towards the end of the song, the additional lyrics are added to the previously used lines – “My lifestyle (birth is pain) / Determines my death style (life is pain)” and they are followed by “A rising tide (death is pain) / That pushes to the other side (it’s all the same).” This pessimistic perception of human life can represent the depressive thoughts of the author, referring to the life as a never-ending pain that even death cannot solve.

A similar theme is evident in the title song “St. Anger.”⁴⁹ The main idea of the song is the necessity of anger as something that keeps the narrator going. The anger is excessively vital and natural to him, but others presumably cannot understand it, as expressed in the first two stanzas: “St. Anger ‘round my neck / He never gets respect.” The narrator tries to explain his connection to “St. Anger” in the following stanza. Apparently, the anger can be identified as a trigger that “fires” the action – “Fuck it all and no regrets / I hit the lights on these dark sets” and that seems to be the description of the feeling when anger takes control over the narrator and he appreciates it, saying: “I need a voice to let myself / To let myself go free.” It seems that the anger is the only matter that enables the expression of the narrator’s true-self and he realizes this fact, therefore, he wants to wear the anger as a

⁴⁹ Metallica, “St. Anger,” *St. Anger*. Recorded May 2002-April 2003, Vertigo Records, 2003, CD.

pendant in order to be constantly independent: “Medallion noose, I hang myself / Saint Anger round my neck.”

After addressing the unknown person by repeating “I’m madly in anger with you” few times, the narrator starts to describe the anger in more detail, stating “And I want my anger to be healthy / And I want my anger just for me” – the “anger” is almost personified, referred to as if it were a real person that the narrator needs the most. Additionally, he expresses the desire to be commanded by the anger or even become “the anger”: “And I need my anger not to control / And I want my anger to be me.” In the final lines, the narrator explicitly states the wish of unleashing the anger: “And I need to set my anger free / Set it free.”

The songs “Frantic” and “St. Anger” are constructed around the motifs of fear and anger, two emotions that were present during the writing process of the album. However, while the *St. Anger* does not belong amongst the band’s most successful albums, it serves as an extraordinary insight into what can be described as the most difficult period of the band’s career, comparable only to the short period after Burton’s death in 1986. As Berlinger and Milner pointed out, the lyrics were written during the recording of the album in 2003 and not before (for the first time in the band’s history),⁵⁰ they are an honest representation of the feelings that the author had at the time.

2.7 Death Magnetic

Metallica released the album *Death Magnetic* in 2008, five years after its predecessor *St. Anger*. The album is seen as a return to the band’s roots after the period of musical experimenting that started with *Load* and *Reload*. The first analyzed song is the ballad “The Day That Never Comes.”⁵¹ Based on the respective music video, the song expresses the feelings of a soldier during a military operation, supposedly in the Middle East.⁵² The first lines starts with “Born to push you around / Better just stay down,” warning against enemy shooting, as expressed in the following lines: “You pull away / He hits the flesh / You hit the ground.” In the following lines, the narrator might be referring to the soldier’s

⁵⁰ See Joe Berlinger and Greg Milner, *Metallica: This Monster Lives* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014), 14.

⁵¹ Metallica, “The Day That Never Comes,” *Death Magnetic*. Recorded May 2007-September 2008, Vertigo Records, 2008, CD.

superior or addresses the propaganda overall, stating “Mouth so full of lies / Tend to black your eyes” and highlighting the need of resisting the pressure: “Just keep them closed / Keep praying / Just keep waiting.” The soldier tries to comfort himself by a prayer and thoughts about the day when it is all over, as the chorus suggests: “Waiting for the one / The day that never comes,” specified more in “When you stand up and feel the warmth / But the sun shine never comes / No, the sun shine never comes.” The protagonist is waiting for the day when he is able to “stand up and feel the warmth,” meaning that he would be no longer in the military service – but as suggested in “the sun shine never comes,” it is not going to happen any soon.

The second stanza starts in the similar manner to the first one. The soldier stays in a safe place, not willing to risk anything: “Push you cross that line / Just stay down this time,” and just trying to control his emotions, as expressed in following line: “Hide in yourself / Crawl in yourself / You’ll have your time.” The anger grows and the retribution is promised in the next lines “God I’ll make them pay / Take it back one day” and elaborated more metaphorically in the following lines “I’ll end this day / I’ll splatter color on this gray.” The protagonist is convinced that one day, he will be able to cover these unpleasant memories, referred as “gray” by something more positive – washing the gray with another color. After the repetition of chorus, the lyrics continue in a different pattern, starting with “Love... is a four letter word / And never spoken here” and followed by “Love... is a four letter word / Here in this prison.”

The protagonist expresses a possible condemn of the armed conflicts in general, noting that “love” in this environment is only a meaningless word and he labels his situation as being in “prison.” In the same manner as it was expressed previously in the song, the anger is taking over and promise is being made: “I suffer this no longer / I’ll put an end to this I swear / This I swear. The sun will shine,” and emphasized by repeating “This I swear” three times.

Even though the music video may suggest a different opinion, James Hetfield revealed that the song was not supposed to serve as a political statement, stating “The one thing that I wasn’t keen on here was Metallica plugging into a modern war or a current event that might be constructed as some sort of political statement on our part,” with Lars Ulrich

⁵² Metallica, “The day That Never Comes” (music video), directed by Thomas Vinterberg, posted July

adding that "It's a story about human beings who don't know each other, in a particularly tense situation."⁵³

The following analyzed song "Cyanide"⁵⁴ focuses on the theme of death. Written from the point of someone waiting for death, the song starts with the line "Sleep, and dream of this / Death angel's kiss," expressing the wish for an end of life and followed by "Brings final bliss / Completely." The protagonist understands his fate and now is ready to welcome death, approaching it as a living person in the bridge lines "Empty they say / Death, won't you let me stay?" and following "Empty they say / Death, hear me call your name / Call your name ...". The chorus follows the bridge, starting with the lines "... Suicide / I've already died" that exaggerate the state of the protagonist who considers himself dead and only needs to be buried: "You're just a funeral I've been waiting for." The second part of the chorus consists of the title word that is mentioned in the lines "Cyanide / Living dead inside" and the recurring expression of desire for death: "Break this empty shell forever more." The meaning of the chorus is not clear, however, the possible interpretation could be that the protagonist suffers from protracted disease that cannot be cured, therefore the only solution for him is death. In the second stanza, the awaited death draws nearer as it is expressed in the lines "Wait, wait patiently / you death black wings" and is expanded in the following lines "Unfolding sleep / Spreading over me." The death that the protagonist has wished for in the first stanza is now finally coming. After the bridge and the chorus are repeated, the tempo of the song changes as well as the lyrics structure. The following stanza starts with the protagonist asking the funeral visitor where he starts to show emotion: "Says is that rain or are they tears? / That has stained your concrete face for years." The listener can get the impression that there was a dispute between the protagonist and the visitor according to description of a "concrete face." This interpretation corresponds with the following lines that explore the idea: "The crying, weeping, shedding strike / Year after year, life after life." The protagonist has to endure the conflict for a longer period of time, and although it is probably used as a purposeful

12, 2016, accessed March 18, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6AJuRK2NE4>.

⁵³ Chris Harris, "Metallica Tackle Forgiveness, Resentment In 'The Day That Never Comes' Clip," MTV, August 1, 2008, accessed March 18, 2017 <http://www.mtv.com/news/1592036/metallica-tackle-forgiveness-resentment-in-the-day-that-never-comes-clip/>.

⁵⁴ Metallica, "Cyanide," *Death Magnetic*. Recorded May 2007-September 2008, Vertigo Records, 2008, CD.

exaggeration, the idea of reincarnation is introduced in the last part of the line “life after life.” The final stanza focuses on the conclusive moment, the funeral that the protagonist has been waiting for. In the lines “An air of freshly broken ground / A concrete angel lit right down,” the listener receives the description of the smell of the clay that is associated with burying. In the description of cremation, the protagonist again uses the adjective “concrete” and labels himself as an angel. The protagonist’s wish is finally fulfilled in the second part of the stanza when he finally finds peace: “Upon the grave which swallows fast / It’s peace at last, peace at last!” Despite the fact that the protagonist died and therefore has reached his goal, the circumstances surrounding his death suggest that the dispute with the funeral visitor was not resolved. This motif appeared in the previously analyzed text “Mama Said” from the *Load* album, where the death of the protagonist’s mother made the protagonist regret his actions. However, there is no evidence of regret in the “Cyanide” lyrics and the overall level of the text is of a lower quality in comparison to “Mama Said.” The language in “Cyanide” is plain and lacks the emotional coloring of the previous text.

2.8 Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct

The most recent Metallica album “*Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct*,” released on November 18, 2016 continues in the similar manner as in *Death Magnetic*. In an interview for the *So What!*, the magazine of the official Metallica fan club, James Hetfield commented on the lyrics that “Hardwired is so simple, it is not Shakespeare, I know that” and explained that the main theme of the song “Hardwired” is the dependency of society on modern technologies.⁵⁵

Looking at the “Hardwired”⁵⁶ lyrics, the author’s statement is perfectly accurate. The opening lines “In the name of desperation / In the name of wretched pain” describe the negative effects of the current technology addiction that can lead to a serious result, as expressed at the end of the stanza: “In the name of all creation / Gone insane.” The following chorus immediately summarizes the situation in a very plain manner: “We are so fucked / Shit outta luck / Hardwired to self-destruct.” The pessimistic tone remains in the second stanza “On the way to paranoia / On the crooked borderline,” where the author

⁵⁵ Steffan Chirazi, “Wired for Action,” Metallica.com, November 1, 2016, accessed April 4, 2017, <https://metallica.com/blog/so-what-article/435546/wired-for-action>.

⁵⁶ Metallica, “Hardwired,” *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct*. Recorded May 2015-August 2016, Blackened Recordings, 2016, digital download.

criticizes the role of existing technologies. The “crooked borderline” can be interpreted that the borderline between using the technology and being dependent has changed and therefore is crooked. The consequences of this trend are described in the following lines “On the way to great destroyer / Doom design” and after the repetition of the chorus, they are explored in the next stanza, where the image of apocalypse is presented: “Once upon a planet burning / Once upon a flame.” The following lines “Once upon a fear returning / All in vain” suggest that the society starts to realize the danger of the dependence on technology, but at this point it is too late to overturn the result. The society is questioned in the lines “Do you feel that hope is fading? / Do you comprehend” in a derisive way that is also evident in the following lines: “Do you feel it terminating? / In the end.” The similar motif can be found in the previously analyzed song “Ride the Lightning” from the eponymous album, where the lyrics address the danger of nuclear weapons. However, the lyrics of the “Ride the Lightning” are much more sophisticated and artistic than the stark phrases used in the text of “Hardwired” that would suit more to the early stage of band’s existence.

The theme of the technologies influencing the human race, introduced in “Hardwired” are further explored in the song “Spit Out The Bone.”⁵⁷ The lyrics, presented from the machine’s point of view, try to persuade the human to break away from the human life and become the machine, as presented in the music video released along with the song.⁵⁸

The first stanza starts with the lines “Come unto me and you will feel perfection / Come unto me and dedicate” that encourage the human to give up his life in order to attract him to become a machine. The process continues in the following lines “Come unto me, you’ll never feel rejection / Come unto me and terminate” and is later expanded in the lines “Remove your heart, it’s only good for bleeding / Bleeding through your fragile skin.” The weaknesses of the human body are highlighted before the idea of limiting the free thinking is introduced: “Remove your thought cause it’s only for deceiving / Deceiving thought destroy within.” The last line before the chorus reveals the intention of the machine, stating “Disappear like man was never here.” The chorus celebrates the upcoming leader of the

⁵⁷ Metallica, “Spit Out The Bone,” *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct*. Recorded May 2015-August 2016, Blackened Recordings, 2016, CD.

⁵⁸ Metallica, “Spit Out The Bone” (music video), directed by Phil Mucci, posted November 17, 2016, accessed April 5, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m46Z0-HXySo>.

world in the lines “Long live machine / The future supreme” as the mankind was removed from the position of the world’s leading power: “Man overthrown / Spit out the bone.”

The second stanza expresses that the man can be connected to the machine in the same way as the electric device to electricity in the lines “Plug into me I guarantee devotion/ Plug into me and dedicate” and “Plug into me and I’ll save you from emotion / Plug into me and terminate.” The emotions are perceived as unnecessary features in the similar nature to the thoughts as expressed in the first stanza. The elimination of these features is considered to be beneficial as explored in the lines “Accelerate, utopian solutions / Finally cure the earth of man.” The annihilation of the human race is celebrated as the tool of the artificially created plan of evolution in order to establish the new world order, as expressed in the lines “Exterminate, speeding up the evolution / Set on a course a master plan / Reinvent the earth inhabitant.” After the repetition of the chorus, the third stanza starts with the description of the society: “The flesh betrays the flesh / Your man has had his time.” The machine criticizes the conditions within the human race, labeled as “the flesh” and decides to intervene: “We lay him down to rest / Machined the new divine.” The concept of a new form of life stripped of all the human traits is introduced and the machine reaches its goal.

The rest of the stanza focuses on the traits that humans are abandoned due to the dedication to the machine in the lines “Stop breathing / And dedicate to me” followed by “Stop dreaming / And terminate for me” and it describes the self sacrifice in the lines “All meaning / You dedicate to me” and “All feelings / You terminate for me.” The motif of the “Spit Out The Bone” lyrics can be compared to the popular science fiction movie *The Matrix* (1999) that depicts a world where the intelligent machines took power over the human race and used the human population as the source of energy.

Despite the ostensible return to the themes that were successful at the beginning of their career, the lyrics of *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct* are very similar to *Death Magnetic*. The lyrics may be inspired by the problems of the society, but the expression of them does not stand out from the trend set up by the previous album. The form of the lyrics remain still very simple, but at least the content is trying to point out at some of the issues that the humanity is struggling with.

3 SUMMARY OF KEY MOTIFS AND THEMES

The first five albums, released from 1983 to 1991 are very diverse in terms of lyrics. Apart from the debut album *Kill 'Em All* where the lyrics offer only little more than the celebration of the metal music itself as shown in the lyrics analysis, the band covers various themes. The motif of faith first appears in the debut album in the song “The Four Horsemen,” but also features in the *Ride the Lightning* (1984) song “Creeping Death” However, the motif of faith appears in a different context in the lyrics of “Dyers Eve” from ...*And Justice For All* (1988) album. The significant change of approach in the process of lyric writing that is apparent on the *Load* and *Reload* albums already started in 1988 and the shift towards the self-expression is represented also in the following album *Metallica* (1991), specifically in the song “The Unforgiven,” that addresses the issue between James Hetfield and his parents. This motif appears also in the lyrics of “Mama Said” from *Load*, therefore it can be seen as a notional sequel to “The Unforgiven.”

The awareness of the public issues is an inseparable feature of the Metallica band’s lyrics between 1983 and 1991, as shown in the analysis of the songs “Master of Puppets” that pays attention to the drug use and “... And Justice For All,” focusing on an increasing threat to justice. The threat of a nuclear war and its effects presented in “Fight Fire with Fire” brings the “anti-war” theme into consideration, especially with the addition of “For Whom the Bell Tolls” and “Disposable Heroes,” together with the song “One” from ... *And Justice for All* album.

The lyrics of the *Load/Reload* albums, released in the second half of the 1990s, no longer cover social issues and public affairs, but focus on more abstract and personal themes, making the lyrics more difficult to understand. The *St. Anger* (2003) lyrics are based on the motifs of fear and anger that reflect a difficult period in the band’s history. The inspiration behind the lyrics is explained in *Some Kind of Monster* movie so the listener is practically deprived of the possibility to interpret the lyrics himself/herself.

The albums *Death Magnetic* (2008) and *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct* (2016) display another shift in the lyrics and to a certain extent the music as well. If the exploration of different music genres started during the *Load/Reload* albums and the experimentation with the band’s sound on *St. Anger* has brought more personal and intimate lyrics, the return to “classic” sound of Metallica also influenced the lyrics. The two most recent albums do not offer plenty to think about and especially *Death Magnetic* lyrics seem to completely lack both the public affairs and personal experience that used to be a favorite

source of lyrics inspiration in 1980s and 1990s. The album *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct* signals the return to these traditional sources, as displayed in the analyzed songs “Hardwired” and “Spit Out The Bone” Although the band returned to the description of the problems of society, it can be hardly seen as a successful comeback. Where the lyrics of the song “... And Justice for All” speak about “Halls of justice painted green” and “Power wolves beset your door,” the lyrics of “Hardwired” offer “We are so fucked / Shit outta luck.” The sophisticated phrases and thoroughly constructed texts no longer seem to have a place in the modern Metallica lyrics, even though their themes are similar to the old albums.

CONCLUSION

During the thirty six years that separate the debut album *Kill 'Em All* and the most recent recording *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct*, the world of music has undergone a rapid change. And understandably, so has Metallica. The first five albums recorded eight years apart, between 1983 and 1991, present the band in a vastly different way than the five remaining albums that were recorded in the following 25 years.

The era from *Kill 'Em All* to *The Black Album* can be seen as the time when the band dedicated everything to their music and desperately tried to prove everyone about their qualities. The lyrics have quickly developed from the plain themes of *Kill 'Em All* and started to display the band as talented music producers with plenty to offer not only in the terms of music, but the lyrics as well. The lyrics have covered wide range of topics, such as the Biblical prophecies, the concerns about the fate of mankind, criticism of the war or injustice and corruption of the judiciary system.

The image of the band after the release of *... And Justice For All* was very different to the image that Metallica had acquired since the release of *The Black Album*. Prior to it, Metallica was a leading representative of the thrash metal, a band with a well constructed and technically sophisticated music with thoughtful, almost anti-establishment lyrics. After the success of *The Black Album*, their image has completely changed. It is understandable that the anti-establishment tone from *...And Justice For All* probably would not allow that.

The different mood that is represented in the *Load* and *Reload* music and the lyrics suggests that the band wanted to discover something new and find out whether they could make a progress. After the successful experiment on *The Black Album*, the band never really returned to the pre-1991 lyrics. The band has become so successful that they practically could afford to do whatever they have wanted, something that is probably the ultimate goal of every artist.

However, the era from *St. Anger* to *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct* can be perceived in a different way. After years dedicated to the thrash metal in 1980s and the experimenting after the breakthrough into the mainstream during 1990s, Metallica still remains a global power in terms of music. Their popularity means that whatever the band releases, the fans will buy it. The driving force behind the band's recent production is the satisfaction of the fans and as the lyrics of the two latest albums suggest, the band is long past its prime.

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