Drinking to death: traditional masculinity, alcohol and shame in Finnish metal lyrics

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ABSTRACT

AIM – This article analyzes the use of alcohol in Finnish metal music lyrics from the perspective of cultural studies. It explores how alcohol is represented in the lyrics and focuses on the theme of shame and self-destructive drinking. MATERIAL – Songs by Timo Rautiainen ja Trio Niskalaukaus (n=28), Kotiteollisuus (n=101) and Viikate (n=155) are analysed. Most attention is given to Elegia (2002, Elegy), a song by Timo Rautiainen ja Trio Niskalaukaus. METHOD – Analysis of the lyrics involves narratology, semiotics and cultural theory. RESULTS – Shame is the common factor in the lyrics and also the root of problem drinking. Alcohol is used as a way to overcome the feelings of shame. In Elegia the son’s death caused by drinking brings shame over his mother. The song portrays a traditional Finnish tale of male misfortune. Such tragedies filled with shame are cultural narratives in Finnish culture. They portray alcohol and shame as the root of male problems. CONCLUSIONS – These tragedies leave little hope for the male main characters; recovery is not an option. Understanding such cultural narratives can broaden knowledge of alcohol and drug abuse.

KEY WORDS – popular culture, music, Finland, masculinity, shame, violence, alcohol.

Introduction

Rock music has been widely associated with excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs. Metal music especially has been seen as the most extreme form of rock n’ roll excess and machismo (Walser 1993). Even the concept “heavy metal” has been taken from Nova Express by William S. Burroughs (1964/1992), who used the term in reference to addictive drugs. Metal music, born with Black Sabbath and Deep Purple in the last years of the 1960s, has for years been considered the hardest sounding bastardized version of rock music. Metal fans are famous for their taste for beer and alcohol in general and many bands keep up the image of excessive habits. For example, the Finnish band Children of Bodom, considered one of the most technical bands in melodic death metal have become notorious for their drinking (see e.g. Children of Bodom 2004).

Metal bands have often used themes that have been too controversial for other popular music genres, for example depres—

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sion, suicide and violence. Themes dealt with by metal bands include ecological catastrophe, the dangers of substance abuse, corruption in government, critique of corporate business, televangelism and the corruption of organised religion (Epstein & Pratto 1990, 74; Harrell 1994, 96–97). The research on metal music has often concentrated solely on classic heavy metal and its pop metal variations of the 1980s – namely on the heavy metal stereotype of metal music (e.g. Walser 1993; Weinstein 1991). Recent studies on extreme metal, for example, have shown a more diversified image of metal music (Kahn-Harris 2007).

Rock music is often said to glorify the use of alcohol although there is a long tradition in rock and metal music to acknowledge the problems of excessive alcohol and drug use. However, research on such issues is almost non-existent. In cultural studies, much attention has been paid to the study of media, literature and films, but relatively little to popular music. In the field of alcohol and drug research, popular music is an even more understudied area. We need more studies on popular music since it has a role in people’s everyday lives. Music carries meanings related to the use of alcohol and drugs. Earlier studies have shown, for example, that addicts use cultural images evoked by rock music (Duterte et al. 2003).

Most of the recent research on popular music and alcohol and drugs has concentrated on rave and techno clubs, and especially on the use of MDMA (e.g. Hunt et al. 2010; Redhead et al. 1997; Salasuo 2004; Thornton 1996). Some studies have addressed the question of musical preferences and substance abuse (Chen et al. 2006; Lewis 1980; Mulder et al. 2009). Studies on lyrics have been marginal, but there are some articles on alcohol and drugs in rock and rap lyrics as well as straight-edge punk lyrics opposing drugs, alcohol and promiscuous sexual activity (Herd 2005; Markert 2001; Wood 1999).

This article will concentrate on the role of alcohol in Finnish metal music. The article will analyse songs by Timo Rautiainen ja Trio Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate from the perspective of cultural studies. These bands are part of a sub-genre of Finnish metal music that became popular in Finland in the early 2000s. Kotiteollisuus and Viikate are still active and among the most popular bands in Finland.

The article will concentrate especially on the theme of shame and drinking that is important in the lyrics. The relevance of shame has also been noted in studies on Finnish men: humiliated men want to desperately escape the shame, sometimes even through self-destructive acts (Siltala 1994).

The article starts with a section describing the method and data. After this, the role of alcohol in Finnish metal music is introduced. The purpose of this section is to give a short introduction to a theme that is perhaps not familiar to all the readers in the field of alcohol and drug research. The analysis starts with the thematic analysis of shame, which pervades the lyrics. The next analytical section concentrates on the in-depth analysis of the Elegia (2002, Elegy) by Timo Rautiainen and Trio Niskalaukaus. The song portrays the shame related to alcoholism and the destructive effect of alcoholism on other people. The last analysis section puts the lyrics by Finnish metal bands into the context of Finnish culture.
Research on rock lyrics, data and methods

The cultural research on rock music has underlined that music is a potent socio-cultural force on people. The music is always produced in a certain time and place. According to Lawrence Grossberg (1986, 190–191) rock music should be analysed in relation to the social and textual contexts within which it has been produced and performed. Contexts of music might refer, for example, to historical situations involving complex political, social, cultural power relations. Contexts themselves are in process (Grossberg 1989, 15–17). The same rock text, for example, may exist in a number of different contexts, each one carrying its specific relations and effects (Grossberg 1992a, 45; 1992b, 54–55).

The ideas put forward by Lawrence Grossberg underline the fact that the cultural research on music is multidisciplinary. This involves the analysis of lyrics, too. For example, rock lyrics are not only poems, because the music gives meaning and a frame for the interpretation to the lyrics (Frith 1996). The lyrics themselves can become a context. Rock lyrics might refer intertextually to other songs and other cultural artefacts of completely different media. Pure textual analysis of rock lyrics without any understanding of music, style and the image of the band might lead to serious misapprehensions (Oksanen 2003, 15).

Finding one single interpretation for rock lyrics is often an unfruitful pursuit. Researchers should rather pay attention to the different connections that the lyrics make. It is not enough to study the occurrence of alcohol or drugs in the rock lyrics. It is more important to understand how the varying meanings related to alcohol and drugs in the lyrics are formed. The effects of marijuana, for example, have been described differently by various subcultural groups (Shapiro 2003, 52–53). Some authors have described the problems of studying lyrics, because drugs per se are not always referred to in texts despite their high value in the sub-culture, for example there is a lack of lyrics on LSD at the peak of its popularity in the 1960s (Markert 2001, 207–208; see also Baumeister 1984, 344).

In this article, the methodological tools are borrowed from narratology and semiotics. Rock lyrics can often, but not always, be considered as narratives with a beginning, middle and an end. Narratological methods help to understand the focalisation and subject positions involved in the lyrics (Bal 2009; Rimmon-Kenan 2002). Semiotics underlines the rock lyrics as meaning-making systems that are in process; in other words, the signifying process remains open (see Eco 1979; 1984). Furthermore, it should be stressed that the lyrics themselves in music involve their own musicality and sometimes the music needs the lyrics to make itself meaningful (Brady & Torode 2000). Here the aim is not to go into musicological analysis, but it is important to understand that lyrics have their context in the music.

This article will analyse songs by Timo Rautiainen ja Trio Niskalaukauks (n=28), Kotiteollisuus (n=101) and Viikate (n=155). These three bands are chosen because they form a peculiar subgenre of Finnish metal music. These bands started their recording careers in 1997–1998 and achieved considerable success during the 2000s. Timo Rautiainen and Trio Niskalaukauks (later shortened to Niskalaukauks) cut its
last record in 2004. Kotiteollisuus and Viikate have remained active. All these three bands combined the gloominess of metal music with the more traditional tone of Finnish rock music and used the images of traditional and nostalgic masculinity involving rural images and men unable to cope with modern urban realities.

All three bands have lyrics that are grounded on social criticism. This involves, for example, social welfare issues raised by the economic recession of the early 1990s. The bands gave a voice to the men who lost their jobs and ended up in desperate situations. Partly for these reasons Timo Rautiainen, for example, was given a cultural award by the Finnish Broadcasting Company in 2002 (Vuoden valopilkku). The problems of traditional masculinity, such as domestic violence, alcoholism and suicides, are well documented in the lyrics. Especially pervasive is the theme of shame, which will be analysed throughout this article. Records by Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate can still be considered important cultural representations of social problems related to masculinity.

_Elegia_ (2002, Elegy) a song by Niskalaukaus is taken as an example case for analysis. _Elegia_ portrays a naturalistic scenario in rural Finland: a son dies after months of drinking. When _Elegia_ came out (in the Rajaportti album) Niskalaukaus were at the peak of their career and one of the most popular bands in Finland. The Rajaportti album sold platinum in Finland and received 4 national prizes in popular music (Emma-palkinto). _Elegia_, the second single of the Rajaportti album, reached second place in the Finnish singles charts.

_Elegia_ was chosen as the main focus of this article for various reasons. First of all, the song provides a unique example of self-destructive drinking. Secondly, the song was popular as a single and a crucial part of the award-winning album by Niskalaukaus. The third reason is a practical one: translating Finnish rock lyrics is a difficult task. The translation of _Elegia_ was done by a professional translator. Fourth, although the analysis concentrates on _Elegia_, it makes intertextual references to various other songs. The article also includes an introduction to the theme of alcohol in Finnish metal. This serves as a context of the lyrics of Niskalaukaus, Viikate and Kotiteollisuus.

**Finnish metal lyrics and alcohol – a short introduction**

Metal music is immensely popular in Finland, which is one of the few countries in the world where metal music is considered mainstream popular music. Based on a nationally representative study on consumer styles, liking metal music is not only popular in Finland, but also relates to the higher income bracket, even when other variables such as gender are controlled for (Purhonen et al. 2009). The popularity of Finnish metal music came after the international success of various metal bands in the 1990s (Oksanen 2003). Finnish metal bands, such as Stratovarius, Waltari, Amorphis, Sentenced, Impaled Nazarene and Apocalyptica gained international success in the mid 1990s. Later acts such as Nightwish, HIM and Children of Bodom reached international fame. The Finnish metal scene has produced dozens of less well-known groups that regularly perform around Europe.

Traditional heavy metal was internation-
ally saturated with the idea of sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll (e.g. Walser 1993). Early Finnish hard rock/heavy metal followed this 1970s and 1980s trend. In Finland, for example, Peer Günt was singing about drinking and reckless partying during the 1980s. They use the typical themes of rock lyrics (women, sex, drugs, alcohol and partying) and write their songs from the masculine perspective. Peer Günt’s classic song Bartender (1987) summarises some aspects of the excess attitude. The “I” of the song has lost his girlfriend because of excessive drinking. The solution to the problem is “messing around” and drinking:

She said she had enough of my drinking
But that ain’t nothing new (…)

Gonna mess around

Bartender I had too many
Bartender gimme one more
Bartender I lost my baby
Don’t ask me what I’m drinking for

(Peer Günt: Bartender [1987])

At the beginning of the 1990s metal music changed. New sub-genres were formed and some of them took a critical stance towards the traditional heavy metal and hard rock bands. The relationship of the 1990s and 2000s metal music to alcohol is a complex issue: some people might promote the old clichés of sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll, but some are critical towards them (Kahn-Harris 2007, 43). The content of the lyrics changed as well. Especially during the 1990s metal bands were involved in portraying human misery in all its forms, and the references to alcohol and drugs were not used as much as before. This was the period when darker genres of metal music (e.g. black, death and gothic metal) dominated the scene. (Oksanen 2008, 133–134)

One of the few 1990s classic Finnish metal songs written about alcohol is Nepenthe by Sentenced from Oulu in northern Finland. Sentenced was one of the most important Finnish metal bands of the 1990s and early 2000s. The lyrics of Sentenced share some similarities with Finnish singing bands such as Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate. All these bands concentrated on describing depression and suicide. In Nepenthe Sentenced portrays a suicidal and depressed masculinity involving drinking to forget the miseries of life. Sentenced has called Nepenthe their ode to alcohol. During their live performances the band usually asked the audience whether they had enough alcohol to drink (see e.g. Sentenced 2006).

Think about all the good in your life
– it’s only temporary
think about all the positive sides in life
– they never last forever

so drink to forget
and drown all your sorrow
bury your dreams
choose mind refinery

(Sentenced: Nepenthe [1995], lyrics by Sami Lopakka)

Nepenthe describes the cosmic loneliness of drinking with the feeling of impending death. In this sense, the song can be compared with the portrayals of drinking
in older Finnish films analysed by Pasi Falk and Pekka Sulkunen (1983). Films portray the cosmic loneliness of drunken males and relate drunkenness to death and dying. A drunken male is always alone – even when he is with other people. Nepenthe, like so many of the lyrics of Sentenced, usually describes anguished life falling apart. Most of their hits are about suicide (Noose [1996], Bleed [1996], Suicider [1998]). Noose includes the scenario of depressive drinking: "I’ll drink the booze to depress myself / then I take the rope and express myself." Nepenthe also represents a melancholic version of drunkenness. Alcohol is a way to escape the sorrows of the world. It is a lonely way of purifying the mind. There is only drinking left in the world.

Since the 1990s, few new things have emerged in metal music. One of the recent trends is Finnish folk and pagan metal that has gained popularity in central Europe. Folk and pagan metal acts use the images of carnevalism that celebrates drinking. The folk metal group Korpiklaani, for example, has song titles such as "Beer Beer" (2005), "Vodka" (2009), "Let’s Drink” (2006) and "Happy Little Boozer” (2006). However, the merry drinking songs of Korpiklaani have not gained as much success in Finland as in the central Europe. Compared with Sentenced and Finnish singing metal bands, folk metal bands portray alcohol and drinking in a totally positive way.

Shame and masculinity in Finnish metal – in Finnish

The first metal bands to use Finnish language were Mana Mana and Lyijykomppania (including Timo Rautiainen as a member). Both bands started in the 1980s and in some of their lyrics portrayed destructive drinking. Lyijykomppania had a harsh visual image with members wearing black suits and committed to rituals of masculinity involving guns, hunting and drinking alcohol (Isoaho & Riekki 2003, 37). Mana Mana portrayed a desperate masculinity in their lyrics. Lyrics involved marginal male figures, ex-convicts and alcoholics. The band sings about death, suicide and loss of sanity. Mana Mana describes life as vale of tears in which the last coins are spent on cheap wine. The dark sounding band was active for only a short period of time. The singer-songwriter of the band Jouni Mommö committed suicide at the age of 35 in 1991.

What is already prevalent in the lyrics, especially of Mana Mana, is the concept of shame. Shame is the uniting factor in the lyrics of Niskalaukaus, Viikate and Kotiteollisuus. Shame is perhaps the most terrible of all emotions, but it is also a culturally constructed concept. According to psychoanalytic thinkers Pentti Ikonen and Eero Reckhardt (1994, 139) shame easily causes a subject to think that even death is preferable to shame. Later life miseries are often rooted in the earlier experiences of humiliation and shame, which became unbearable for the men (Siltala 1994, 96). Shame, depression and drinking are closely related. Drinking and death both offer an escape from a situation that is too demanding and shameful (Oksanen 2003, 66).

Many of the songs by Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate describe desperate males with a bitter sense of irony. A song by Niskalaukaus called Rekkamies (1999, [Truck driver]) describes a lonely man who would rather lie at the bottom of the
sea. The routes of his life have one by one ended and he wants to go back home: “It would be nice to go home after 13 years/and to see the children and my wife’s new husband.”1 The male failure is imbued with shame and a general feeling of having no options in life. In the Viikate songs losing the house, property and job causes unbearable shame. The irony of existence is expressed via the variety ways of committing suicide (e.g. by gun, knife, rope, drowning). In Alakulotettuja tunnelmia (2000a, [Depressive Feelings]) the man makes himself poison from toadstools to put an end to the miseries and humiliations of his life.

Most often the songs are written from the perspective of a man who is ashamed of his life. There are some exceptions. Kuoleen miehen kupletti [A Dead Man’s Song] by Viikate (2004) narrates a downward spiral that is written from the narrative perspective of the six-year-old son whose father keeps asking him whether he already drinks spirits. The mother leaves the family and the end of the song describes the son finding his father lying dead on the kitchen table after a drinking bout. A doctor comes to the house to pronounce his father dead. There is a paucity of words, but the song still manages to present vividly how the father destroys himself with alcohol and causes shame and misery to his son.

Timo Rautiainen has said that many of the songs by Niskalaukaus are based on real-life stories from rural eastern Finland, for example the songs Elegia, Rajaton Rakkaus (2000, [Endless Love]) and Nyt on mies! [Man now!] (Nuutinen 2002, 84). The context of these songs, eastern Finland, has high overall consumption of alcohol (Karlsson & Österberg 2010), high levels of alcohol mortality (Mäkelä et al. 2001; Vanhatalo et al. 2010) and suicides (Partonen et al. 2003). It is perhaps no surprise that all these metal bands singing in Finnish (Mana Mana, Lyijykomppania, Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate) come from eastern Finland. These songs are not born in the Finnish conurbations, like Helsinki, Tampere or Turku. They rather portray masculinity that is rural and traditional.

One of the tragic songs portraying rural Eastern Finland, Rajaton rakkaus by Niskalaukaus describes a negative aspect of Finnish “sisu”, guts; in this context stubbornness. A man kills himself after not succeeding in getting himself a wife from the south (meaning either southern Finland or Estonia). Even committing suicide proves difficult, because the noose is too thick and ceiling is too low. In the song Nyt on mies! the man has “drunk half a bottle” and in his mind he goes through all the failures in his life. This song, like many others by Niskalaukaus, Viikate and Kotiteollisuus describes masculinity in terms of shame: “A man can take the pain, but not the shame” (Niskalaukaus 2001, Nyt on mies!, lyrics by Timo Rautiainen).2

Elegia and the elements of dying
Elegia describes the end of self-destructive drinking in a rural setting. The name of the song translates into an elegy that refers to the lament for the dead. Like many songs by Niskalaukaus, Viikate and Kotiteollisuus the tone of the song is melancholic and mournful. The steady beat of this 5-minute long melodic song enforces the sad lyrics. Elegia follows narrative form and, like many of the songs by Niskalaukaus, it does
not include a refrain. The story is narrated in the third person, but uses internal focalization (see Rimmon-Kenan 2002, 74–75). In other words, the lyric is written from the point of view of the mother, especially after the fifth line. The story begins by describing the weeping son in the agony of severe alcohol intoxication after months of drinking (lines 1–4). The middle part (lines 5–18) narrates the process of dying. There is an instrumental section almost one minute long in the middle of the song (after line 12). This stresses the tragic content of the words. The end of the story (lines 19–28) represents the announcement of the son’s death by the mother.

The middle part of Elegia, which is the longest part of the song, underlines the

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<tr>
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<th>Finnish Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joi poika senkin kuukauden</td>
<td>He drank all that month as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ja aikaan kauniin aamunkoiton</td>
<td>And as the day broke, beautiful,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hän kouristeli itkien</td>
<td>He twitched and wept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nyt viina veisi voiton</td>
<td>Now the drink would beat him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Niin äiti saapui huoneeseen</td>
<td>His mother came into the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Valituksen kuullessaan</td>
<td>Hearing his cries and moans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hän valti katsoi juoneeseen</td>
<td>She stood there, silent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kalmankalpeaan</td>
<td>Watching him, pale as death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Veti verhot ikkunaan</td>
<td>She drew the curtains to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ja otti tuolin alle</td>
<td>And took a chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kun poika yski</td>
<td>While he was coughing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Verta lattialle</td>
<td>Blood onto the floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mitään sanottavaa ollut ei</td>
<td>There was nothing to say</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Käsi tarttunut ei toiseen</td>
<td>No hand sought another hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Äidin katse ulos vei</td>
<td>The mother turned her gaze</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Aamuaurinkoiseen</td>
<td>Out to the morning sun</td>
</tr>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Niin kului tunti, toinenkin</td>
<td>An hour went by, and another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ja hiljeni sen pojan peti</td>
<td>And the son’s bed grew quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ja äiti ylen haalarin</td>
<td>And she pulled on her overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ja saappaat jalkaan veti</td>
<td>And a pair of rubber boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yli pellon pahaisen</td>
<td>Across a meagre field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Laahusti naapuritaloon</td>
<td>She trudged to the neighbours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Astui varoen</td>
<td>Stepping carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Vähäiseen valoon</td>
<td>Into the faint light</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ei kiire vaivannut kysyjää</td>
<td>She took her time about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Vain yhdestä oli huoli</td>
<td>She only had one thing to ask</td>
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long process of dying. In this sense, *Elegia* describes a pre-modern, rural death that implies an understanding of the moment of death (see Ariès 1977). The mother and the son are together in the same room, but there is nothing more to say or do. Hours pass while the son coughs blood on the floor. There is a contrast with the beautiful sunny morning and the wait for the final moment of death. The mother does not try to soothe the dying son and she does not leave to call for help, but waits for her son to die first. This does not necessarily mean lack of affection, but perhaps rather willingness to let go. This is underlined by the use of the metaphor of light. The mother watches the sun despite the fact that she has closed the curtains.

The passivity of the mother is the narrative focal point of the song. Narratives involve the question of possible worlds; in other words the narratives raise the question: what else could have happened? (Eco 1979, 113–117). One starts to ask why the mother does not help and why she does not soothe her son. By choosing this path of narration *Elegia* manages to raise questions about the drastic nature of alcoholism. It is a striking portrayal of the difficulty of alcoholism for the bystanders. Perhaps the mother is too ashamed to call for help? Closed curtains refer to shame.

The description of lack of light at the time of announcing the death to the neighbour might also be understood in terms of the mother being ashamed of her son. Shame makes people want to hide. The mother, too, wants to hide from the world, because of her son. The loneliness and mourning of the mother are underlined at the end of the song when she walks through the desolate landscape to the neighbour’s house. At this moment there is only faint light left. Darkness has taken over although it should be daytime. This underlines not only shame but also sorrow.

The uses of words enforce the shame related interpretation of *Elegia*. The song uses the Finnish word "poika”, which can be translated both as "son” and “boy”. The word “poika” can also refer to an older man. In the rural context the words "aikamiespoika” and "peräkamarinpoika” have a negative connotation and refer to an adult son who has not moved out or got married. Niskalaukaus and Viikate often describe the shame and misery of such men. The bands sometimes use the word "poika” with a connotation of shame. "Poika” meaning that the boy is not really a man. Masculinity is often defined by such bipolar oppositions: the man is not a boy, and the man is not a woman (Easthope 1990; Kimmel 2007). "Poika” is a contradictory term in this sense. It underlines the fact that the man has not really gained his independence despite his adult age.

*Elegia* is a drastic song about alcoholism. The song is situated in rural eastern Finland with high consumption of alcohol, alcohol mortality and suicides. *Elegia* underlines how understanding of shame might help us to understand not only alcohol abuse but also its destructive effect on
relatives. *Elegia* demonstrates how drinking is closely connected with the shame. Shame refers not only to the son, but also to the mother who is possibly ashamed of her son dying of drinking.

**Masculinity in crisis as cultural narrative in Finland**

*Elegia* portrays a rural and traditional tale of male misfortune. Such male miseries could be called cultural narratives in Finnish culture. A cultural narrative refers to the narratives whose author is not an individual, but rather a larger collective entity, a whole society or specific subgroup of society. In the USA such a narrative would be, for example, a story of individual triumph after the difficulties of life due to hard work and intelligence. (Phelan 2005, 8). In the Finnish context narratives of male misery have been dominant since the Kullervo character of *Kalevala* who destroyed himself in his desire for revenge after humiliation and shame. Finnish literature in general is full of figures that are tragic to the point of becoming humorous. Finnish popular music stars are often also portrayed in a similar vein (Aho 2002, 160–173).

According to Satu Apo (1999, 131), in Finnish folklore alcohol has been considered as being something that is stronger than the man; alcohol becomes almost an entity of its own and it can afflict a man like a demon or disease. The Finnish relationship to alcohol has been above all fatalistic. Similarly the men of the 1980s *Urban pub* study described the externalization of self-control by these men. Men saw alcohol as a world of freedom. Someone else put limits to their drinking. (Sulkunen et al. 1997). Males are not only driven by alcohol, but it offers them a minimum of identity; men can talk about alcohol even if they have nothing else in common. (Soikkeli 2006, 231)

Although traditional Finnish masculinity may be neither dominant nor desired by younger cohorts, it is still recognisable culturally. The traditional and even sometimes nostalgic masculinity still holds a position in Finnish culture. This has been one aspect of the image of the Viikate band. They have purposely used nostalgic images of rural Finland. Finnish Television has also used nostalgic images from past decades to portray an idyllic, but already lost past (Ruohonen 1995). Nostalgia combines the desire for the past (nostos) with pain (algos) (Kukkonen 1996, 7, 17). However, bands like Viikate and Niskalaukaus portray a much gloomier version of nostalgia that is not really idyllic, but rather corrupt. They describe a rural setting where men are ashamed of themselves and the world they are living in.

In the lyrics of Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate, masculinity and life are portrayed as a painful road, a *via dolorosa*. Males are portrayed as tough but weak in their inability to find any options to their destructive life trajectories. Kotiteollisuus (2000, *Granitti* [Granite]) sings about everlasting granite as a reference to a man: "Granite – never breaks / Granite (You don’t have to be ashamed of this son)/Granite – Never cries/". Niskalaukaus portrays a man who carries his own cross to the bitter end – like Christ – and does not want the help from others (*Nyt on mies!*). Loneliness and individualism are the crucial parts of this male destruction represented in the metal lyrics. The lyrics also underline masculine armouring.
defensiveness of the ego that has been described in international studies on masculinity (Easthope 1990; Theweleit 2000).

Drinking is part of the via dolorosa. It serves as the way to forget the miseries of life (cf. Sentenced, Nepenthe). Furthermore, suicidal drinking could be considered the extreme version of self-control (Siltala 1994, 140, 178, 180). Alcoholism serves often as such a double-bind situation: it serves as a way of relaxing from everyday life, but drunkenness often serves to cause more damage and stress for the subject (Koski-Jännies 1992). Similarly Niskalaukaus, Viikate and Kotiteollisuus describe the inability of men to cope with the shame and miseries of life. Things in life have gone so far that there is no turning back: "When you sense soil in your mouth/There is no more bitterness left (Viikate 2000b, Taisto-vainaan valssi [The Waltz of a Dead Man])."

Representations of male tragedies are, however, so prominent in metal music and other products of Finnish culture that one might start to ask whether they have an affect on coping with alcohol problems. American culture, for example, underlines the theme of survival from addictions in current popular culture (Oksanen 2012). Survival narratives are in many ways more healthy resources for people to use. Although Finnish tragedies warn about the misery of alcoholism, these culturally dominant narratives are almost fatalistic. They are closed narratives; in other words narratives that leave rather limited space for future prospects (Eco 1979, 119–121). Such narrative closure makes alcoholism a demonic trap with no escape.

Discussion
The purpose of this article was to study shame and alcohol in Finnish metal lyrics. The lyrics used in the analysis were by Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate and focused on the Elegia song by Niskalaukaus. The lyrics portray masculine tragedies where alcohol abuse often plays a leading role. In these songs the male tragedy is related to social problems, shame and lack of options in life in general. In Finnish metal music the question of shame is the root of male problems – and especially the root of problem drinking. Drinking offers an easy escape from the miseries of life – to the point where the drink takes the leading role. The men seem to solve their problems by excessive drinking in order to avoid the feeling of shame. This creates a vicious downward spiral. The end of such a spiral is portrayed in Elegia’s narration of drinking to death. The song underlines, how the shame affects not only the men but also their relatives. Shame becomes a social emotion.

The theme of masculinity in crisis portrayed by the metal lyrics is also represented in the popular cultural products of other media, for example in media images, books and films (e.g. Aho 2002; Siltala 1994). This article underlined that such masculinity could be seen as a cultural narrative in Finland. This means that tragedy dominates as a narrative form when telling about alcohol abuse. Alcoholism in these tragedies becomes a closed narrative whose main character is doomed to fail. A closed narrative leaves little hope for recovery. This has serious implications for prevention and treatment practices. Although studies on popular culture do not typically operate on this level, they may
offers tools of cultural understanding for practical work on alcohol related problems.

This study was limited to the analysis of rock lyrics and it does not answer the question about the reception of music. Despite this, it should be underlined that Finnish metal in Finnish has played a relevant role in the discussions of Finnish masculinity (see e.g. Oksanen 2003). The bands studied here, Niskalaukaus, Kotiteollisuus and Viikate are still among the most important rock groups in Finland and they have a wide audience among young and old. Future studies should continue the analysis of cultural products in the field of alcohol and drug research. Through cultural products people get an impression of what, for example, “being high” means although they may never have tried drugs (Boothroyd 2006, 13). Similarly, cultural images affect those abusing alcohol or drugs. Cultural analysis can broaden our knowledge of alcohol and drug abuse.

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NOTES

1 "Olisi hauska mennä kotiin pitkästä aikaa/13 vuoden jälkeen nähdä omat lapset ja vaimon uusi mies.”
2 "Kyllä mies kivun kestää/mutta ei häpeää.”
3 "Graniitti ei murru milloinkaan / graniitti (ei tätä poikaa tarvitse hävetä) / graniitti ei itke milloinkaan.”
4 "Kun multa suussa maistuu/On katkeruus jäänyt taa.”