

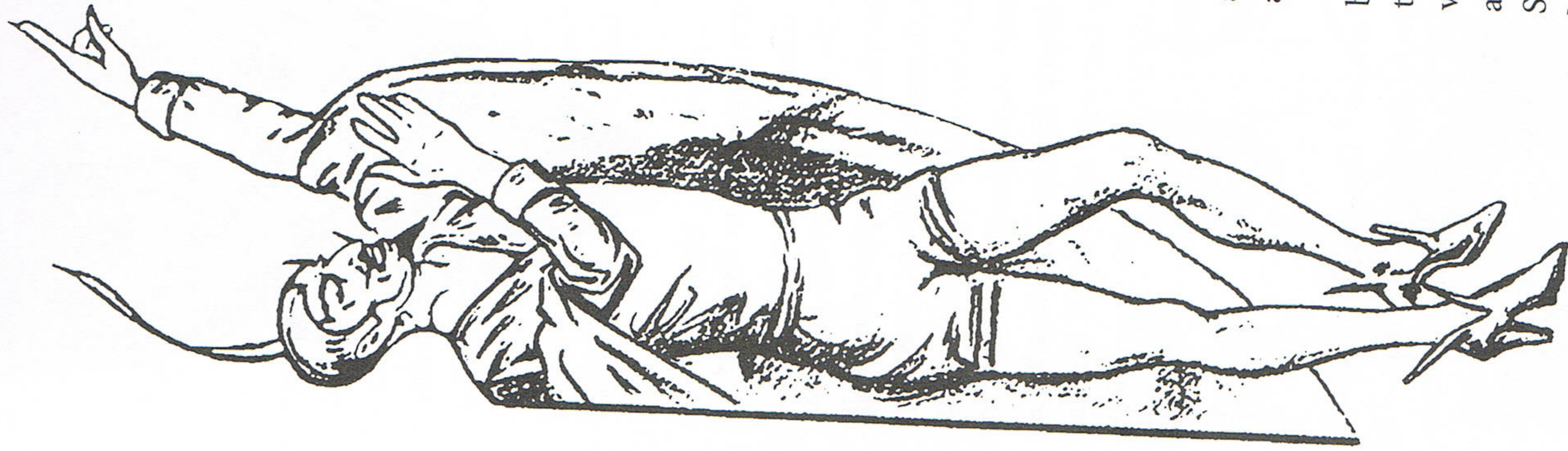
I don't think it has much to do with reason. If they hate Christianity that's not a very reasonable thing to do. It's emotional. As for *why* they hate it—when I was 15 or 16 years old I hated Christianity. I wasn't brought up with Sunday School, going to church, reading the Bible, saying prayers, etc., and I really hated it at the same age as many people who become Satanists.

Opposition toward Christianity is very strong among the youth in Norway. You'll find very few Norwegian youngsters that have a relationship to Christianity; if they have it, they have a very extreme relationship towards it, and are involved with very extreme charismatic movements. But most people actually hate it.

Fifteen years later I look upon it and I think *that was a Christian thing*, to be in opposition to the religion. To hate God, or to hate the Church, meant that I actually *felt* something for it and had a relationship with it. The hatred shows that you have love, that you have a concern. You wouldn't be able to put many emotions and hatred into it if you didn't have a strong feeling of what I would call love.

It's interesting when you come to Satanism, and look upon it as a religious phenomenon. I would maybe define some of these people as Christians today, because I think the hatred they have is actually showing that maybe in their heart they're loving God, or have a relationship to Jesus. I think it's possible. It's an extreme form of what happens when people are jealous—they kill their lover. It's not an unchristian thing to hate the Church. A lot of good Christians have done that. I'm not saying this is the truth, but it's an interesting way to look upon the Satanists as a Christian movement to some extent.

It think it's important to differentiate between the opportunistic side of Satanism and the serious side. The leaders have a deliberate view upon religion as such, and I would say they are not opportunists. In its heart Norwegian Satanism has a very close relationship to Norwegian Christianity.



IS THERE A TRADITION OF SATANISM IN NORWAY?

We definitely have an occult tradition in the Nordic religion, that's obvious. We also have occult traditions within Christianity both through the medieval age and after the Protestant reformation. There is a very long and continuous religious tradition of occult phenomena. I would call the medieval tradition of burning witches something which is based in the occult, and that's rather close to the Church today. It's a verdict on the immoral aspect.

When I was talking to Ihsahn, he was saying that what he hates most about the Church is that it's really weak. It doesn't have a morality. It's immoral and he would look upon that as one of the things he hated most about it. If the Christian Church would actually lower a verdict on people, to judge and be hard with that, he would have much more respect for it. That's a pretty Christian thought to me.

Satanism is really just another expression of occult phenomena in Christianity. Freemasonry, for example, is a Christian occult tradition. There are many movements on the fringe of the Christian religion that still have a relation to occultism. All these occult phenomena that we have been seeing, including people like August Strindberg and things that we have seen in the last two centuries, have a relation to Christianity. I have a rather broad definition of Christianity.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE OCCULTISM?

Occultism has something to do with the dark aspect of human nature. It's based on undogmatic thinking—you take your own personal experience as a basis for what you do. You don't use religious laws or anything of that nature. It's an extreme form of subjective religious experience. This could be almost anything. With this definition I would have to say that some of the charismatic Christian movement is also "occult." They have no law, they have no government, they are just experiencing, choosing whatever aspects they feel like, and experiencing dark aspects by going through that.

IS THE CHRISTIAN MASS AN OCCULT RITE?

It has aspects of the occult. The communion, in the Catholic and Greco-Roman tradition, has occultic aspects, but I wouldn't say it is occult.



Also the sacrifice of something which has this love—the killing of it—has occult aspects, but I wouldn't say it is occult. These phenomena are related and it's a typical historically unaware thing that we do today when we look upon Satanism as something very new and different, wondering, "What is this?" It's in a long, long tradition of religiosity which is based on human experience and rituals. It's not anything new at all. If you look at the Old Testament, God also did this, he was burning down cities and killing people when he was dissatisfied with them. This aspect in religion is not new.

I have a reason for making this analysis of it, and the motivation is to make it human in some way. In the postmodern way of thinking, you see one phenomenon which is extreme and then you say that you have to judge all these people. These are bad people and we just have to hate them and isolate them. I don't like that mentality and I think it's wrong.

If you look at Satanism as a reflection of the spiritual life and spiritual tradition that we are standing in, I feel that it makes the Satanists more human. It makes them moral people who actually have a cause, and who are trying to say something to us. If you see some of the leaders, they are bright and reflective people, they are people with integrity. I would look upon them as moral people, and we have to take seriously what they are saying. If I thought of them just an extreme example of disobedient youngsters, I wouldn't have to listen to them.

That's what the Church is doing; they just try to isolate the Satanists and say it's not serious, it's just violence and brutality, it's just revenge they're after. They don't define them as part of their own tradition, and I do. We have to listen to what they're saying.

THE FACT THAT THEY'VE KILLED SOMEONE DOESN'T COMPROMISE WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY?

How many Christian people have killed for the beliefs of their own religion? Killing people is an extremely human thing and doesn't exclude them from being sincere and having a message. The Baader-Meinhof [German terrorist group] has a message which I think we should take seriously—although they did dreadful things. Doing criminal things and killing people doesn't exclude you from having an opinion that is important.

WHAT'S THEIR REAL MESSAGE?

My motivation is to understand what they're saying, and to take that message seriously. The violence in Satanism is not particular in any way, it's not more severe than other violence in this society, and maybe it's less if you compare it with football hooligans or whatever. The Satanists have a religious message, and that is the interesting thing, that they have something to say to our religious tradition and they are definitely saying it. Being violent in a religious tradition is not a very strange

thing—it's normal in that context. The Satanists are killing each other—many have been doing that in the Christian tradition for thousands of years. They're only killing people when they disagree with them, there's nothing new about it. It's historically unaware to look upon this as something specific and "Satanic," the fact they are killing each other when they have a conflict among themselves.

Look at the church fires. If their primary motive was just violence, they would burn the church down when there was a funeral or a baptism there, if they really wanted to make hell for people and show that violence is the most important thing. Why burn it in the middle of the night? Of course it's dark, but in many parts of Norway it's dark in the daytime too. So they could burn a church in the north of Norway on a Sunday and still get the aesthetic side of it, and kill a hundred people at the same time by blocking the doors and burning it up. Why don't they do that? Because violence isn't the basic message. It's extremely obvious to me.

When we look at pictures of the bands, they look very violent. I think some of that is just the visual trappings of violence more than the actual thing. Are these really violent people going around? I don't think so; I think they're quite normal, when it comes to being violent people or not. It's part of the cult to make a violent statement, to visually show off something violent, but it's not a violent culture as I see it.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT NORWEGIAN SATANISM?

There is Satanism and occultism in a lot of places in this world, but the reason why the Norwegian Satanism has become so strong and interesting compared to other countries is because it has been so intense. There is sense of a Satanism here that is very judgmental. You have this LaVey sort of thing with enjoying life, but at its best Norwegian Satanism is the total opposite of that. It's an aesthetic movement with strong beliefs not to enjoy life, but only to dedicate yourself to destroying the church and Christianity. As Ihsahn was talking about, destroy it because it's weak, because it doesn't have a right to live anymore, because it's just good to everybody. It doesn't have the power to judge anymore. It's just some sort of social-democratic Christianity, and these people despise that kind of weakness. Satanism in Norway has become strong because it's a despotic form of Satanism, but that is also why it's going to fade so fast—because people are not able to live like that for a very long period of time. Also our Christian tradition is moving away from this more despotic side.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE SATANISM?

Satanism in its basis is a protest against civilization as such, whether you consider it the Greek or Christian civilization. It is against the fact that you have moral laws: how you should be, what you can't do, that you can't kill people, that you are supposed to be nice to people that are different from you, etc.

The Satanists say—to put it brutally—that we are animals. The animal culture is the most important one, and we are losing that part of us. This is broad in the culture today, with the “wild women,” etc., this whole thing of going back to nature. Being part of nature instead of spirit or morals is very strong now.

I think Satanism has been an expression of that, and was one of the earliest things to do so. If you hate somebody, kill them. Just do it, there's nothing immoral about that. Animals do that. If you hate somebody there's no reason against doing that.

ISN'T THAT STRIVING TOWARD NATURE AKIN TO THE HEATHEN RELIGION?

The interesting thing about the old Nordic religion is that the current justice system in Norway comes from there. They had written laws, meeting places, judges. Everybody thinks that these people were just living out in nature, but it was just another religious system, with laws, with civilization in a different manner.

This dark aspect of human nature—to kill someone if you don't like them, to rape someone if you feel like it and to not feel bad about it—goes back much further and is older than the Nordic religion, definitely. They didn't accept that. They built societies and civilizations on different standards, but the ideal was the same that you have to respect the collective norms and laws of society.

Satanism says something totally different: do what you like to do, don't ask anybody else what they think about it. Just do what you think is right. That is something different, and if they try to mix that with Nordic traditions, that is very unhistorical—and it becomes extremely explosive because you can take the violent aspects of the Nordic tradition and legitimize it through this new thing. You legitimize it through the symbols of that time, which is totally incorrect, and then use it in our time as an expression of extreme individualism.

That struck me when I was talking to Ihsahn, the symbols he was using of three or four-thousand-year-old Eastern symbols of different religions, and at the same to say that it's only Norway for me and only the Nordic religion that counts. It's not rational on that point at all. It doesn't relate to history as something rational—you just use it.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MESSAGE OF SOMEONE LIKE VIKERNES IS?

I should say that I don't look upon Vikernes as being the most representative of the Satanists in Norway. He is a very special personality; he is not a conformist in any way. If he was a supporter of a football club he wouldn't wear the same clothing as they do, he would always want to be individualistic toward any trend.

It would be dangerous to define Vikernes as simply a Norwegian Satanist, because I don't think he is that. He has become a leader or a spokesperson because of his extreme individualism and because he's so strange as a person. He

could be that kind of a leader to very, very many different groups. For him being a Satanist, I think that just may be the most extreme thing going down, to some extent. I would question whether Satanism actually is important for Vikernes.

The leaders are moving in a new direction. The basic Satanism is about to leave and change. I think they will be moving more towards classical occultic things, magic, and so on. There you have the weakness of this movement: you have strong leaders, reflective kinds of people, and they couldn't stay Satanists for twenty or thirty years. For a reflective person that's an impossibility. It is very natural that it moves on.

DO YOU THINK VIKERNES IS TRUTHFUL CLAIMING THAT THERE WAS A WHOLE STRATEGY BEHIND THE CHURCH BURNINGS?

I think he's bragging about his own influence. I don't think he has been that conscious about his own purpose. That's an advanced thought which he comes up with afterwards to justify his own intentions. Any intellectual will do that, any person with the ability to reason does that with their own history, because you have the extremely strong need as a thinking person to make meaning of what you have done, and feel that it leads forward to the point where you are standing now. It's an interesting statement, but I wouldn't trust it and I think in five years he will say something different about it again.

VIKERNES HAS NOW TAKEN UP A MILITANT ADVOCACY OF HEATHENISM AS HIS CAUSE.



I think Vikernes has been analyzing our times and thinking, what can we do to achieve something? But I also think that over the years he will find out that for us to go back to the heathen religion is very, very unrealistic. It's not going to happen if you look at the religious aspect of it. We're not going to go back to that kind of religious ritual. That is not going to happen.

They have had a very romantic notion about the extremely individualistic aspects of it—and what that does to our society—which is absolutely not accurate. What it's leading to, as I see it, is just the legitimizing of violence, lawlessness, immoral acts of any kind, and that is going to affect our culture, because a lot of movements and people think it's good to break the foundation of our society. They are capable of achieving some of that because there are many forces in

our time that want to break down Christianity. The Norwegian Labor Party has been doing it for forty years, it's nothing new! It's just accelerating. That is what they are going to achieve, to break down culture, but they are not going to get back any of the heathen religion or rituals or anything else that they want to have.

HAS THERE BEEN ANY WIDESPREAD REVIVAL OF INTEREST IN HEATHENISM?

There is general interest in the Nordic religion which has been growing rapidly here over the last five years. Now we have amusement parks with whole areas devoted to just the Norwegian old religion. That's a big movement in the spiritual life of Norway, much bigger than Satanism.

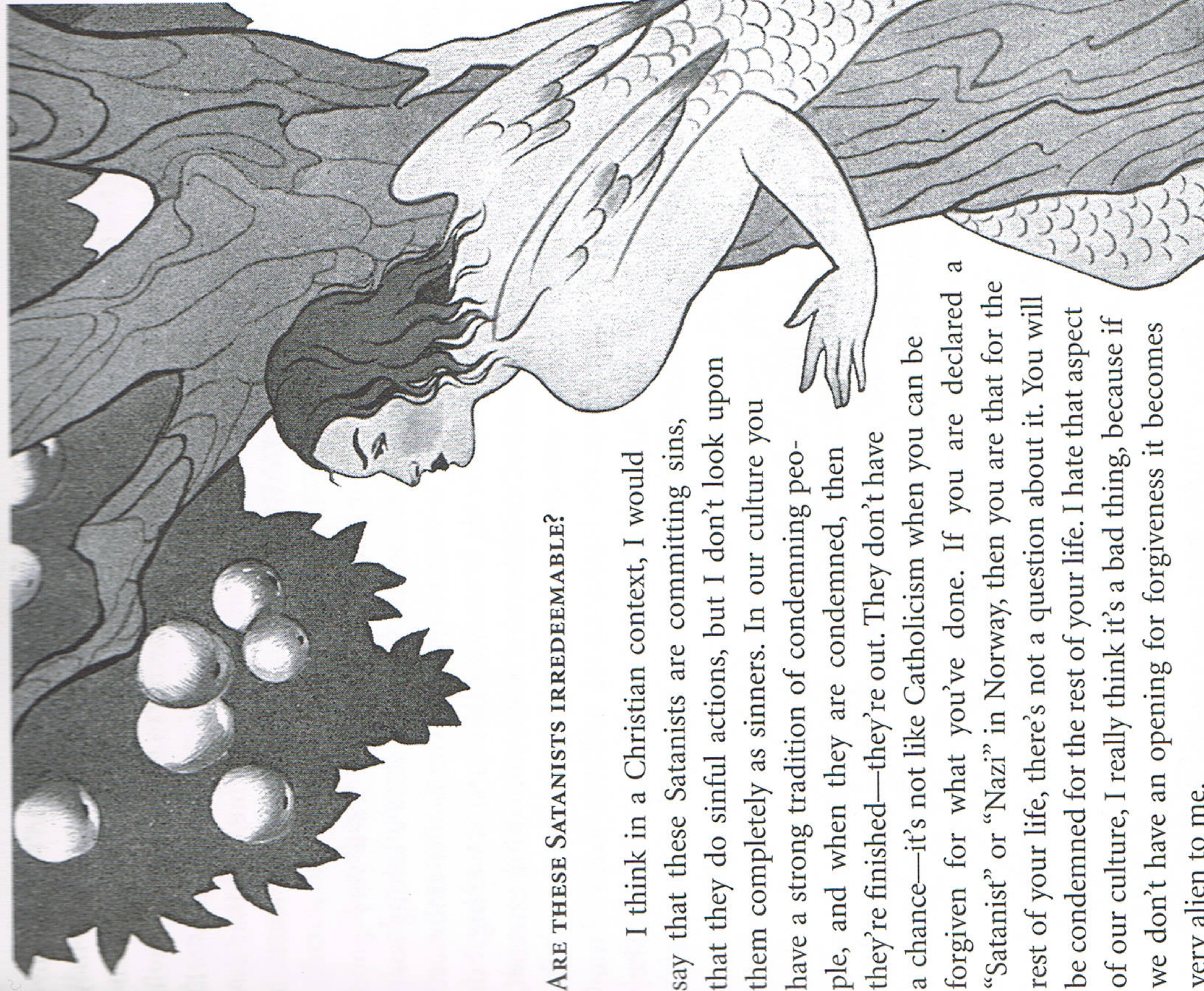
THE HEATHEN IDEAS OF VIKERNES ARE TIED IN WITH QUITE A STRONG RACIAL BELIEF AS WELL.

Racism, and to legitimize racism, is becoming a big issue in our culture today—definitely the Satanists are doing that too. What they actually do is say it's okay to hate, it's a good thing, a natural thing, to hate. That is true, it is natural for human beings to hate.

If you look at Yugoslavia or wherever a war is going down, if you emphasize and legitimize hatred, then you get the brutal aspects of human life, like ethnic cleansing. When you legitimize hatred, then you get killing. You get people not helping each other. It's rather simple in that way.

They look upon it that we have been false, by saying we can be good or moral. They look upon that as being untruthful to human nature, and that's correct. The whole Christian project of civilization tries to say that human nature has to be put a little bit to the side—we can't build civilization if we just base it on human nature. We have to say that human nature is something bad; it's not just good things. The effect of Satanism today, to legitimize people being evil, to legitimize people hating each other—that cannot and will not help anything. That can't be good. I understand the motivations for it and the psychological aspects of it, but if they understood anything about the effects of what they are doing, they would stop doing it very fast. It's because they are naive about the effects of that mentality. I think to legitimize hatred is the most dangerous thing human beings can do, if you look at Hitler or someone similar. That's what he said—"It's okay to hate." It's okay to hate Jews. And the Serbs say it's okay to hate the Muslims. When you say that it's okay to hate someone, then you step over a borderline in your own psyche and everybody knows what happens afterward. It's not good. I think Satanism in that aspect is definitely evil in any society.

You have to believe that society as such is something very stupid which we should get away from as soon as possible, to think that Satanism can be constructive in any way. It can't be because it's not a collective thought at all. It doesn't have any concern for anything but itself... it's even worse than America!



ARE THESE SATANISTS IRREDEEMABLE?

I think in a Christian context, I would say that these Satanists are committing sins, that they do sinful actions, but I don't look upon them completely as sinners. In our culture you have a strong tradition of condemning people, and when they are condemned, then they're finished—they're out. They don't have a chance—it's not like Catholicism when you can be forgiven for what you've done. If you are declared a "Satanist" or "Nazi" in Norway, then you are that for the rest of your life, there's not a question about it. You will be condemned for the rest of your life. I hate that aspect of our culture, I really think it's a bad thing, because if we don't have an opening for forgiveness it becomes very alien to me.

I would say that's the Church to some extent, but the Satanists do it too, in the way that they condemn people and don't give them a second chance. That is not a Christian thing. Christianity is *forgiveness and mercy*, as I look upon it, based on Christian thinking. That you do one thing, but you have a second chance, a third chance, a fourth chance... That's why I look upon Satanism this way, that there are sinful actions, but there is room for forgiveness within the Church, or there should be room for forgiveness for these people and their sinful actions.

I think that's very important, the Christian foundation of looking upon them as humans and also people we should listen to instead of just saying these are shitty guys and let's just freeze them out.

CAN YOU ELABORATE MORE ON THE SPECIFIC REACTION TOWARD THEM BY THE CHURCH AND THE MEDIA?



The Church was definitely shocked and didn't expect anything like this to happen at all. When it happened, and they found out that there were Satanists behind it, they just condemned it right away and were starting to talk about the Devil, that we must be aware the Devil is always lurking in this world and that he looks for new members all the time, and that this is an act of the Devil. That was the basic Christian reaction from the Bishops.

I think in society when something like that happens it's a very good opportunity for the media. They like it because they can start a lasting soap opera with strong characters, and these Satanic groups. The media embraced it to a certain extent, and made it really big in Norway. Of course it *was* big, but I would say that the media capitalized on it, because it was something extreme, new, and specifically Norwegian. For them to sell newspapers, they treat it as extremely as possible. Very early on the media started to define them as total extremists, the same way they might look upon the neo-Nazi movement. They defined them as that right away; then they had them there and they can look upon them like animals doing strange things, and they can report it like something that is very different from the rest of our society. I think it's untrue to view them that way, but that is the mechanism that the media and society make, because it's a shock for them. They don't understand where the Satanists are coming from, they don't understand what they want, and then they isolate them as a group. But of course that doesn't help them in any way—it has the opposite effect, that many youngsters find it a taboo and it becomes extremely interesting.

They are resourceful people, many of them—Vikernes is a good example of that, Ihsahn is also an example. Black Metal is not like the neo-Nazis, either, who have a kind of magnetic effect on the weak people, the outsiders. It's not like that.

WHY DOES BLACK METAL ATTRACT THESE MORE RESOURCEFUL TYPES OF YOUTH?

I think there is a culture in Norway around the collective dream of society. Everything is a collective dream, which is quite reminiscent of the foundation of communism. I think in Ihsahn's case he didn't like this at all.

This is something that's important—individualism in Norway has been held down. That has happened. If you are different in school, or very good for example, or very intelligent, that becomes a problem for you. We don't accept people with exceptional gifts or anything like that. In England or the U.S., you have schools for these kind of youngsters, you send them somewhere else, and say, "You are different, go over there." We don't have that. Everything is supposed to fit in, in a classroom of twenty-five or thirty people. If you are too weak or too healthy, or if you're too good, you're supposed to shut up. It's mediocrity.

Satanism then, for these people, starts as a purpose against this pattern. It's the exceptional people who actually feel this the most! People with great resources and intellectual strength who actually feel that the system has been holding them down. They've been oppressed because they have special gifts, and that's true. We have been doing that. We don't like people like that in Norway. That's one important aspect in Norwegian society, and because of that when it boils over it becomes very extreme because the hatred toward the mediocrity is so strong that when it breaks free then the results are that much more extreme.

Then they run into what we have with nature. We have a very special relationship to nature, a very close one. And during the Christian period this thing with nature has been suppressed—nature is not good, nature is "evil," so to speak. Norwegians interact with nature and are very closely connected to it, just due to the way the country itself is formed. So they go to nature and start to get these kinds of powerful emotions and relationships.

I think if they had done strategic and really bright analysis they could have learned something much greater about this, about Norwegians having a special relationship to nature. The Satanists could have done this much better, if their



goal was to create a broad movement for going back to nature and also back to the heathen religion. If these deep-souled figures of strength like Vikernes had done that at that time they could have made something really big in Norwegian society. But I don't think that was what they wanted.

DID THEIR ACTIONS MANAGE TO HAVE ANY EFFECT ON SOCIETY?

In 1995 in Norway you had a very strong movement toward religion—towards Christianity and towards the New Age kinds of things—everybody is going into religion now. I was just writing an article about the Labor Party, which actually has just now become positive toward having more Christianity in schools. They've spent fifty years after the war bringing down Christianity, and for the first time they're saying now that we need more Christianity in the schools. It shows the times have changed. Maybe we have become conscious to some extent about the Christian culture when people start to burn down our churches—maybe, you can't rule that out. It's possible that when we see that in this country people are burning churches down then we have to make a statement against that.

I'm doubtful that the Satanism has had any great affect on society, but I could be wrong. I don't know what people actually do or think all the time...

DO YOU THINK IT WILL CONTINUE? IS THERE AN IMPETUS FOR IT TO KEEP HAPPENING?

It's not going to succeed in any way in Norwegian society, but it's definitely going to go on for some years. That's possible. I think they're going to need strength, mostly because it has become somewhat normal now. When you burn down churches it's not a big sensation anymore, we're kind of used to it that they burn down churches sometimes.

I don't think it's going to get stronger; I think it will get weaker, and it's going to move from Satanism into magic or these kind of things. The New Age religious movement is growing in Norway, and it becomes kind of linked together with those kinds of powers and occultic interests. I think they can grow in that way but then they won't be Satanists anymore, they'll be something else. That's where the strong people are going to go, and you will get some mutated expressions of Satanism in the future.

If you are talking about what can survive from Satanism, I think the dramatic part will—the very interesting visual aspects, the drama. That aspect, as we see it now, that people make these huge performances, that they have roles they play. This drama aspect is going to survive as a religious phenomenon, it's going to go on and I think it could be extreme and very interesting, but it's not going to remain as Satanism.

IS THERE A SPECIFIC REASON FOR THAT?

The reason Satanism eventually will not last is because it doesn't bring anything, or give anything back. Destruction doesn't give anything back. It kind of wears itself out, because what do you get back from thinking or being like that?

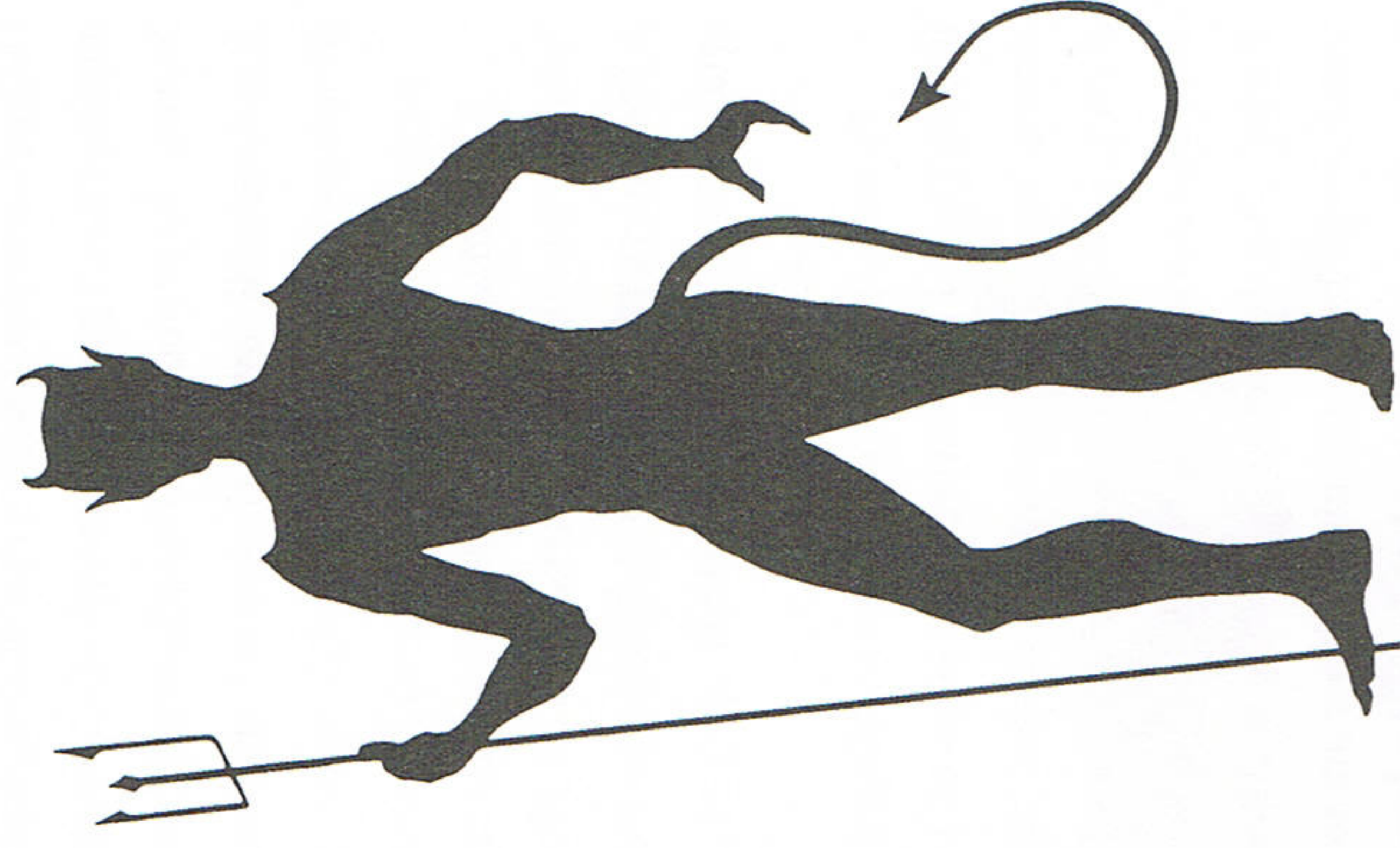


GIVING THE DEVIL MORE THAN HIS DUE

Asbjørn Dyrendal is a Research Fellow at the Department of Cultural Studies at the University in Oslo. He has been primarily researching the new and emergent religions, especially Wicca. He has also done considerable investigation into the hysteria that has been running rampant in the Norwegian and foreign media about a Satanic conspiracy. Dyrendal has summarized his findings in a fascinating article entitled "Media Constructions of 'Satanism' in Norway (1988–1997)" where he offers a chronology of the shifting manner in which the Satan scare was presented there by the press.

According to Dyrendal, the horrifying tales of cult conspiracies and Satanic ritual abuse arrived in Norway a few years after their explosion in the tabloid press of America and Britain. The Norwegian State Church had addressed Satanism as a problem in its annual Bishops' Conferences dating back to the late '70s, but it was generally considered a small aspect of the general growth of New Age and occult trends in spirituality. Satanism per se was not a grave threat.

Satanism hit the newspaper headlines in the summer of 1988, beginning with a few oddball stories of alleged groups of Satanists gathering in small towns. In one case a pair of brothers stole items from a church, threatened people, and engaged in "worshipping Satan at midnight dances."⁶ In another case a small Satanic ritual site was discovered during a drug bust. Concern was expressed by journalists and Christian commentators over the availability of Anton LaVey's *Satanic Bible* in Norwegian bookstores (the book had been published in Danish, and the English



edition also had international distribution), a theme which would resurface during the Black Metal hysteria years later.

In 1990 reports of Satanic ritual abuse exploded in the press. The hoopla was bolstered by statements from Willy Kobbhaug, a police lieutenant on the Oslo Vice Squad, who told the press he had evidence indicating criminal Satanic activity was becoming prevalent in Norway and was the object of serious investigation by the police. These revelations were met with skepticism from certain quarters (the "Satanic abuse conspiracy" tales having been widely debunked in America by that time), but regardless the media continued to describe disparate "Satanic" crimes in the context of an organized movement. In the heat of the hysteria about Satanic groups operating in Norway, the occult society the Ordo Templi Orientis was also accused of involvement in sacrifices and other criminal activity, but none of these allegations were ever proven, nor were they taken seriously by most in the police departments.

In his article, Dyrendal explains how the Satanic ritual abuse stories eventually dissipated, only to be replaced by the arrival of Black Metal to the headlines in 1993. He writes:

The main image of and debate on Satanism was being made by the sudden, high visibility of teenagers, mostly aged 15-18 years old (but ranging from 14 to 25), who were playing with the identity of being evil. Sometimes they would claim to be Nazis, sometimes Satanists, sometimes Odinists, and at other points they would refuse any label other than "evil," spouting statements such as: "We're not Nazis. The Nazis only hated the Jews, we hate everyone." "We're not racists, we want all people to suffer." "If our music causes people to commit suicide, that's good. It weeds out the weak." The reason they got the opportunity to go on the record with this philosophy, was that some of them also acted: some attacked people, most attacked property—by desecrating graveyards and burning churches. ... During the period of 1991-1993, several people were beaten, some stabbed, at least one girl (15) was raped, allegedly by two 17-year-old arsonists, of which one was convicted of a lesser charge, and two people were murdered.⁷

Dyrendal notes the media served to create the impression of a large-scale Satanic assault on Christians in Norway. It is no surprise that this in turn sparked a fearful response from both the police and the Church, which in many instances may have been warranted:

In some places the interest in alleged ritual sites approached panic reactions, where anything unusual could be interpreted as signs of Satanist activity. The drive towards action was even larger among some churchgoers. Police and congregations several times kept nightly watch over their churches—with variable success. Some of these churches were burned down at later dates, when watchfulness was down. Not all were as conscientious as 67-year-old Victor Andersson, priest in the Trinity Church in Oslo. According to Aftenposten (6/8/93), he armed himself with an axe and kept watch in the sacristy at night: "If we are to survive as a cultured nation, society has to strike back at these plebeians (pøbelveldet)," said Andersson...⁸

After a period of sensationalist coverage, the media approached the Black Metal phenomenon in a more serious manner. A few different theories have been advanced as to why it took hold in Norway, some of which have already been presented in the interviews in this book. These theories range from negative cultural influences via music, role-playing games, and occultism, to criticisms leveled at the Church for its inability to reach out to youth in a manner capable of sustaining their attention. Some in the Church believed they must become more aggressive in their dealings with young people, and Dyrendal even mentions one conservative priest who wanted to bring back the practice of exorcism. Despite the varying proposed solutions to the problem, there was no doubt of the consensus that something was gravely wrong.

What is particularly fascinating about Dyrendal's study is how it implicates the media. By printing lurid stories which highlighted gruesome (and undocumented) allegations about Satanic practices, the tabloid papers may have helped create the atmosphere for real-life criminal behavior that would later unfold. Dyrendal's research would seem to partially vindicate Simen Midgaard's theory that the original exposés on Satanic cults in 1990-91 provided the blueprint for the ideology of Norwegian Satanism that would develop in the Black Metal scene.

ASBJØRN DYRENDAL

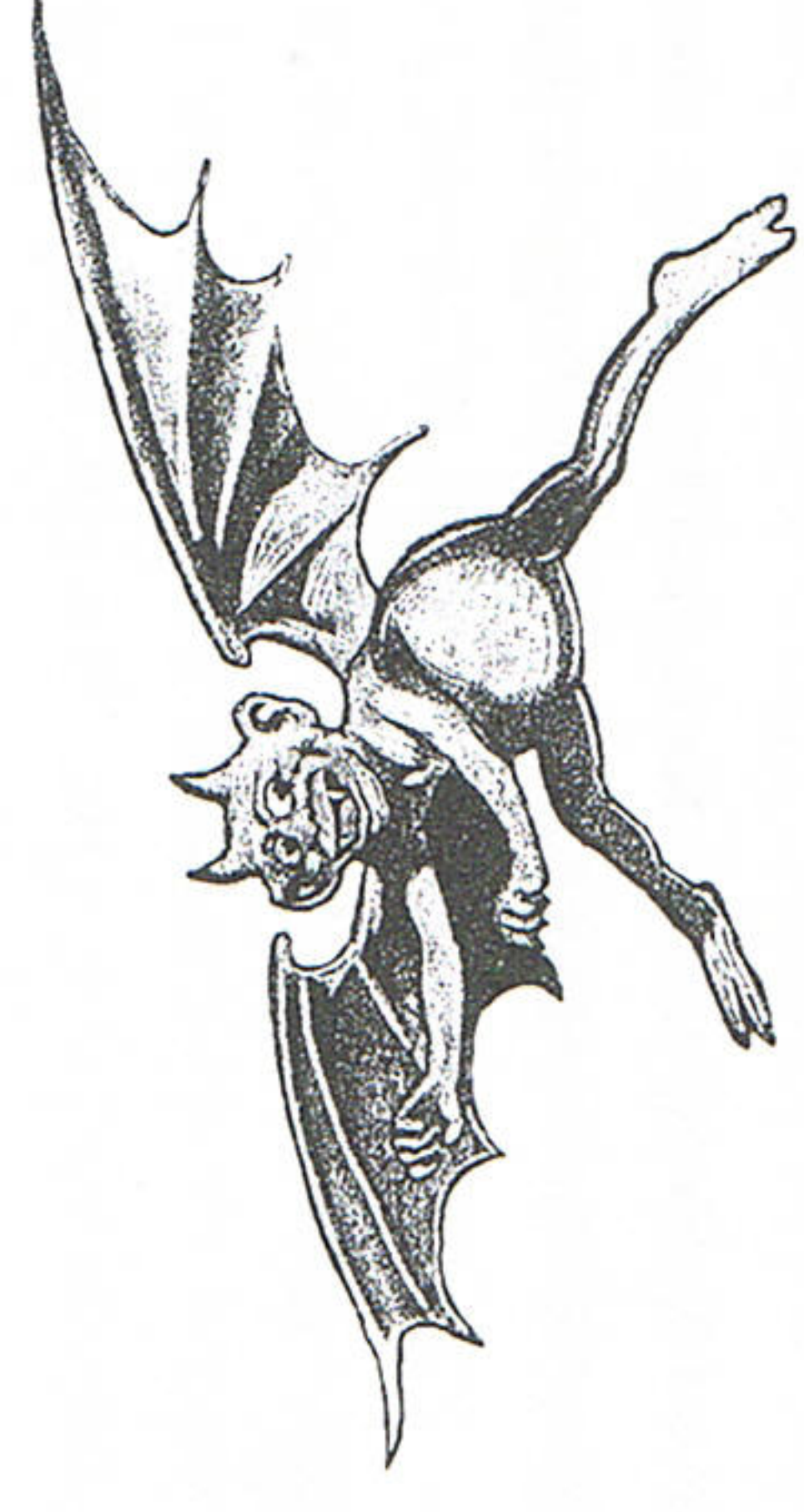
HAS NORWAY IMPORTED AMERICAN STEREOTYPES ABOUT SATANISM?

If you look at the Norwegian media, there is not much written about Satanism before 1988 or '89. Then some reports started turning up, almost exclusively about youth Satanists. There was a police raid on a nest of Satanists in Halden in which some rather down-and-out people were arrested.

[The "nest" Dyrendal refers to was uncovered during a drug raid that took place in southeast Norway. It contained an altar adorned with a picture of Baphomet, "ritual" knives, a skull, and tarot cards. The group consisted of people 16-30 years of age. Some of them were arrested for possession of marijuana.]

BUT THESE PEOPLE IN HALDEN HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH BLACK METAL, CORRECT? THEY SEEMED TO BE MORE INTERESTED IN DRUGS.

Yes, and one of them, a girl who claimed to have had the name "Lucifer" within the group, later turned up in the conservative Christian newspaper *Dagen*. She came out as having been born again. A year later, she was in the same paper again, saying that Satanists pray to Satan to crush the powerful



Evangelical awakening in the border areas near to Sweden. These rumors seem to come from Evangelical circles in that country. And even though all of this really has nothing to do with Black Metal, it is interesting to note that the Black Metal culture later grew very strong in these parts of the country.

Apart from this rather sad coven, there were only some teenagers out in the countryside that were involved in Satanism. Then in 1990 and 1991, figures like Fred Harrison and Dianne Core came into the picture. Fred Harrison is a freelance journalist for the major Norwegian tabloid *Dagbladet*. He interviewed some English psychologists, psychiatrists, and "child-rescuers" about Satanism. As a result, on August 11, 1990, *Dagbladet* had a headline about Satanists eating babies and doing other abominable things. The year after, all this was repeated in the media by Willy Kobbhaug. Kobbhaug claimed to have seen similar cases in Norway. I have been told that he had recently come from a police seminar in the Netherlands where he had heard these stories.

Many of the Satanic survivor stories in Norway come from Christian subcultures. In Harrison and Core's book *Chasing Satan* there is an abortion scenario that is reinterpreted, within a very Christian framework, as a sacrifice to Satan.

THIS SOUNDS LIKE WHAT IS CALLED A "BREEDER" STORY, IN WHICH THE SINISTER SATANIC CONSPIRATORS IMPREGNATE WOMEN TO PRODUCE BABIES WHO WILL LATER BE SACRIFICED TO THE DEVIL.

Yes, and it is part of an older myth, which dates back to the '60s and early '70s. In Sweden there was a "Satanic survivor" story in the '70s. A woman claimed to have been a victim of a Satanic cult, and have been forced to participate in child sacrifice. The police didn't find anything back then either.

After being supplied with these stories, the police and media started looking for Satanic cults that would fit this image. In typical fashion, the Ordo Templi Orientis was singled out, simply because they were visible. The O.T.O. is established in Norway, unlike the Church of Satan, Temple of Set, or other real Satanic organizations.

The police and press didn't find the cults they were looking for. What they did eventually find, though, were caves with inverted crosses, stolen tombstones, and so on. In other words: Black Metal culture. They then tried to project this cult stereotype that they got from Kobbhaug onto what they found. It didn't work.

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WILLY KOBBAHAUG [INTERVIEWED IN AUGUST, 1997—NO LONGER WORKING IN THE VICE DIVISION OF THE OSLO POLICE]

HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER THESE STORIES?

I was involved with building up the child section of the Oslo Police Department. As a result, I got into contact with specialists working with children, some of them on seminars abroad. I wrote an article in the Oslo Police Dept.'s internal magazine in 1989 about these things. *Dagbladet* newspaper used some of this material and the ensuing rabble made me not write any more on the subject.

BUT POLICE ABROAD LIKE THE SCOTLAND YARD, THAT HAVE BEEN INVESTIGATING SIMILAR ALLEGATIONS, HAVE NOT COME UP WITH ANY EVIDENCE.

The problem with finding witnesses in these kinds of cases is that many of them have difficulty distinguishing fantasy and reality. Most of them are psychiatric cases. One might ask why they are so—is it because they have been subjected to quite horrible things?

DO YOU THINK AN ORGANIZED NETWORK OF SATANISTS WHO SACRIFICE CHILDREN EXISTS?

I intended to have evidence for this back then. I haven't followed it in the later years, so I don't know exactly how things are now. There is an organized Satanic network. But I don't think they sacrifice children. Norway is a country with few people, and they are easy to keep track of. Children just don't disappear like they would have to for this to be true.

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ASBJØRN DYRENDAL

DID THE BLACK METAL SCENE MIMIC THE IMAGES OF SATANISM THAT WERE PRESENTED BY THE MEDIA?

This is an interesting phenomenon where people try to emulate the stories that are circulating. There you had a lot of young people who wanted to be Satanists. Where could they hear about what you do when you're a Satanist? They had to get it through the media and Christian sources. They got the myths, and they tried as best as they could, by their rather modest means, to live up to them. You can see that in the early interviews with Varg Vikernes. There were situations where the journalists were trying to see this in light of the stories supplied by Kobbhaug, and where Vikernes played the appropriate role. He was hinting that many people disappear each year, that these might have been killed, and then said that he cannot comment on who was doing the killings. When asked if he has

killed anyone: "I can't talk about that." He was building up to get the question of whether he had killed anyone, and then denying it in a manner which implied the opposite.



WHAT ABOUT THE CASE OF THE TEENAGER THAT DISAPPEARED IN TØNSBERG?

There is a lot of exaggeration in this case. That is understandable, given the fact that he was a priest's son and obsessed with the occult. According to one story, he checked the number on the electricity meter in his home and discovered that it had three sixes in it. That would suggest a certain interest. The police don't know what happened. He may have killed himself, which seems the most probable given how kids that age behave. But since it is an unsolved case, it remains open for speculation. His family tried to resolve it by hiring a private investigator, but the investigator didn't come up with much.

WHERE DID THE BLACK METAL WORLDVIEW, IF YOU CAN CALL IT THAT, COME FROM?

You draw from the cultural resources that are at your disposal. Vikernes was very fond of telling people that he read LaVey and Crowley. However, what he has come out with in interviews indicates that he hasn't understood it all very well.

Inverting cultural values seems to be the easiest way out in devising a rebellious ideology. Quotes like: "We are not racists, we hate everyone," "We are not Nazis—Hitler only wanted to kill the Jews, we want everyone to suffer," indicate both a need for opposition and use of the resources that are present. I wouldn't call it a worldview, but more a relative self-identity, very dependent on the situation. There is little to indicate, judging from interviews with their parents, families, etc., that this is an identity they have taken with them into everything they have done.

This group identity seems to have been internal from an early stage. It was directed towards the other members of the inner circle. It was not aimed at the rest of society before Vikernes. He was the one that actively solicited the media, the great publicity whore.

SOME OF THESE PEOPLE SEEM TO HAVE LIVED A KIND OF DOUBLE LIFE. ONE MOMENT THEY HAVE BEEN HAVING A NICE DINNER WITH THEIR MOTHERS, THE NEXT THEY ARE OUT BURNING CHURCHES AND KILLING PEOPLE...

To immerse yourself into a total lifestyle takes a lot of time. Most of the Black Metal people were young, still in their teens. Much of the criminal activity has been spontaneous, which is typical of juvenile delinquency. People have to remember that if you are as shoplifter or are violent, it isn't necessarily apparent that you are a criminal. Crime is something that you do on the side, unless you have a career based around it.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE MEDIA HAS BEEN FANNING THE FLAMES IN THE CASE OF THE BLACK METAL CRIMEWAVE?

I didn't think so initially. After talking to a good amount of journalists and people that have been working with Vikernes's trial, I have changed my mind. "Street cred" is very important in youth subcultures. The mass media was invaluable for Vikernes in building his street cred. The media allowed him to build a near-mythological image of himself.

You can also see it in statements from people in the Black Metal scene itself where they say that everything got really wild after the mass media had started focusing on this. The media then threw gasoline on the fire, in that the coverage intensified the internal struggle for being the dominant personality. It is true that subcultures like the Black Metal scene have an internal dynamic that will operate without regard for the outside world. In this case, I think media may have played a larger role than is usual because the attention these people got was so massive.

WHY HAVE YOUNG PEOPLE BEEN ATTRACTED TO THIS?

It has elements of dark mysticism in the music, it has a mythological dimension in the link to the Viking Age, and so on. The music has a very aggressive force, and in the wake of listening to it you experience the feeling of identifying with it. That is a very powerful thing. If you are an adolescent, you are in a period of your life where it is impossible for you to exert influence upon your surroundings. Being able to hate and feel strong can be very liberating. This is much of the same power that lay in other forms of Metal and in Punk.

The Black Metal image is also appealing to people who are a bit of an outcast, or feel like outsiders. The Black Metal uniform sends very strong signals, especially after people have started associating these outfits with very powerful and scary things. It has passed the point where people point at you and laugh, and reached the point where people shy away from you.

LET'S NOT FORGET THE BIOLOGICAL DIMENSION EITHER, WITH HORMONES RUNNING AMOK.

There have been two major theories among the people that have been working with the Black Metal thing in the media. One has been that modern, secular