

of the eighties Death Metal ruled as perhaps the most marked and exaggerated, most macabre and brutal form of underground metal that hitherto had existed, musically and lyrically, as well as in attitudes and the kind of symbols that were being used. It was meant to serve as a stronghold against a reality that was experienced as disintegrating, empty, false, effeminating etc. That Death Metal had gone commercial and mainstream was according to its critics proved by the fact that it was being released on big, financially strong labels and promoted via MTV and Metal magazines such as *Metal Hammer* and *Kerrang!* To many underground metalheads this development undermined the original functions and message of this particular music scene: "I refuse to have anything to do with all the mainstream trends in the scene today. ... Death Metal should not be played on MTV or be on TOP 10, because that is killing the scene" (Euronymous in *Slayer* 1990/1991: 34). That the underground was dying, or already dead, was a common view within the scene itself. "Morbidity" from the Greek underground Metal band Necromantia emphasized the corrupting power of money and was of the not uncommon opinion that the avariciousness of record-labels, not only the Death Metal bands and musicians themselves, were to be blamed for this development: "Death metal is dying. Occult-black metal is the future. No, it's not underground [when you can watch bands like Napalm Death, Entombed, Morbid Angel and Death on MTV] and the bands are not fully responsible for it. Labels are! Money, pal!" (*Orcustus* 1992: 21)

The development of Black Metal was bound to the criticism of what was seen as Death Metal's growing discrepancy between the diverse stylistic components, as well as between the stylistic dimension and the attitudes of bands and its members. In the eyes of the critics the image, the lyrics and the attitudes of band members and the musical style itself should support each other, form one package. Many were for instance fed up with the ordinary, expressionless and "americanized" street-fashion image of Death Metal, which generally consisted of trainers, tracksuit or shorts and hardly any use of make-up and equipment in the form of corpse-paint or spikes and cartridge belts. Adherents of the extreme underground metal scene wanted to establish a style that in its outrageous and grotesque character would manage to create an unbridgeable gap between truly extreme metal circles and the rest of contemporary society, between those who were self-willed and strong enough to rise above the Western trend-oriented consumer culture and "the dependent herd-people". The dawning Black Metal scene stood for a stylistic concept of coherent, continuous darkness, which drew quite a few bands to the scene. Most of these bands changed during the process from being Death Metal to becoming Black Metal. Immortal's change of style is explained thus by its guitarist and songwriter "Demonaz":

We decided to do that because we have been into black metal for a long time and because we are getting bored with the death metal scene! It has become standard and it seems like everyone do death metal these days!! We don't just want to play brutal music but we also want to do evil live shows with corpse-paint in

our faces ... And black metal has a special feeling and it gives us much more than the usual death metal. Death metal should be supported by true people and not by little kids...!! ... It seems like the trend people are afraid of bands with corpse-paint and the evil stuff. That's good. People should hate it!!!! Yes the death metal scene is lost ... It's for stupid kids. It's like the thrash thing ... It's been accepted by all kinds of people! (*Sadistic Noise* 1991: 39)

Darkthrone's reason for changing from Death Metal to Black Metal is about the same, as the vocalist and songwriter "Nocturno Culto" says: "What we are doing now is the true thing. The new stuff is much more brutal, dark and evil. We love darkness, and we are gonna piss on the graves to all fucking trends" (*Orcustus* 1992: 6).

Death Metal was, as its name signified, meant to be about real, misanthropic worship of death and death-related phenomena (e.g. blood, torture, murder, necrophilia etc.), not politically correct and current topics. "Greven" answered thus to the question of why he left the Thrash/Death Metal band Old Funeral in order to start up his own band project: "I think some of the people in Old (Fun)eral aren't true worshippers of 'death', and that's what death metal is all about. If not, I'll call it life-metal, fun-metal, or maybe trend-metal ... not death metal" (ibid.: 32). Or as another core member of the newly established Black Metal scene said in 1992 in a private letter: "Death to humanitarian life metal pigs." The making of Death Metal into a cool, socially beneficial and quite non-committal musical style gradually broke down the boundaries that were set between it and other mainstream cultural expressions, and between it and certain cultural and societal influences. It got too accessible, watered out, used up. As a primary expressive arena for unconventional young male individuals, the Death Metal scene seemed lost forever:

It's a big trend today to look totally normal with these goddam jogging suits and sing about 'important matters' and call it Death Metal. These people can die, they have betrayed the scene. Death Metal is for brutal people who are capable of killing, it's not for idiotic children who want to have a funny hobby after school. ... Death and Black Metal is my life. (Euronymous in *Slayer* 1990/1991: 33)

Even if some believed, or hoped, that the popularity of Death Metal was a passing phenomenon, and that only the true, dedicated musicians and fans would remain in its wake, some also seemed to realize that they had to create something relatively new, a new underground: "[T]he scene is dead. I'd just like to save the rest of it and create a new one with only brutal people. Everyone else – FUCK OFF" (ibid.: 35). Beginning with a set of traditional elements from the world of metal in general, underground metal enthusiasts more or less consciously set out to create a style that they did not believe could ever possibly be turned into a

demanding product in a commercial landscape.²¹ What mattered now was to separate “the false” from “the true” by way of an aesthetics and a cast of mind that in its inhumanity, its unsavory and extreme worship of darkness impossibly could gain attraction in contemporary society, neither among potential consumers, such as cool teenagers, nor in the culture or life-style industry. The modern, Western world had never before seen anything like the subculture that now was being generated.

The Birth of the Black Metal Anti-Aesthetic

Black Metal aesthetic is an anti-aesthetic in the sense that it entails an adoption and development of unconventional, culturally illegitimate aesthetical standards, of the “grotesque” bodily style (Hetherington 1998: 72, 146). One aspired to ugliness, abomination, primitiveness. The anti-aesthetic played an all-important part in the process of shaping, expressing and consolidating both individual and collective identity. It worked as a kind of coded and expressive tribal symbolism, comprehensible to no one but the initiated and chosen. It was the glue of the scene, that which united “the dedicated”, “the true ones”, not least by communication of who one is *not* and what one does *not* adhere to. Thus the boundary drawing, distancing and culture-criticizing dimensions of the anti-aesthetic are central:

I'd like to see a scene where the music is something gruesome and evil that normal people fear, and where the people in the scene all look like Hellhammer or old Sarcophago, spikes and chains rule! The scene must ... be out of reach for normal idiots, because I think it should be for extreme people. (Euronymous in *Slayer* 1990/1991: 35)

The sound technician “Pyttén”, who has contributed to the production of a great number of Black Metal releases, said that this might find expression in the use of “elements that in ordinary music ... have been discarded as ugly”²², and exemplifies this with ugly sounds, bad playing and distorted guitars (Mørk 2002: 75). Black Metal vocals can be described as an unarticulated, at times brutish hissing, spitting or screaming, contrary to what is thought of as a proper or beautiful singing voice. Besides having a personal feel to it, the acoustic dimension were to cultivate an antisocial, subversive atmosphere by being unpolished, cold, disharmonious, thin, rough and violent, in contrast to the kind of music that the majority appreciates as pleasant, which is relatively harmonious, distinctly structured, well-arranged, rhythmic and professionally perfected in different ways. The anti-aesthetics was

²¹ Through the adoption of certain (anti-)aesthetic, “traditional” metal components the Black Metal scene expressively signaled that it was in search of the “uncool” and authentic (see i.e. Moynihan and Söderlind 1998; Hansen 2001). This might also have contributed to a sense of substance and coherence in life (Mørk 2002).

²² My translation.

also reflected lyrically, both through its often high-flown style and the tendency to be about occult phenomena, hatred, violence, death, evil, suffering, war, etc.

The wish to repel and offend was also expressed visually and behaviourally in different manners, which is shown by the following visions that the singer and song-writer “Dead” had for Mayhem’s concerts:

Nobody shall still be left in a place we'd played at. I want people to feel disgust when they see us live.... I think of having rotted flesh in the air condition. Work out something more with the cutting in myself and have something more than only impaled pigheads, maybe an impaled cow or something. (*Putrefaction zine*, 1990: 28)

When it came to bodily appearance the ideal was to be rather thin, sinewy and sharp-edged, “unpolished” and as pale as can be. It was also preferable to look a bit unkempt, and some cut and burnt their own skin. A few years back I was told a story about a member of the scene who did not manifest “the correct” bodily appearance, which serves to show that the specifically anti-aesthetic bodily ideal within Black Metal had to do with gender issues.²³ This guy was increasingly troubled by the soft and chubby character of his body, and once in a while got mocked because of this. In order to change his looks he sometimes beat the knuckles of his hands sore. For a period of time he almost stopped eating, and he even scratched himself in the face with a knife. Desperate acts which aimed at the achievement of a shape that stood as truly masculine. But the traits and motivations underlying these strategies was not approved as properly masculine by his circle, or rather, as the correct Black Metal attitude. Seemingly signaling an inferiority complex, a need of acceptance and a preoccupation with food and looks, they were instead conceived of as feminine, pathetic and all-too-human. On the contrary, the alleged self-torture of the infamous and seemingly extremely evil-worshipping Swedish band Abruption during the recording of the album *Obscuritatem Advoco Amplectere Me* was held in great esteem, as it was considered extreme and evil (*Helvete* 1992: 2).

However disgusting and destructive it may seem to the outside world, the worship of darkness and the anti-aesthetic (which are two sides to the same story), in particular the aggressive and violent aspects, imply taking an active interest in the shaping of one's own identity, view and way of life. It can be seen as a means to “exorcise the emblems” that postmodern consumer society has imprinted and is constantly imprinting in males, that is the beating and bleeding out, the ridding oneself of “the varnish from degenerating civilizational influence, [to] reinstate pure and hardened masculinity” as the basis on which a new (personal) world order are to be built upon (Kolnar 2003: 200, 231). The Black Metal subculture is a manifest rejection of most things valued and desired by ordinary people and

²³ With regard to the privacy of the individual I will not state the reference of this information.

trendy teenagers, e.g. a tanned and flawless skin, sleek and gym-shaped bodies, entertainment, fun and various forms of pleasures. The "ugliness" and relative timelessness or constancy of the Black Metal image is both a critique of culturally dominant aesthetics and of the fluctuating, shallow and capitalistic fashion industry and consumerism more generally. In addition, by making black and white the scene's prevalent code of colour, especially in regard to the "uniform", signalled a celebration of seriousness, harshness and primitivity in contrast to the light-hearted and tolerant rich colouring of the blinking "neon culture".

The Anti-La Vey- "Campaign"

Black Metal is at times interpreted as decisively influenced by the Satanism of Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan. These interpretations overlook the fact that Black Metal's attitude towards LaVey and the Church of Satan has all along been both ambiguous and often even dismissive.²⁴ Eurononymous created a symbol which conveyed an explicitly anti-LaVeyan stance: it was framed as a prohibitory sign encircled by the catchwords "no mosh", "no core", "no fun", "no trend". This symbol was for instance used in connection with record releases on his own label Deathlike Silence Productions. Just as commercial, mainstream Death Metal was considered a betrayal of what this form of expressive art was meant for, the Satanism that the Church of Satan offered was deemed as misrepresenting "true" Satanism. "It" from Abruptum referred to LaVey's sort of Satanism as "idiotic humanism", as a Christian-like peace-loving poisoning of "the name of evil", and continued thus: "Get lost, old geezer and take with you all the damn bands worshipping your word ... and hundreds of other fucking idiots. The true Satanist horde spreads evil and not words of sex and happiness" (*Helvete* 1992: 4).²⁵

The following quotation shows the opinion of "Faust" from Thorns and Emperor some time before his arrest:

[I]t is wrong to call bands who follow the path of Anton LaVey for Black Metal. Those who have read the 'Satanic' bible know that Anton LaVey stands for everything that's good in life and the worship of all kinds of pleasures which leads to big gratification for him and the members of the Church of Satan. ... [They are only a family club who wanna make sure that people get the best out of their earthly lives and nothing more than that.] He wants to make sure that Satanism gets a good reputation and that it can become something acceptable. And this is exactly how it is not meant to be. When people hear the word Satanism they

²⁴ The feeling is mutual: LaVey wasn't fond of what he perceived as herd music, and the Church of Satan and most self-identified Satanists in the LaVeyan tradition take exception to the perceived stupidity and lack of balance in the style and criminal acts of the Black Metal scene in Norway [editor's note].

²⁵ My translation.

freeze on their backs and they shall be really afraid of the Satanists ... (*Slayer* 1995: 4)²⁶

Although the Social Darwinism of the Church of Satan overlaps with ideas within Black Metal to a certain extent, its Satanism was perceived to be lacking subversive and substantial identity processing potential. LaVey's hedonistic and utilitarian brand of Satanism was all in all tailor-made for the contemporary Western world, i.e. postmodern consumer society, and that was its main and insurmountable problem. The official, law-abiding and thereby accessible and open character of the Church of Satan probably reinforced the Black Metal scene's hostility towards it.

The Demand for Originality

The dawning Black Metal scene's demand for innovation and uniqueness served as another vital part of the struggle to distinguish oneself from mainstream Death Metal and commercialism. Bands which at the outset had been unique within the Death Metal genre was made more or less standard by numerous new bands copying them – bands that "Dead" tended to label "clone-bands". To the question of what a band has to do in order to be taken as original, Morbid from the Greek band Necromantia answered: "Never sa[y], 'we'll make a song like Morbid Angel, Death etc', or to be satisfied when people say 'they sound like....'. NEVER! Be what you are, play what you play, no matter how hard it's to the audience to swallow it. Create, not copy!!" (*Orcustus* 1992: 21)

Critical voices within the scene claimed that instead of giving innovative contributions to the scene that helped keep the true Death Metal spirit alive, these so-called "clone" or mainstream bands along with the commercial music industry converted an artistic expression into mass-produced, insignificant and hollow signs, unable to ravish and transform, inspire and collect. Aspirations to become rich and famous "rock stars" were deemed corrupting and incompatible with a sincere and individual approach to the music. Accordingly, within the Black Metal scene *original creative power* became a distinguishing mark. It was taken a sign of self-confidence, genius and strength on behalf of the musician(s) in the band, in contrast to unimaginative musicians and bands that manifested herd-mentality. Immortal from the West coast of Norway had their own way of putting it in the cover of the album *Battles in the North*: "The 'IMMORTAL' Single stands forever as a mark against those who so pathetically tried to follow us lyrically and musically... YOU ARE TRULY BENEATH US."

²⁶ This interview with Faust contained utterances that point to a more traditional, religious conception of Satanism, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter to assess clearly exceptional expressions of what seem to be a single individual's religious Satanism.

The demand for consistency that arose in contrast to mainstream Death Metal was knit to a rejection of what was perceived as an abysmal gap between musical practice and life style within the Death Metal scene. The development of this into a demand for action, that is to live one's life according to one's musical affiliation, was the point where Black Metal differed most radically from all previous Metal scenes. "A" expressed that black metallers were "expected to hold extreme viewpoints and to do the things that earlier on had been spoken of in band's lyrics" (Grude 2007). According to a couple of members of the scene the stress that was put on containing a Satanic profile from around 1990, also led to a considerably rougher mentality in the sense that "soft" or "feminine" values and traits such as kindness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love was rejected. One should rather aim at being bad and vicious, especially towards people one did not know very well or had any close relationships to, as well as towards the rest of society (ibid.). Actions are generally more binding and demanding of the individual than words, and would in this context help to distinguish the "true" from the "false", the brave from the cowards, the strong from the weak, to make it simple. In other words, those who showed themselves to be Black Metal, that they were truly dedicated to this music culture, were accepted as (more or less) "true" and worthy of respect. An inevitable consequence of this way of thinking was a threatening and aggressive attitude towards representatives of the "trendy" Death Metal scene, especially the Swedish one. Insulting utterances and slogans in fanzines, flyers and on records, threatening letters, demonstrative behaviour at concerts, and even physical attacks directed at individual Death Metal band members, and even Attempts to live up to the harsh, "Satanic" mentality and image also resulted in the aforementioned church arson, vandalization of graveyards, breaking into sacred buildings and arsenals, as well as homicide. Varg Vikernes maintained that the Black Metal scene had deviating attitudes towards killing and violent behaviour in general: "The attitude towards killing, there was no ideological antagonisms with respect to that. ... If anyone had killed a priest, a preacher of this sort of Asian regurgitation, then there would scarcely be anyone within the scene that would find it regrettable" (ibid.).

The connection between violence and male identity processing is not least present where violence is a reaction against menacingly effeminizing impulses. The murder that "Faust" committed when stabbing an unfamiliar, gay man who by Faust's account more or less subtly had invited to some kind of intimate dealings, can be viewed in light of this:

They thought it was a little tough ... 'cause nobody had until then done such a serious act [to have killed a man]. ... It had after all crossed a line, from committing criminal damage, as it was called, to committing such a serious act as murder. So clearly, this was looked at in a positive way ... [I]n that time the scene was very closed, it had its own moral values. (Ibid.)

The homicide indubitably led to an elevation of Faust's position within the scene, although Faust himself has stressed more than once that he committed the murder neither for the sake of his own personal or his band's status-elevation. To commit a crime in order to gain access to and respect within the scene on the one hand and to do it because one is Black Metal as a person and "by nature" on the other – these are to completely different things. In an interview that was done some time after his imprisonment, Faust claimed that not even his circle of ordinary acquaintances got surprised when they heard of his killing and church arson: "They knew that I sooner or later would do something like this" (Slayer 1995: 7). He was concerned with appearing as "true", far above posers and wannabees. In an interview that was done approximately a year earlier, before his arrest, Faust uttered: "I have never said that I'm evil and such things, because I'm not into this just for the sake of being evil. This is what I wanna do, this is my life, so then it's just a trifle whether it's 'evil' or not" (ibid.: 5).

There have always been individuals within the scene who have taken a stand against its criminal aspects, individuals who have been into Black Metal purely for the artistic dimension. I would nevertheless dare to say that the majority of black metallers – musicians, fanzine editors and fans alike – support at least some of its immoral and illegal aspects. Added to this is the fact that there has hardly been any trace of regret among the ones remaining as well as among newcomers, although some pulled out of the scene when the media coverage was peaking and the police and judicial system tightened their grip. Faust has said that he did not wish undone any of the criminal acts that had the Norwegian Black Metal scene as its origin, except for the murder of Euronymous:

I think it's perfectly all right that we burn churches and about the murder I have committed ... well, it's something I always wanted to do, so I gladly serve 14 years in prison for it. But honestly, I think the murder of Euronymous was a tragedy. I don't understand at all the point of killing him while there are so many other people who should rather be killed. But anyway, shit happens and it is nothing we can do about it. (Ibid.: 6)

In response to the court's question whether he regretted the murder of Euronymous, "Greven" said: "He is dead, I am alive!" To have pangs of conscience when one emerges victorious from a struggle, when one comes out of a fight alive and (in one's own eyes) with dignity, obviously seems absurd and unnatural to him.²⁷ In an environment where action and the capability to stand by one's words is idealized, regret is taken as an indication of weakness. The phrasing "cowardly men talks, real men acts" had a major influence within the scene for a period of time for quite a few members. It serves to show not only the limited value that

²⁷ The nature and result of the conflict between Greven/Vikernes and Euronymous/Aarseth, as well as Vikernes' own portrayal of it, has been, and to a certain extent still is, a controversial and sensitive topic within the Black Metal scene.

was being attributed to words, reason and dialogue within the Black Metal scene, but also that the idealistic demand for action was really about establishing and maintaining masculine identity.

The Insufficiency of Words

Within Black Metal the body is in many ways given precedence as field of expression and experience. Its orientation towards sensuousness and comprehensiveness contain a dimension of cultural criticism in that it can be seen as a negation of the Christian and modern civilization's disparagement and disciplining of the body, of intuition, fantasy, mysticism etc. Bodily strategies that exist separate from, prior to or exceed the limits set by reason, are placed above words, dialogue and rationality, and functions as primary and indispensable emancipatory strategies for young men who more or less have been situated in postmodern consumer society from birth. According to Kolnar, consumption and consumerism is something that the people of today *is* (Kolnar 2003: 196). Our whole mode of being is entangled in it – our entire way of desiring, feeling, thinking, acting and choosing. And it is precisely for this reason and because of the forceful and violent way it has been and *is constantly being* impressed into people's body and mind, that it has to be stopped and "drained out" by way of "wordless", e.g. aggressive, strategies: "The words, the dialogue, the negotiations are only 'skin-deep', they are unable to transform the deep structures of identity [and patterns of world-cognition] that consumer society has imprinted" (ibid.: 201).

The bodily domain has such a distinct and primary function with regard to the purification and restructuring of the self and its perception of the world, because our body is what is most intimate to us, because we "are" our body in the sense that we depend on it for our existence. We exist in the world through our body and also perceive the world through it. The significance of the body when it comes to change, articulation and consolidation of the self, as well as to creation of existential meaning, is in the context of Black Metal reflected through its clear connection with issues of masculinity. Firstly, a bodily centered worship of darkness constitutes an immediate and powerful source of masculine fullness and energy. Secondly, it is a manifestation of and thereby in many instances leads to incorporation and enforcement of ideal conceptions of manhood. In my opinion church arson is linked to the formation of masculine identity on different levels. As a physical act church arson might make real and thereby effect the internalization of the idea of action as an evidence of strong and authentic masculinity. The construction of a masculine identity through church arson has probably been reinforced by the fact that such a deed are likely to represent a gateway to extraordinary, "transgressional" bodily experiences and presence, while at the same time must have formed a more or less definite break with the prevailing and common cultural and societal surroundings. Kolnar maintains that "it is via the transforming properties of violence that a homeless masculinity can establish a bodily and mental point of departure that

enables a totally different and far more autonomous view on the cultural field and one's place in it" (op.cit.: 203).

Conclusion: "A gate out of hell into the void of death", Part II

"A Lost Forgotten Sad Spirit" (1991) by Burzum launches a very critical view on contemporary Western civilization and reflects a comprehensive existential pessimism. Visions of "Hell" as a vital and dynamic place belonging to the past, where there was also room for "temperatures" and sentiments such as cold and hatred, stands in sharp contrast to the contemporary world which is draining out the life and energy of the lyrical subject, and which neither offers nor ever will offer any real or vital existence:

The fire in the sky is extinguished / Blue waters no longer cry / The dancing of trees has stopped / The stream of freshness from cold winds / Exists no longer / The rain has stopped to drip / From the sky / Still dripping exists / From the veins of a nearly dead boy / Once there was hatred / Once there was cold / Now / There is only / A dark stone tomb / With an altar / An altar which / serves as a bed / A bed of eternal sleep / The dreams of the human in sleep / Are dreams of relief / A gate out of hell / Into the void of death / Yet undisturbed / The human sleep / And one day / Will the grave be unlocked / And the soul / Must return to this world / But this time as / A lost forgotten sad spirit / Doomed / To haunt / Endlessly.

Both the world of today and the existence of the lyrical subject is depicted as petrified, void of life, as an empty, vast and unending deathlike corridor. People are stupefied and imperturbable in their everlasting dreams of "relief". I see these lyrics as a critique of modern societies' secular form of the metaphysics of light: Man's want of a convenient and comfortable life and the tendency to shun the sad and difficult – the dark – sides of life. The lost, forgotten, sad spirit in this song cannot help but strive to awake people, to make them aware of and engaged in changing the life world back into luxuriant and vital "Hell", but it is a hopeless mission.

In my eyes, the Black Metal worship of darkness is a way of taking a clear stand against the metaphysics of light in modern, Western civilization. Black Metal's uncompromising and exaggerated worship of darkness has attempted to break down the value-laden wall that culturally for centuries has intended to keep life and death, joy and sorrow, darkness and light apart. The point has been to wake people up from their slumber, make them think, as people's minds are believed to be imprinted and impregnated with delusive images as to what a truly good or ideal life consists in via existing ideologies and the mass media. The human pursuit of different kinds of enjoyment in a modern and partly overprotective society is seen as degenerating and in the long run diminishing the quality of life. The attempt to isolate and banish illness, pain, misery and death from the human

domain, to make natural and inevitable aspects of life into something unnatural and solely destructive that humans at all costs has to be protected from, has made humans blasé and their life easy and empty. But it has also weakened our innate capacity to handle the hard facts of life. However far-fetched and extreme worship of darkness might be, it neither implies glorification nor romantic aestheticization of it. The Black Metal scene has wanted to push darkness in all its horror in the faces and into the lives of people, and it even conveys a willingness to incorporate it into one's own life in spite of (or perhaps precisely because of) what it is. It has among other things to do with cultivation of courage and strength, as it takes courage to relate to darkness qua darkness, which the following statement by Euronymous illustrates:

... I think it's great that [snuff-movies] are forbidden. If they were legal and easily accessible, all the small trend children would be watching them, and then it would not be something extreme anymore. ... It's just the same what happened to death metal – it became something everyone could buy in every store, something normal and accessible for everyone. All the mystic and evil atmosphere is GONE. I do not think snuff-movies are funny, I think they are DARK. I've seen people laugh at them, but that's probably because they will not be mentally able to take the PAIN and EVIL on over themselves. That is the best way to watch such a movie, to try to FEEL the actual pain of the victims. It becomes much more gruesome then, and that's great. One must be alone in the darkness and suffer with the victims. If you watch it with other people, they will often talk, laugh and so on, and then you get more distanced from it. It's not supposed to be funny (death to fun), it's much better when it's depressive. (*Orcutus* 1992: 37)

It is worth noticing the interesting constellation that the capitalized, and probably unconsciously stressed, words frame: "GONE", "DARK", "PAIN", "EVIL", "FEEL". In order to (re)gain an enhanced sensation and awareness of self and life one has to go through pain, evil, darkness. One has to challenge and surpass one's own sensitivity and limits, not only as a strategy restricted to a certain life phase but as an integral part of one's existence. Within Black Metal traditional and essentialistic conceptions of manliness are being activated through practices demanding courage, capacity for violence and endurance of pain (and thereby mental and physical strength), ability to act and determination. Pain and violence have made central ingredients in manhood rites in various cultures throughout history (Kolnar 2003: 202). Besides this, war and violence is historically speaking linked to men and often considered as carving men out of boys, as necessary for the cultivation of masculinity. In the song "War" on Burzum's album *Burzum*, music-making is fundamentally related such issues:

This is War / I lie Wounded on Wintery Ground / With Hundred of Corpses around / Many Wounded Crawl Helplessly around / On the Blood Red Snowy

Ground // War // Cries of the (ha, ha) suffering sound / Cries for help to all their dear Moms // War // Many hours of music / Many drops of blood / Many shiverings and now I am dead / And still we must never give up // War.

This unvarnished depiction of a bleak battlefield reveals a lack of compassion for its suffering and helpless victims. Despite being in the same boat as the others on the battlefield, the lyrical subject seems insensitive or indifferent even to his own misery, and also refuses to go down with his own suffering. The parallel that is being drawn between this battlefield scenario and making music tells us something of the existential scope of this dark form of art, as I have touched on earlier. Black Metal is said to be at the very core of their being, inseparably tied to their life and who they are.

"War" seems to idealize an unconditional will to self-sacrifice, an indomitable and indefatigable idealism, and gives a voice to the band's dismissal of both the incongruence within Death Metal, the typically postmodern attitude to life and various expressions of the metaphysics of light in contemporary, Western society. As proposed by the drummer Erlend Erichsen/Sgt. Erichsen from Molested and Gorgoroth, the Black Metal subculture may be understood as a Romantic movement, a Romantic kick against the specifically postmodern mentality that is marked by a certain ironical attitude and superficiality in relation to self and life, thereby expressing a lack of capacity, courage or will to passionate commitment and to show "the world" who one really is (Mørk 2002: 87). Instead postmodern individuals seem to hide behind this mask of irony and adjust all too easily to people, situations and roles. The specifically postmodern individualism and attitude to life differs widely from Black Metal which combines radical individualism with a focus on authenticity and continuity, meaning coherence, originality and capacity to take idealistic/revolutionary action, as well as a conception of ancestral roots and cultural tradition.

The End?

The anti-aesthetic foundation and distinguishing ideals of Black Metal reflect a desperate or energetic attempt to hold one's own against what may seem as a constant outer threat, an incessant and intimidating pressure on one's sense of distinct identity and meaning from civilizational forces. The almost paranoid, rapidly increasing mistrust in even *Black Metal* musicians' and bands' alleged truthfulness, expressed a doubt as to whether the scene's powerful strategies were sufficient to maintain Black Metal as a "pure" and "true", understood as extreme and inaccessible, subculture. Accusations of falseness, weakness and so on began to fire back and forth within the scene. Besides this, "Samoth" from Emperor (among others) questioned the apparent ambivalence or double set of morals which broke surface with the murder of Euronymous:

If death and darkness is what they worship then the death of EURONYMOUS shouldn't be that hard to handle, but that doesn't mean we support that murder, though destroying BURZUM items is just as childish because the music of BURZUM is as dark as ever. (*Slayer* 1995: 9)

It was in other words not only the media coverage of the many extreme and illegal circumstances which laid the foundation of radical changes within the Black Metal scene. Because the two perhaps most marked, charismatic and influential individuals of the circle disappeared with the killing of Euronymous – Euronymous was now dead, “Greven” was after some time arrested and sentenced to 21 years in prison – basic questions regarding the scene's self-image and self-presentation, what being sincere and true mean within the framework of Black Metal, what the worship of darkness is really about, were acutely as well as lastingly activated. It was first and foremost solving the murder of Euronymous which, probably unintended, tore the circle apart and fragmented the scene and within a relatively short time span turned Black Metal into what perhaps Euronymous most of all dreaded: A rather acceptable, decent, commercial, standardized, mainstream and trendy music culture – although there still are musicians, bands and fans who scorn this development. Even if the internal discourse which got accentuated and accelerated as a consequence of the killing of Euronymous, displays a rather normal and healthy commitment within the scene, it also gave expression to a diversity that made Black Metal more exposed and susceptible to the disintegrating forces one attempted to combat.

References

- Agaliarept, issue 1, 1994.
- Bossius, Thomas 2003. *Med framtiden i backspeglen. Black metal- och transkulturen. Ungdomar, musik och religion i en senmodern värld*. I serien: Skrifter från Institutionen för musikvetenskap, Göteborgs universitet, nr. 74. Göteborg: Daidalos.
- Grude, Torstein 2007. Written interview material collected by Torstein Grude/Piraya Film in connection with the production of the documentary *Satan rir media* (1997). I will keep the anonymity of his informants.
- Hansen, Petter 2001. *Fra gravstøtte til statsstøtte: en kultursosiologisk studie av black metal*. Unpublished Masters Thesis in Sociology, University of Oslo. *Helvete*, katalog nr. 1, 1992.
- Henriksen, Jan-Olav 1999. *På grensen til Den andre. Om teologi og postmodernitet*. Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal.
- Hetherington, Kevin 1998. *Expressions of Identity. Space, Performance, Politics*. UK: SAGE Publications.
- Kolnar, Knut 2003. *Det ambisiøse selv*. Dr. art. avhandling (Ph.D. dissertation), Filosofisk institutt, NTNU Trondheim, 2003.

- Losten, Peder 2001. “Ödethar skänkt mig en gåva. Brevväxling med kyrkbrännare.” In *Hundra år av rörelse. Jönköpings läns museum 1901–2001*. Småländska kulturbilder 2001, pp. 113–136.
- Mørk, Gry B. 2002. *Drømmer om fortiden, minner for fremtiden. Norsk black metals norrøne orientering, 1992–1995*. Unpublished Masters Thesis in Religious Studies, University of Tromsø. Contains written and oral interview material produced in connection with the dissertation in my main subject.
- Moynihan, Michael & Didrik Søderlind 1998. *Lords of Chaos. The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*. Venice, CA: Feral House.
- Orcustus*, issue 1 (2), 1992.
- Putrefaction zine*, issue 3, 1990.
- Sadistic Noise*, issue 3, 1991.
- Sægrov, Jon-Arne 1996. *Svart ungdom*. Unpublished Masters Thesis in Pedagogy, University of Oslo.
- Slayer*, vol. VIII, 1990/1991 (doubtful date).
- Slayer*, vol. X, 1995 (doubtful date – could be published in late 1994 or early 1996).
- Torgovnick, Marianna 1996. *Primitive Passions. Men, Women and the Quest for Ecstasy*. New York: Knopf.
- Vikernes, Varg 1995. Radio interview with Varg Vikernes in the series *Gamle synder*, P4, 1995.
- Witoszcze, Nina 1998. *Norske naturmytologier. Fra Edda til økofilosofi*. Oslo: Pax forlag.

Albums

- Burzum
- Burzum* (Recorded: 1992/Released: 1992)
- Aske* (REC.: 1992/REL: 1993)
- Det som engang var* (REC: 1992/REL: 1993)
- Hvis lyset tar oss* (REC: 1992/REL: 1994)
- Filosofem* (REC: ?/ REL: 1996)
- Darkthrone
- A Blaze in the Northern Sky* (REC: 1991/REL: 1992)
- Under a Funeral Moon* (REC: 1993/REL: 1993)
- Transilvanian Hunger* (REC: 1993/REL: 1994)
- Panzerfaust* (REC: 1994/REL: 1995)
- Gorgoroth
- Under the Sign of Hell* (REC: 1996/REL: 1997?)
- Antichrist* (REC: 1994+1996/REL: 1996?)
- Destroyer* (REL: 1998)

Italian Martyrs of “Satanism”: Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni¹

Andrea Menegotto

The Background: Satanism and Satanists in Italy²

The statistics on *organized Satanism* (also called “adult Satanism” (Introvigne 1997)) can be reconstructed in a fairly precise way, as it is practically impossible that an *organized* group may completely escape the survey carried out by experts and police organs. An estimate to calculate the number of people adhering to organized Satanic groups in Italy (referring to the year 2003) can count about 240 members which can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1 Adherents to groups of organized Satanism In Italy

Bambini di Satana	50
Chiesa di Satana (rationalist)	20
Chiesa di Satana (occultist)	20
Minor groups	150
Altogether	240

Source: CESNUR 2003.

Therefore, despite the numbers often supplied by mass media – those who propose such numbers should, of course, be capable of supporting their statements

¹ This chapter is based on the paper “Italian Martyrs of Satanism: Sister Maria Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni” presented at the CESNUR Conference *Religion and Democracy: An Exchange of Experiences Between East and West*, Vilnius, Lithuania, April 9–12 2003.

² With particular reference to the Italian situation, see the important studies in Introvigne 1994, 1997. For a classification of Satanism within the widest magic current, see Menegotto 2003. On the recent controversies on Satanism, see Richardson et al. 1991.