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Norges Våpen

Cultural Memory and Uses of History
in Norwegian Black Metal



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Abstract

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This dissertation examines uses of history and expressions of cultural memory in Norwegian black metal. Formed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Norwegian black metal seemed at odds with many of the stereotypes of Norway. The genre is an extreme style of heavy metal music that has been associated with burning churches, desecrating graves, and committing murders. Yet, Norway is often perceived as wealthy with sublime natural beauty and high levels of equality. Since the late 1990s, Norwegian black metal has increasingly received positive recognition and support from Norwegian government agencies and cultural institutions who have deemed this style of music a cultural product of Norway.

In exploring the relationship between Norwegian black metal and Norway, two primary questions are asked: what makes Norwegian black metal ‘Norwegian’ and what are its influences? To answer these questions, a theoretical approach based on Astrid Erll’s cultural memory complex is used. Included in this cultural memory complex are notions of individual and collective memory, both of which include concepts of nationalism as outlined by Benedict Anderson and Michael Billig. The source base for this dissertation includes the musical releases of over five hundred Norwegian black metal bands which were gathered and analyzed. Three primary categories, with corresponding subcategories, were identified to account for the ways Norwegian black metal bands have used history and expressed cultural memory over a twenty-five-year period from 1988 to 2013.

This dissertation shows that Norwegian black metal has made frequent use of history and has actively negotiated parts of the identity-making process from nineteenth-century Norway. In connecting to Norwegian identity in such a way, these bands link to historically construed notions of *likhet* and egalitarian individualism as identified by the Norwegian anthropologists Marianne Gullestad and Thomas Hylland Eriksen. They actively reproduce many of the same essentialized notions of Norwegian identity that create and maintain ethnic boundaries on Norwegian identity. By using history and expressing cultural memory in the way that they do, Norwegian black metal bands communicate that they are firmly Norwegian while, at the same time, reinforcing ethnocentric notions of Norwegian identity.

Keywords: Norwegian black metal, cultural memory, nationalism, national romanticism, uses of history, popular music, egalitarian individualism, *likhet*, Norway

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Christopher Thompson
Norrköping 2018

Introduction: Setting the Stage

The year is 2014 and an eagerly anticipated exhibition is being unveiled in Warsaw, Poland. A buzz has been building for several weeks leading up to an event that is set to showcase a series of photographs focusing on the striking visuals of Norwegian black metal. Only a decade before, in 2004, the Norwegian black metal band Gorgoroth had generated controversy during a live performance in Krakow after being accused of breaking the country's blasphemy law.¹ In the days leading up to the exhibition, the Norwegian embassy addressed some of the concerns and questions surrounding this style of music. According to a report by *Polskie Radio*, the Norwegian embassy released a statement claiming that, "Norway is known throughout the world for its superb music scene, with its mythical atmosphere, provocative character, and strong expression" and that "a special place has been taken by Norwegian black metal, which has become one of our cultural export products."² Fully aware of the disbelief such a statement might be met with outside of Norway, the embassy continued by saying that "[it wanted] to communicate to the Polish public that it treats black metal the same as it would any other cultural phenomenon" and that "contrary to appearances, metal musicians are often just ordinary citizens—devoted parents, lovers of mountain scenery, scientists and teachers."³

¹ This concert, which was held at an old television studio, was recorded for a DVD that was eventually released in 2008. The venue itself was not unaccustomed to hosting extreme metal acts as fellow Norwegian black metal band Enslaved also recorded for a DVD at the same location.

² "Ambassador promotes Norwegian black metal." *Polskie Radio Dla Zagranicy*, 2014.

³ "Ambassador promotes Norwegian black metal." *Polskie Radio Dla Zagranicy*, 2014. It should be noted over that the public opinion of black metal in Poland has been slowly moving towards greater acceptance and has been more normalized. Much of this centers around the band Behemoth and lead vocalist/guitarist Adam 'Nergal' Darski's romantic involvement with a Polish pop star, coaching role on the Polish version of *The Voice*, and diagnosis and eventual recovery from leukemia. However, it should also be mentioned that Darski has been charged and tried in the past for destroying The Bible and blasphemy in Poland.

Two years later, in 2016, another such scenario unfolded, but this time in New York City to less controversy and greater fanfare. The Norwegian consulate in New York City hosted a mingle in preparation for an event celebrating the country's cultural heritage.⁴ The event in question was not showcasing Norway's rich folk traditions or the works of Edvard Munch. Rather, it featured the Norwegian bands Enslaved and BardSpec and was the second of two such events following a successful and sold-out debut in London earlier in 2016.⁵ Along with the concerts, a special workshop was planned with Einar Selvik of the neo-folk band Warduna. Aside from his work in Warduna, Selvik was a long-time member of Gorgoroth and, more recently, had contributed music to the hit television series *Vikings*. The events hosted at Scandinavia House, the New York City headquarters of The American-Scandinavian Foundation, were held in conjunction with By Norse, a platform that promotes Norwegian artistic endeavors including music, film, and literature. The fact that Enslaved, BardSpec, and Selvik were involved is not a coincidence. By Norse was initiated by Enslaved co-founder and BardSpec originator Ivar Bjørnson along with Selvik as a vehicle to promote Norwegian culture. Though a relatively new organization, its ambitions have been to support Norwegian art and promote Norwegian culture. While the kind of artistic activities endorsed were straightforward, what Norwegian means in this context is blurred and not firmly articulated by By Norse. However, those more familiar with the work of By Norse's founders would have understood what was implied. Bjørnson's work with both Enslaved and BardSpec as well as Selvik's work with Warduna and *Vikings* all maintained a distinct Viking and Norse mythology inspired theme. With this in mind, the meaning of Norwegian becomes clearer. By Norse and its founders implicitly tie the concept of 'Norwegian' with parts of Norway's history that are not necessarily inclusive and run contrary to inclusions of other cultures that recent immigration has brought. Despite the myriad of potential problems of an official governmental institution and representative of the state supporting such a view of Norwegian culture, the consulate's promotion of the By Norse event reiterated the sentiment expressed by the embassy in Warsaw two years before.

The support Norwegian black metal has received in recent years stands in stark contrast to its public perception twenty years ago. The statements released by the Norwegian embassy in Warsaw in 2014 and the New York City consulate in 2016 warmly embrace black metal and see its artists as productive members of Norwegian culture and society. Yet, in the mid-1990s there was a distinct sense of trepidation regarding the rising black

⁴ Handelman, 2016.

⁵ "The Vikings are Coming! Noisy Presents Enslaved, Warduna, and More at New York By Norse." *Vice: Noisy*, 2016.

metal trend among the country's youth. This sentiment is expressed in a 1995 *New York Times* article titled "Norway Celebrates a Millennium of Christianity Despite Fires." Reporting from Oslo, the article explains that the celebrations of Norway's one thousand year anniversary of Christianity have been marred by three years of arson attacks aimed at the country's most beloved and oldest churches.⁶ According to the article, Arne Huuse, the director of Norway's National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, commonly known as Kripos, had little doubt regarding who was behind the fires saying that "[the arsonists] are telling the police and the public who has done this" and that Kripos was "quite sure there are Satanists standing behind these criminal acts."⁷ After giving a brief overview of Norway's conversion to Christianity, the article returns to the church burnings saying that members of congregations all over Norway have volunteered to keep watch over the churches at night and that,

the police say that hundreds of people in Oslo and the west coast cities of Bergen and Stavanger are involved in Satan worship. Chief Public Prosecutor Bjørn Soknes says most are young men infatuated by a Norwegian strain of heavy metal music called black metal.⁸

At the end of the article, and summarizing the general anxiety about the arsonists and black metal as a whole, a volunteer helping rebuild the destroyed Fantoft church in Bergen exclaims "there must be something wrong in the community as a whole when young people resort to this kind of expression."⁹ Such acts along with the arrest, trial, and incarceration of Varg Vikernes, the believed Satanist ringleader, sparked a media frenzy and public outrage that further pushed black metal to the fringes of acceptable society and positioned it as a threat to the social and cultural fabric of Norway.

The outrage and concern expressed about black metal in this article is far removed from the glowing acceptance offered in more recent years. In considering this change it is fair to ask how such a shift in perception could have occurred. One could simply assert that as a marketable form of Norwegian art it is unsurprising that Norwegian black metal would receive some form of recognition from Norway's various governmental and cultural institutions. Bands, including Dimmu Borgir, and Satyricon, have attained commercial success and signed recording deals with large international record labels over the course of their careers. Combined with

⁶ "Norway Celebrates a Millennium of Christianity Despite Fires." *The New York Times*, 1995.

⁷ "Norway Celebrates a Millennium of Christianity Despite Fires." *The New York Times*, 1995.

⁸ "Norway Celebrates a Millennium of Christianity Despite Fires." *The New York Times*, 1995.

⁹ "Norway Celebrates a Millennium of Christianity Despite Fires." *The New York Times*, 1995.

the international commercial appeal generated by some in Norwegian black metal, domestic accolades have been awarded to a number of bands associated with the scene. This has included bands not just being nominated for, and winning, the *Spellemannpris*, but also the awarding of monetary stipends and prizes to bands for their endeavors as musicians and artists contributing to Norwegian culture.¹⁰ While this sort of recognition accounts for the fact that Norwegian black metal has transcended its once transgressive status, the question of what it contributes to Norwegian culture is less clear. Though it may seem reasonable to assume that the status of this music in Norway has risen because of its commercial success, it must still be remembered that black metal is an extreme form of heavy metal music and much of it lacks widespread appeal. Despite the success of some bands, many of the over five hundred black metal bands that have existed in Norway since the late 1980s have been confined to the underground, their music circulating only amongst dedicated fans. Though those fans may well consume enough merchandise to cover the costs of making and distributing music, it is typically not at a level that would allow musicians to live on their music alone. What this means then is that there must be something else involved in this style of music for it to have attained its status as a legitimate cultural product.

1.1 Transformations and Questions

This issue of normalization is brought up in an interview with Vebjørn Guttormsgaard Møllberg of the band Haust from 2011. In the interview, Møllberg discusses the degree of Norwegian black metal's normalization when asked about Vikings and Norse mythology in the music. Norwegian black metal bands are known for including these themes, but it is not necessarily something embraced by all those playing music associated with black metal in Norway.¹¹ Haust, along with a handful of other Norwegian bands such as Årabrot, Okkultokrati, and Kvelertak, are notable for their application of black metal in a blend of styles including punk and hardcore. In terms of style, neither Haust nor the other bands comfortably fit into one musical category and are instead better described as playing some form of post-black metal or post-punk. Yet coming from Norway, these bands are able to reflect on how Norwegian black metal has influenced their music and are open about how they see Norwegian black metal's development since the early 1990s. As a member of Haust and contributor

¹⁰ The *Spellemannpris* is the Norwegian equivalent to the Grammy Awards in the United States or the *Grammis* in Sweden.

¹¹ "Årabrot And Necromantic Norway: An In Extremis Special." *The Quietus*, 2011.

to the post-black metal scene in Norway, Møllberg is well positioned to evaluate Norwegian black metal with a degree of critical distance. As such, he is cognizant of some of the problems Norwegian black metal has made visible and is critical of the style.

One of the foremost critiques of the genre rests on its preoccupation with Viking themes. This has, according to Møllberg, made Norwegian black metal a cliché.¹² More problematic, however, are the links Viking-related themes and symbols often have to nationalism and right-wing extremism. Though Kvelertak at times uses Viking-related themes, other bands associated with post-black metal in Norway have avoided such themes.¹³ Haust's fatigue and disillusionment with Norwegian black metal is reflected on the song "Nekromantik Norway" from the 2010 full-length album *Powers of Horror* which stresses the band's exhaustions from being referenced with Norwegian black metal.¹⁴ While "Nekromantik Norway" details the band's frustration with being associated with Norwegian black metal, Møllberg specifically criticizes the genre's association right-wing extremism. Such a critique is also amplified when considering the genre's violent past and propensity toward anti-Christianity, aspects that stand in contrast to the stereotype of Norwegian religiosity and the fact that Norway awards the Nobel Peace Prize. While it is easy to focus on the extreme politics of Norwegian black metal, its asocial tendencies, and association with violence, it is clear from the accolades and awards given to the bands and artists of the genre that its problematic tendencies have not hindered it from being considered a cultural product and a source through which Norwegian culture is distributed to the rest of the world.

It is from this point that the primary question of this dissertation begins: what exactly is Norwegian about Norwegian black metal and what are its influences? True, being from Norway technically allows for such a designation, though such superficial reasoning obscures many of the intricacies embedded in the making of the modern Norwegian state, the means through which identity was imagined, and its connection to the past. Møllberg and the By Norse event in New York City point to Vikings and Norse mythology as being a primary factor in this designation. While such an valuation is not wrong, it is nevertheless incomplete. Norwegian history, and its uses, has a significant presence in Norwegian black metal. Vikings and Norse mythology are indeed a part of this but even the most cursory of glances will recognize that there is more to this style of music than just subjects relating to the Viking era. Norwegian black metal reveals a myriad of content pertaining to Norway's history. Moreover, when

¹² "Arabrot And Necromantic Norway: An *In Extremis* Special." *The Quietus*, 2011.

¹³ See Kvelertak's song "Mjød" from the full-length record *Kvelertak* from 2010 which details the theft of Suttung's magical mead by Odin as described in the Prose Edda.

¹⁴ Haust. *Powers of Horror*. Fysisk Format FY022-1, 2010, compact disc.

historical themes are used it is always done through a romantic frame that is interwoven with nationalism and exceptionalism. Yet, it is important to recognize when and how these notions developed and, equally as important, to ask what it means when they are expressed through Norwegian black metal. This initial position then necessitates the following questions: in what ways does Norwegian black metal use history and what is reflected when it is used?

1.2 Theoretical Considerations: Norway's Introspective Anthropologists and Locating Cultural Memory

Norway's embrace of its once rebellious music style seemingly stands in direct opposition to the values that Norway prides itself on and reflects a tension in the country's identity. On the one hand Norway is a country known for its pristine nature, oil derived wealth, and high levels of equality. However, Norway is also determinedly inward, exclusive, and maintains a cautious distance from participation in international partnerships that do not explicitly suit its own needs.¹⁵ While these traits are not altogether opposites, an underlying tension persists. A cadre of Norwegian anthropologists have explored this tension through reflective studies of Norway. Of these researchers two have done much to demonstrate the duality present in Norwegian identity. Firstly, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marianne Gullestad, in exploring the invention of Norwegian identity, claim that the country's identity is heavily influenced by its rural and egalitarian traditions and that these historically informed customs have been the basis for conceptualizing unique meanings of equality, independence, and individualism.¹⁶ At the same time, Eriksen notes that Norway, for all of its stereotypes of eating *brunost*, wearing red woolen hats called *nisselue*, going cross-country skiing, is also highly advanced, as the country maintains relative low wealth inequality, full state welfare, and a high standard of living.¹⁷ Of course, it is impossible to ignore the role of

¹⁵ Examples of this behavior can be seen throughout the entirety of Norway's independence. After independence in 1905, Norway held fast to neutrality and non-alignment, a position that exploited by the Germans. Following the Second World War Norway became a founding partner of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Given their experience during the war and proximity to the Soviet Union, such a move is perhaps unsurprising. However, other than membership in NATO, Norway has rejected opportunities to join unions with other European states on numerous occasions. Most notably Norway rejected referendums concerning European Committee membership in 1972 and European Union membership in 1994.

¹⁶ Eriksen 1993, 17. Gullestad 1992, 183.

¹⁷ Eriksen 1993, 19-24.

Norway's sovereign wealth fund and the impact North Sea oil drilling has had on the country's small population. Yet, Norwegian society contains significant contradictions that permeate the formation of this identity and the imagining of equality, independence, and individualism in the Norwegian context.

In some sense, it is easy to dismiss such tensions as mere curious quirks of a bygone time that are only the result of a superficial adherence to tradition. However, such a defense begins to fall apart when considering the overt anxieties expressed in debates concerning the European Union (EU), the inclusion of ethnic minorities, and immigration. Since 2009, these anxieties have been visible in the parliamentary elections with the ascension of the right-leaning, populist political party *Fremskrittspartiet* to the *Storting*.¹⁸ What is evident then is that these tensions and concerns are reflective of a tendency to turn inward. However, it is fair to ask how this tendency toward inward retreat is related to concepts of equality, independence, and individualism in Norway. Like Eriksen, Marianne Gullestad points to an oblique notion of Norwegian identity. Rather than focusing on questions of nation or nationalism, Gullestad instead contends that the frames of everyday life define the borders of how notions of equality, independence, and individualism are expressed in the Norwegian context. While it might not be entirely possible to disaggregate these notions completely from collective forms of identity, they still inform how individual practices of identity are construed and frame part of the base from which the everyday occurs.

In a broader sense, the relationship between the everyday and equality, independence, and individualism are common among other Scandinavian welfare states, as they too are known for having a strong sense of collective solidarity. In this regard Norway is no different from its neighbors. Yet when trying to understand how this relationship is conceived in Norway, Gullestad points to the word *likhet* to demonstrate the underlying tensions between a peaceful, democratic ideal and reclusive exceptionalism.¹⁹ Gullestad explains that these tensions, while opaque, become clearer when considering how *likhet* is translated into English. In a common translation to English, *likhet* can be understood to mean 'equality,' but a fuller understanding of the word can be derived from its literal translation of either 'alike' or 'sameness.' This is further emphasized when considering the word as a prefix. As Gullestad notes, "*likeverd* (same of equal value), *likeberettigelse* (same or equal right), and *likestilling* (same or

¹⁸ *Fremskrittspartiet* or 'The Progress Party,' claims itself to be neo-liberal and conservative. Yet, like many other right-wing populist parties in Europe they are also Euro-skeptic and oppose immigration. In addition, the party stands for the promotion of 'Western' and 'Norwegian' values and cultural heritage and supports Norway's involvement in NATO.

¹⁹ Gullestad 1992, 184. Gullestad 2002, 47.

equal status)” demonstrate that sameness is not just implied but integral to its meaning.²⁰ In an American context it is possible, and most common, to understand equality in terms of opportunity.²¹ Examples include phenomena such as speech, employment, and other such cases where a liberal notion of equal opportunity is in theory legally guaranteed. Yet, as Gullestad points out, in Norway *likhet* and the concept of equality is intertwined with notions of sameness and bound to social relations and personal interactions. In this sense, the opposite of *likhet*, *ulikhet* or difference, is considered undesirable and applies to differences of class, economics, politics, religion, and ethnicity. In discussing these undesired differences, Gullestad is primarily focused on two tensions caused by the notion of *likhet* regarding egalitarian individualism.

The first source of tension comes from the dual implications of independence. At an individual level independence can be conceived as both positive and negative. On the one hand, it is associated with the ego and a conceited sense of self. This is a negative reading of the term as these are generally considered undesirable character traits. When connected to individualism, however, a clear sense of the term in a Norwegian context comes to light. Norway, in seeming contrast to its collectivist tendencies, is also intensely individualist, a notion at least partially rooted in the Lutheran pietistic and revival movements of the late eighteenth century. Thus, a tension is apparent when considering *likhet* and the emphasis given to sameness. How is it possible to be individualist but also stress sameness at the same time? The answer is that difference is tolerated within a given set of boundaries which are culturally constructed. These are based on a common set of historical reference points that are collectively agreed to authentically represent a unified identity. In other words, egalitarian individualism emphasizes the expression of individuality, but only within a defined set of parameters that stress sameness.²² Yet, how and why are these collectively agreed upon points given primacy and how and why are they made to define boundaries? This question leads to the second tension within the Norwegian version of egalitarian individualism, namely that the emphasis on *likhet* maintains and reinforces ethnic boundaries that are bound to an imagined collective consensus relating to expressions of cultural memory and everyday reaffirmations of nationalism. From this second tension it is then possible to see how those who are *uliket*, such as the Sami, Roma, and non-Western immigrants, might find it difficult to overcome these boundaries. Of course, what is meant by cultural memory and nationalism in relation to these tensions is still in need of explanation. Moreover, understanding these terms will better help explain how

²⁰ Gullestad 1992, 185.

²¹ Gullestad 1992, 185.

²² Gullestad 1991, 491.

Norwegian black metal uses history and expresses cultural memory in a way that is consistent with sameness.

1.2.1 The Cultural Memory Complex

In its application across academic disciplines, cultural memory has often been practiced more than theorized. Because of this, and its disciplinary diversity, a host of terminologies stemming from Maurice Halbwach's and Aby Warburg's initial considerations on memory have arisen over the course of cultural memory's conceptual development. These have ranged from "*mémoire collective*/collective memory, *cadres sociaux*/social frameworks of memory, social memory, *mnemosyne*, *ars memoriae*, *loci et imagines*, *lieux de mémoire*/sites of memory, invented traditions, myth, *memoria*, heritage, commemoration, *kulturelles Gedächtnis*, communicative memory, generationality, [and] postmemory" among numerous others.²³ Through this diverse terminology it is possible to see that cultural memory is not just confined to one discipline but is inherently transdisciplinary. As such, it is argued to have no privileged disciplinary approach and benefits from interdisciplinary collaborations. Some of the most influential works in cultural memory have taken advantage of this collaborative breadth. They include, Jan Assmann's and Aleida Assmann's joining of media studies and cultural history, Hans Markowitsch's and Harald Welzer's combining of cognitive psychology and history, and Gerald Echterhoff's linking of social psychology and linguistics.²⁴ Yet, for the purposes of this dissertation, cultural memory will be defined and conceived of through a spectrum of disciplines that will primarily involve history and cultural studies, but also include media studies, sociology, and linguistics.

Jan Assmann builds his concept of cultural memory from Halbwach's view of communicative memory which contends that individual memory is constructed within 'social frames', the ephemeral character of oral communication, and other such informal communicative acts. Such communicative practices are tethered to a limited period of time, therefore restricting their 'temporal horizon.' Yet for Jan Assmann, memory and the cultural formation of memory can exist beyond the everyday. Cultural memory is thus more enduring and must be maintained through structures that exist in a more permanent capacity over time. According to Jan Assmann, cultural memory is derived from an 'institutional buttressing' of commemorative practices.²⁵ In this sense, institutions are to be understood as organizational structures that include state apparatuses such

²³ Erll 2010, 2-3. Eriksen 2014, 19.

²⁴ Erll 2010, 3. For further reading on these topics see: Markowitsch 2005. Welzer, 2002. Echterhoff et al. 2008. Jan Assmann 2002. Aleida Assmann, 2006.

²⁵ Assmann 1995, 130.

as universities, museums, and non-governmental organizations. Thus, cultural memory is the result of institutions and their ability to concretize, reconstruct, organize, and create a sense of obligation to a given group. They do so by identifying “fixed points, or fateful events, of the past and maintain[ing] them through cultural formation (text, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).”²⁶ Moreover, Jan Assmann understands cultural memory to be reflexive in three interrelated ways. It is, firstly, ‘practice-reflexive’ in its repetition of rituals and common-sense expressions, such as proverbs or maxims.²⁷ Secondly, cultural memory uses itself “to explain, distinguish, reinterpret, criticize, censure, control, surpass, and receive hypoleptically.”²⁸ Thirdly, it uses “its own image insofar as it reflects the self-image of the group through a preoccupation with its own social system.”²⁹ In other words, it is through institutions that cultural memory is defined and affirmed through reflexive practices that set the boundaries of what is and what is not memorialized over time.

Though Jan Assmann’s concept of cultural memory is exacting and rigorous in differentiating between individual/communicative memory and cultural/institutional memory, it is also rigid as it does not account for the fact that institutions are not monolithic and inflexible structures. Indeed, institutions are comprised of people who carry with them their individual memories. Yet, one must be careful not to overstress the individual when discussing memory. Theorist Aleida Assmann, wrestles with this very topic in the article “Transformations between History and Memory.” When reproaching Susan Sontag for her denial of collective memory, Aleida Assmann acknowledges that memory is fundamentally tied to individuals and the neurological functions that are bound to a singular person. However, she also notes that:

in spite of our sound and justified skepticism of collective mystifications and political abuse of such notions in racist and nationalist discourse, we must not forget that humans do not live in the first singular person, but also in various formats of the first-person plural. They become part of different groups whose ‘we’ they adopt together with the respective social frames.³⁰

²⁶ Assmann 1995, 129.

²⁷ Assmann 1995, 132.

²⁸ Assmann 1995, 132.

²⁹ Assmann 1995, 132. Jan Assmann’s use of hypoleptically in this quote derives from his book *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* when discussing a form of “intertextual connection” that denotes “a new form of cultural continuity and coherence: reference to texts of the past, in the form of controlled variation.” See: Assmann 2011, 86 and 256.

³⁰ Assmann 2008, 51.

In addition to highlighting the importance of Halbwach's social frames, it is evident that Aleida Assmann is eager to move beyond the over accentuation of individuality in memory studies. Indeed, too much focus on the individual and their memories deemphasizes the simple fact that 'we' do not simply exist in the first person. This is not to remove individual agency or deem it unimportant in the study of memory, but to simply recognize that individuals do not live in a vacuum. Sociologist Iwona Irwin-Zarecka further speaks to this relationship when considering individual and collective forms of commemoration and how they are framed. Irwin-Zarecka contends that while individuals do indeed have notions and feelings about the past, it is only those confirmed at a collective level that have the possibility to persist over time. Thus, cultural memory is dependent on conditions that are framed not just in the minds of separate individuals alone in isolation, but in their shared perspectives on a perceived and collective past—perceptions which receive legitimization from institutions.³¹

This dialectic is the foundation from which the German media studies and cultural memory theorist Astrid Erll builds a notion of cultural memory that does not just account for the discursive continuum between the individual and collective, but recognizes how they influence each other. For Erll, the connection between the individual level and collective level of memory forms the basis of a triangular relationship with cultural memory at its summit.³² At the individual level, the process of remembering is informed and shaped by the collective. Yet, at a collective level, individual remembering actualizes the commemorative frames of the collective while each, at the same time, are influenced by cultural memory. For the collective side of the triangle, this becomes a metaphor through which institutional structures establish and legitimize knowledge about the past. Erll, Jan Assmann, and Aleida Assmann recognize professional history and historiography as a part of this process, a notion that correlates with Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*. When practiced, the collective processes of cultural memory are instrumental to the creation of collective identities, none more relevant at a national level than Benedict Anderson's now ubiquitous concept of 'imagined communities.' Anderson argues that nations are "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them."³³ While existing in the present, this imagined connection between members of a given nation transcends time. As such, nations attain a status of immortality that allows them to trace their existence into the ancient past while at the same time allowing them to persist into the

³¹ Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 4.

³² Erll 2011, 99.

³³ Anderson 1983, 15.

future.³⁴ Thus, it is apparent that institutional structures at the collective level of cultural memory are instrumental in establishing a connection not just between those living in the present, but those of the past, present, and future linked in a continuum that ignores temporal limitations.

However, notions of nationalism are not exclusive to the collective level of cultural memory. At the individual level, cultural memory functions as a metonym through a process of individual remembering.³⁵ This includes not just memory from a social psychological and neuroscientific perspective, but also relates to oral history, the cognitive processes through which individuals relate to the everyday, and the apparatuses through which they are maintained.³⁶ A key aspect to keep in mind when considering the individual level is that the reflexive recognition of structures and stereotypes are not necessarily present when the collective level is actualized.³⁷ Once again, Erll, Jan Assmann, and Aleida Assmann recognize the importance of the individual in relation to the collective in cultural memory. Yet, it is Erll who denotes the individual level's ability to unconsciously confirm the everyday processes of collective identity in a manner that is consistent with Michael Billig's notion of banal nationalism. Billig contends that banal forms of nationalism are varied and constituted in several different ways. Things like the national flag appearing on a postage stamp or waving outside an administration building are accepted and unquestioned ways in which nationalism appears and is reaffirmed. Billig argues that it is from these everyday encounters that "nations and their citizenry as nationals" are reproduced in a process that he refers to as 'banal nationalism'.³⁸ These symbols are banal for the very reason that they are common to the point that they are unseen and unremarkable to those belonging to the nation that is being confirmed. Such symbols become internalized and form the environment in which nations and nationals construct their identities. Therefore, the unseen reminders of the collective enable the individual to establish a connection with others in an 'imagined community' that might not otherwise exist.

When considering Erll's triangular cultural memory complex, a crucial aspect that is not necessarily made explicit is laid bare when considering how cultural memory is disseminated to the collective and individual levels. With a basis in media studies, Erll contends that cultural memory is

³⁴ Anderson 1983, 19.

³⁵ Erll 2011, 99. Individual remembering constitutes not just the memories that a singular person may carry, but also the collective memories of individual groups in larger, more encompassing collectives. For example, bands are an individual unit in the larger collective network of a 'scene' or genre.

³⁶ Erll 2011, 108.

³⁷ Erll 2011, 108.

³⁸ Billig 1995, 6.

dependent on media communication.³⁹ While Erll's notion of media is broad and encompasses a wide range of material including oral history, TV, religious texts, and monuments, little is offered on the discursive dynamics involved between what is and what is not communicated in these communicative forms.⁴⁰ The relation between the individual and collective levels is reciprocal meaning that all components in the triangle influence one another. Still, Erll presents cultural memory influencing collective and individual forms of memory without changing or being subject to influence itself.⁴¹ Of course, like any form of memory, cultural memory is subject to a process of remembering and forgetting. While frailties of the mind are a relatively known and accepted feature of individual memory, the process of remembering and forgetting in cultural memory is directly attributable relations of to power. Though memory is not a zero-sum game, it is often perceived as a competitive space through which only one or a few hegemonic memory discourses can exist.⁴² This means that those memory discourses that are not hegemonic are subject to not just being neglected and delegitimized but silenced or forgotten entirely in the presence of more dominant narratives.

It is vital, then, to consider how individual and collective forms of memory influence cultural memory itself in the process of remembering and forgetting. The discursive dynamics at play between individual and collective forms of memory also influence what ultimately becomes legitimated as cultural memory. When considering national identity, various components used to create a sense of 'imagined community' will change to meet the demands of the present. Certain aspects of nationalism become accentuated and while others are lessened, changes that ultimately influence how the individual conceives the past. Yet, even when considering nationalism, the discursive processes, material, and symbolism used to create a sense of communion are not confined to a self-contained cycle of recirculation. Norman Fairclough addresses this very point when considering the movement of meaning. For Fairclough, meanings "do not simply 'circulate' unchanged between texts; movement of meanings involves both continuity and change."⁴³ While Fairclough does not explicitly name this process of mediation, it is clear that the movement of meanings involves some form of negotiation.

One of the first scholars to conceptualize negotiations of a cultural past is the literary historian Stephen Greenblatt. While Greenblatt does not fully actualize it as a theoretical approach, his concept of negotiation stems

³⁹ Erll 2010, 389.

⁴⁰ Erll 2010, 389-390.

⁴¹ Erll 2011, 99.

⁴² Rothberg 2006, 307. Rothberg 2009, 3.

⁴³ Fairclough 2006, 23.

from the recognition that “art or literature as such must be seen not as the product of a singular genius, but as a ‘collective creation.’”⁴⁴ Moreover, negotiations and the processes they are a part of are “bound up with ‘modes of aesthetic empowerment’ in the way “cultural objects or practices...acquire a specific kind of ‘social energy’” which then has the ability to “produce, shape, and organize collective physical and mental experiences.”⁴⁵ This allows for negotiations to not be bound to “one specific historical context or one particular discourse,” but instead be able to persist “in terms of a ‘historical process, a structured negotiation and exchange.”⁴⁶ Though Greenblatt is primarily concerned with art and literature, the cultural historian Helge Jordheim believes that those are not the only cultural products that can be imbued with the ‘social energy’ needed to persist over time. Indeed, Jordheim points to other “objects and genres, such as history books, museums, school tours, and monuments” as also being places in which negotiation of the past is visible.⁴⁷ Through its ability to shape and actualize, negotiation should be understood as the means through which the discursive process occurs between the individual and collective levels of cultural memory. Yet, because the practice of negotiation is never static and involves movements of meaning, it is impossible to ignore the fact that cultural memory itself is subject to change depending on the social and structural dynamics involved. When understanding Erll’s cultural memory complex and the ways national identity is confirmed, it is possible to see how all aspects of cultural memory are a part of a mediated discursive process that helps determine what is remembered and what is forgotten.

Taken together, the concepts presented here form the theoretical frame for this dissertation. Nationalism and negotiation should be understood as interrelated processes that are integral to the notions of *likehet* and egalitarian individualism that inform part of Norwegian cultural memory. As these are the expressions from which structural hegemony is created, maintained, and transformed over time, these theories help illuminate the ways in which Norwegian black metal maintains consistency with and reflects historical and contemporary notions of Norway. Moreover, it is from this framework that the use of history must be considered. Uses of history reflects both the individual and collective levels of cultural memory. Moreover, history use can reveal the broader contexts through which meanings are made, perpetuated, and changed. Though tempting to separate the two levels in an empirical analysis, such an effort proves not just difficult, but impossible given how interconnected and dependent the

⁴⁴ Jordheim 2009, 21. Maza 2004, 253. Greenblatt 1991, 7.

⁴⁵ Jordheim 2009, 17. Greenblatt 1988, 6.

⁴⁶ Jordheim 2009, 17.

⁴⁷ Jordheim 2009, 17.

two levels are in the scope of cultural memory. Thus, when cultural memory is expressed, and analyzed, it should be understood that this includes both the individual and the collective.

1.3 Structure of Dissertation

Following the introduction, the second chapter of the dissertation presents an overview of the previous research regarding black metal, methods and process of empirical selection. The chapter begins by exploring some of the better-known popular and academic works that have attempted to understand black metal. Included within this discussion, are more in-depth examinations of recent academic works and well-known popular work dealing with the genre. This is not just done to evaluate these works, but used to position this dissertation with other work dealing with the same subject area. As an academic field, metal studies is relatively new and this dissertation aims to contribute new knowledge to that field as well as into the discipline of history and field of memory studies.

Following the previous research, an overview of the methods, methodology, and sources are presented in Chapter 3. Included in this chapter is a definition of black metal and how the sources were delineated and divided into analytical categories along with a simple quantitative presentation to better clarify the number of bands dealt with in the analysis chapters. Building from the definition of black metal, a more detailed presentation of the music style is presented. Included in this is an overview of black metal that is more nuanced with a contextualized exploration of the genre's musical and non-musical aesthetic lineage dating from the early 1970s until the start of Norwegian black metal in the early 1990s. Both musical and non-musical influences are presented to give an overall picture of the thematic inspirations present in the years prior to the scene's development. While multifaceted and diverse, these influences include not just an overview of the better-known musical and thematic influences, such as heavy metal's various subgenres of the early 1980s, the occult, and Levayan Satanism, but also a look into other factors from popular culture in general. In particular, this involves a glimpse into the influence of fantasy literature, with an emphasis given to J. R. R. Tolkien's writings, and role-playing games.

After providing context and background for black metal and the development of Norwegian black metal, the analysis chapters connect the various ways that history and cultural memory are presented. The first of these, Chapter 4, is devoted to themes of folk narratives, how they were conceived and promulgated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the way Norwegian black metal uses these themes. Chapter 5 focuses on Vikings and Norse mythology and looks at the way these

themes have been presented in Norwegian romanticism and nationalist discourses through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It also shows similarities and differences with how those discourses have been portrayed in Norwegian black metal. In Chapter 6, the theme of nature and the landscape is explored. As with the two other analysis chapters, this chapter also places Norwegian black metal's use of these themes in dialogue with earlier portrayals of nature and the landscape in the modern history of Norway. The last chapter, Chapter 7, both summarizes the analytical chapters and discusses the meanings and implications involved when Norwegian black metal's history use is placed in the broader scope of Norwegian history and contextualized with the construction and previous expressions of cultural memory.

CHAPTER 2

Locating Norwegian Black Metal: Previous Research, Definitions, and Methods

Since the onset of Norwegian black metal there have been a variety of attempts to understand what this type of music is as well as further attempts to gain some insight into the uniqueness of the scene. Some efforts to study the scene were made in the 1990s, yet the scholarly study of Norwegian black metal has only developed in earnest over the past decade. As a result, prior to 2010 research on the subject was largely dominated by documentaries and journalistic books. While the quality of some of these works is questionable at best, others provide valuable interview source material from a time closer to the early days of the scene when direct access to the bands was more difficult. Thus, when considering the previous research of Norwegian black metal, it is impossible to ignore the contributions from non-academic sources as they have, and continue to have, the potential to contribute valuable insight into this style of music.

2.1 Exploring the Field

In 1994, within the first years of the scene's formation, Norwegian state television and radio, *Norsk rikskringkasting* (NRK), made a documentary titled *Det Svarte Alvor*.⁴⁸ Though 1994 proved to be an eventful year for Norwegian black metal, the timing of the documentary meant that Varg Vikernes's trial and the scene's rise in prominence could not be included. That aside, *Det Svarte Alvor* is an admirable early attempt to cover Norwegian black metal from a domestic standpoint. It is not only valuable as a source of early career band interviews, but it also manages to capture the reactions of everyday Norwegians. Unsurprisingly, the documentary

⁴⁸ Grøndahl, Gunnar. "Det svarte alvor." NRK. Originally aired April 12, 1994.

makes it seem that black metal was a known phenomenon among average Norwegians. Yet, *Det Svarte Alvor* also shows that the media frenzy so often described in later accounts was not so prevalent. Moreover, the NRK documentary recognizes the National Socialist and fascist tendencies that, while minimal, ran through some parts of the scene. In its portrayal of the music, *Det Svarte Alvor* provides valuable insight into this period of Norwegian black metal.

The first book that dealt seriously with Norwegian black metal was the now widely criticized *Lords of Chaos* by Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind.⁴⁹ The book drew an unprecedented amount of international attention to the scene at the time of publication in 1998. Consisting of numerous interviews with key members of Norwegian black metal bands, with several firsthand accounts of the heady days of the early 1990s, *Lords of Chaos* colored otherwise informative and insightful interviews with an overt focus on Satanism. Indeed, the focus *Lords of Chaos* places on Satanism leads the authors to connect otherwise unrelated bands and their activities to Norwegian black metal in an effort to demonstrate the prevalence of Satanism during this period. In addition to describing the wave of violence associated with the early Norwegian black metal scene, Moynihan and Söderlind cite criminal deeds in the United States and Europe that had the loosest of connections to black metal. Moreover, the authors tend to treat Satanism as a childish form of rebellion. In their view, it pales by comparison to pagan revivalist belief systems as an oppositional structure to Christianity and Judeo-Christian values. Coupled with this is a less than veiled attempt to exalt the ‘more mature’ revival of ancient animistic belief systems such as Asatru. Despite its many flaws, *Lords of Chaos* remains an important work in the literature of Norwegian black metal, as it was the first international attempt to deal with the phenomenon in a meaningful way. As one of the few readily accessible accounts of the scene, *Lords of Chaos* proved to be a starting point for more work on Norwegian black metal.

Within a decade, other attempts to understand the genre were undertaken. Two documentary films stand out in this regard. The first of these was *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* by Canadian filmmaker Sam Dunn in 2005.⁵⁰ Dunn's film takes an anthropological approach to the subject in an attempt to understand metal music in a more generalized way. However, part of the documentary is devoted to Norwegian black metal and contains numerous interviews including a renowned segment with Gorgoroth's former vocalist Kristian Eivind Espedal, known by the stage name Gaahl. This segment did much to create a sense of mystery and

⁴⁹ Moynihan, Michael and Didrik Söderlind. *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*. Los Angeles: Feral House, 2003.

⁵⁰ Dunn, Sam, Scot McFadyen, and Jessica Joy Wise, *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*. 2005; Toronto: Banger Films, 2006. DVD.

danger around Espedal who had previously been arrested and jailed for imprisoning and torturing a man. Throughout the lengthy interview, Espedal only blinks a handful of times while sipping a glass of wine and professing that black metal is Satan. Three years after Dunn's documentary, in 2008, *Until the Light Takes Us* by Aaron Aites and Audrey Ewell was released.⁵¹ *Until the Light Takes Us* deals exclusively with the scene and closely follows some of its most revered members including Darkthrone's Gylve 'Fenriz' Nagell and Satyricon's Kjetil-Vidar 'Frost' Haraldstad. Aites and Ewell were also able to interview Norwegian black metal's most notorious personality, Varg Vikernes, while still serving his twenty-one-year prison sentence for murder and arson. Both documentaries deal with Norwegian black metal in concrete ways, but do not move beyond the scope of a few key individuals to grasp the scene as a whole. As a result, *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* and *Until the Light Takes Us* merely hint at the scene as a total entity. Since the release of *Until the Light Takes Us* numerous other documentaries dealing with black metal and Norway have been made. While some came from recognized media outlets like NRK and *Vive*, the majority have been undertaken by independent filmmakers. These documentaries vary little in their understanding of Norwegian black metal and tend to rely on the experience of a few bands to make generalized statements about the scene.

The documentary form has not been the only non-academic medium that has explored Norwegian black metal. Several books have been published since the initial publication of *Lords of Chaos* in 1998. Some of these have come in the form of memoir-style works like *Metalion: The Slayer Mag Diaries* by Jon Kristiansen and photographic compilations such as Peter Beste's *True Norwegian Black Metal*. However, it has been Dayal Patterson's multi-volume series that has provided one of the most thorough efforts to cover not just Norwegian black metal, but black metal as a global entity.⁵² The series' strongest feature is the accessibility Patterson has to prominent individuals in black metal and the near confessional quality of some of the interviews. Patterson is able to obtain insight into individual inspirations and perspectives on the genre that are invaluable to a greater understanding of black metal's foundations and definitional boundaries. As a result, Patterson's work, though not theoretically sophisticated, is still useful as it gives a comprehensive

⁵¹ Aites, Aaron and Audrey Ewell, *Until the Light Takes Us*. 2009; New York: Variance Films, 2010. DVD.

⁵² The series is comprised of numerous interviews conducted by Patterson during his time as metal music journalist and, as of the moment of writing, includes four books: Patterson, Dayal (a). *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*. Port Townsend: Feral House, 2013; Patterson, Dayal (b). *Black Metal: Prelude to a Cult*. London: Cult Never Dies, 2013; Patterson and Dayal. *Black Metal: The Cult Never Dies, Vol One*. London: Cult Never Dies, 2015; Patterson, Dayal. *Black Metal: Into the Abyss*. London: Cult Never Dies, 2016.

glimpse into the musical and non-musical influences of many of the artists involved. Patterson astutely recognizes that black metal should be understood as evolving over time rather than broken up into waves as is often done when discussing black metal.⁵³ In doing so, Patterson is able to avoid having to demarcate boundaries regarding changes in sound. Yet, what is lacking in this notion of 'evolution' is the recognition of the genre's remarkable consistency over time. This is not to suggest that the sound and look of black metal has not changed, but that when change occurs it is typically slow in development and rooted in the preexisting frame from the early 1980s.

In the last ten years, there has also been an increasing amount of academic research dedicated to the subject. Indeed, discounting magazine and website interviews, it is likely that there has been more academic work written on the subject over the past decade than journalistic or popular work. Pinpointing an exact reason for this is difficult. However, when considering the extremes associated with black metal and the violence specifically connected to Norwegian black metal, perhaps it is understandable why scholars have turned their attention to this type of music.

2.2 Black Metal in Academia

The academic pursuit of black metal has not been limited to a singular field. It has drawn interest from an array of disciplines that range from the social sciences to the humanities, each applying their own theories and methodological expertise to the subject. The disciplinary variety, while enriching, has led to a degree of over complication concerning some of black metal's positions particularly when it comes to epistemology and religion. This is particularly evidenced in the recently founded journal *Helvete* that is devoted to the exploration of black metal theory.⁵⁴ Though it is slightly unfair to generalize about all of the contributions to the journal, there is a distinct tendency to literally interpret a style of music renowned for taking itself too seriously, making many of the articles turgid

⁵³ It is exceedingly common to refer to Norwegian black metal of the late 1980s and early 1990s as 'second wave' black metal following the first wave which came in the early 1980s. These designations have been applied in hindsight and miss the fact that none of the bands of the so-called first wave actually identified as black metal.

⁵⁴ Literature scholar Nicola Masciandaro and religion researcher Steven Shakespeare initiated the journal. They were also behind a black metal symposium that was held in Brooklyn, New York in 2009 whose contributions were later published in the 2010 book *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium 1*. See: Masciandaro, Nicola ed. *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium 1*. CreateSpace.com, 2010.

and inaccessible even to those familiar with the genre. Moreover, some authors are unable to maintain a critical distance from the subject matter.⁵⁵

Beyond the articles presented in *Helvete*, several other researchers have explored black metal in substantial and concrete ways. A number of articles and collaborative chapters have been published by a research collective centered at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada led by the education sociologist Vivek Venkatesh. Though mostly concerned with online hate speech in extreme metal, Venkatesh's team, through interviews and collected data from online black metal forums, has identified a distinct tendency by fans and bands alike to reject larger notions of a broader metal music community and opt instead for a more individualistic approach when connecting with the music.⁵⁶ This is not to say that there is an outright rejection of the metal community, but that the individual comes first when concerning black metal consumption and fan identification. Moreover, Venkatesh's research collective notes that various online black metal forums and discussion boards reject associations with racism and nationalism.⁵⁷ However, rather than denouncing such attitudes outright, forum participants were more likely to dismiss these positions as merely an attempt to transgress social norms.⁵⁸

While *Helvete* and Venkatesh's research collective represent some of the more notable efforts to academically approach extreme metal, other scholars have dealt more directly with Norway and Norwegian black metal. The recently published dissertation *Norwegian Native Art: Cultural Identity in Norwegian Metal Music* from 2017 by the German Scandinavianist Imke von Helden approaches black metal by focusing on 'Viking' metal from Norway.⁵⁹ In this way, von Helden is able to avoid the problems of defining black metal, but, at the same time, she treats 'Viking' metal as a genre unto itself. Von Helden is not alone in using the term in an academic setting, yet questions regarding whether 'Viking' metal is an independent subgenre or style have been raised by fans and bands alike.⁶⁰ Moreover, von Helden's focus on Vikings leaves little opportunity to emphasize or, at the very least, disentangle other important parts of Norwegian cultural identity from Viking romanticism.

At the same time, the Viking theme is highly visible and cannot be ignored. As noted in the introduction, Vikings are some of the most

⁵⁵ For an example of such a contribution, see: Dendinger, Reuben. "The Way of the Sword: Christianity, Facism, and the Folk Magic of Black Metal." *Helvete: A Journal of Black Metal Theory* 2 (Winter 2015): 29-37.

⁵⁶ Venkatesh et al. 2016, 146.

⁵⁷ Venkatesh et al. 2016, 144.

⁵⁸ Venkatesh et al. 2016, 144.

⁵⁹ von Helden, Imke. *Norwegian Native Art: Cultural Identity in Norwegian Metal Music*. Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2017.

⁶⁰ Ashby and Schofield 2015, 502-503.

recognizable themes used in Norwegian black metal. Other studies such as Kennet Granholm's article "Sons of Northern Darkness: Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music" (2011), Irina-Maria Manea's 2016 dissertation *Valhalla Rising: The Construction of Cultural Identity Through Myth in Scandinavian and German Pagan Metal*, Gry Mørk's "Why didn't the Churches Begin to Burn a Thousand Years Earlier?" from the anthology *Religion and Popular Music in Europe: New Expressions of Sacred and Secular Identity* (2011) have a similar topical positioning.⁶¹ Taken together with von Helden's contribution, the works of Granholm, Manea and Mørk are demonstrative of a preoccupation with the broader theme of Vikings and Norse mythology in extreme metal and underground music. While von Helden and Mørk are focused on Norway, the others deal with the Viking aspect of extreme metal in a more generalized way that lacks contextualization. However, in the case of Mørk, the attention given to black metal as a religious response to Christianity in Norway misses the underlying reasons for why these bands might be interested in promoting the more 'authentic' over the foreign. Furthermore, von Helden, Granholm, Mørk, and Manea do not draw from a significant enough source base to make assertions beyond those examples which confirm their own perspectives.

Another recent study from musicologist Stephen Graham titled *Sounds of the Underground: A Cultural, Political, and Aesthetic Mapping of Underground and Fringe Music* (2016) takes on the difficulties of dealing with black metal by combining it with a broader study of underground music.⁶² Like some of the other previously mentioned studies, Graham's work is based on interviews with fans and bands. Yet, as the book focuses on underground music in general there is a limited focus on black metal and, thus, specifics of the genre are limited to generalizations. The same assessment can be made about black metal in works dealing with right-wing extremism and the occult. Mattias Gardell in *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (2003), Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke in *Black Sun: Aryan Cult, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (2002), and Stefanie von Schnurbein in *Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Neopaganism* (2016) deal with black metal in this way.⁶³ Both Gardell and Goodrick-Clarke

⁶¹ Granholm, Kennet, "'Sons of Northern Darkness': Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music." *Numen* 58, no. 4 (2011): 514-544; Manea, Irina-Maria. *Valhalla Rising: The Construction of Cultural Identity Through Myth in Scandinavian and German Pagan Metal*. PhD diss., University of Bucharest, 2016; Mørk, Gry. "Why didn't the Churches Begin to Burn a Thousand Years Earlier?" *Religion and Popular Music in Europe: New Expressions of Sacred and Secular Identity*, edited by Thomas Bossius, Andreas Häger, and Keith Kahn-Harris, 124-144. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011.

⁶² Graham, Stephen. *Sounds of the Underground: A Cultural, Political, and Aesthetic Mapping of Underground and Fringe Music*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016.

⁶³ Gardell, Mattias. *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003; Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. *Black Sun: Aryan Cult, 32*

reference Norwegian black metal, but it is done only in terms of its connection to extreme right-wing politics, Neopaganism, and Asatrú. In addition, both researchers are especially concerned with Burzum's Varg Vikernes as the principle actor in the political radicalization of the genre. While Goodrick-Clarke is soberer in his assessment of Vikernes and black metal, Gardell's insight is influenced by a clear distaste for the music which colors his evaluation of it. Like Goodrick-Clarke, von Schnurbein is also clinical in her discussion of Vikernes and Norwegian black metal. However, von Schnurbein is less concerned with the explicitly problematic aspects of this scene and, instead, gives more attention to how Norwegian black metal has helped enable the normalization of Asatrú. In this way, von Schnurbein highlights an important point about Norwegian black metal. While it was at one time a fringe music movement, it has been increasingly legitimized through hegemonic, mainstream cultural discourse in Norway. Von Schnurbein recognizes this and credits Norwegian black metal with being at least partially responsible for the rise of Asatrú in Norway.⁶⁴ At the same, von Schnurbein's scope does not afford any room to recognize the different ways Norwegian black metal has used the broader themes associated with Vikings and Norse mythology nor does it take into account the consistency with which the themes have appeared over time.

2.2.1 Defining Black Metal: Music vs. Ideology

While the works already discussed have contributed to a better understanding of black metal, British sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris was one of the first to take on a sophisticated approach to the genre with the book *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* in 2007. In addition to discussing other forms of extreme metal in multiple locations including Sweden and Israel, Kahn-Harris identifies black metal's tendencies toward what he calls 'reflexive anti-reflexivity.'⁶⁵ Through interviews with fans and 'scene' members, Kahn-Harris connects this term to the reticence those associated with black metal show toward the genre's association with violence, bigotry, and right-wing extremism. Kahn-Harris notes that those associated with black metal either as fans or musicians are "at the very least willfully ignorant, lacking in self-awareness and politically naïve" which comes not as a result of a lack of reflexivity, but instead from the "active suppression of reflexivity, of anti-reflexive practice."⁶⁶ What this

Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity. New York: New York University Press, 2002; von Schnurbein, Stefanie. *Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Neopaganism*. Boston: Haymarket Books, 2016.

⁶⁴ von Schnurbein 2016, 334.

⁶⁵ Kahn-Harris 2007, 144.

⁶⁶ Kahn-Harris 2007, 144-145.

means then is that black metal is not unreflexive or lacking the ability to be reflexive but rather that it chooses not to acknowledge a given phenomenon. Kahn-Harris elucidates this meaning in reference to the interviews he conducted with scene members saying,

Whereas unreflexivity derives from a failure, antireflexivity is an active achievement in holding the reflexivity of modernity at bay. Whereas unreflexive practices leave members defenseless against processes of reflexive modernization, anti-reflexive practices simply refuse to admit that such processes exist. If reflexivity is founded on an appreciation of the contingent, ambiguous, unintended character of practice, anti-reflexivity is founded on the illusion that the world is simple and obvious. The above examples show members stubbornly taking statements at 'face value' and ignoring contradiction. Anti-reflexivity produces a simplistic world in which nothing need be examined and everything is just as it appears.⁶⁷

For Kahn-Harris, there is a distinct difference between unreflexivity and antireflexivity. Whereas unreflexivity is akin to ignorance of a given subject, antireflexivity is the negation of complexity in favor of simplicity. Yet, what does it mean to have 'reflexive anti-reflexivity'? On the surface it would appear that this term is contradictory, however Kahn-Harris carefully locates the terms in question. 'Reflexive anti-reflexivity' is the active process of denying what is already known and accepted.⁶⁸ This concept is key to understanding how those involved with the music demarcate its boundaries and decide what beliefs and behaviors that can be considered authentic or 'true' expressions of black metal.

The boundaries set through reflexive anti-reflexivity makes black metal a challenging phenomenon to define. The English music and subculture scholar Karl Spracklen identifies these boundaries as open to interpretation through an open meaning-setting that is, at the same time, closely guarded.⁶⁹ This sort of boundary negotiation is inextricably linked to Kahn-Harris's notion of reflexive anti-reflexivity and identifies how black metal is a self-referencing community.⁷⁰ Through a series of interviews and observations made in the open forums of blackmetal.co.uk, Spracklen affirms that members of the black metal community tend to universally agree that black metal "is anti-Christianity, anti-State, anti-commercialization."⁷¹ This is based on the assumption that black metal exists outside of normative, corporate rock music, which it does, but only to an extent. Since the late 1990s, black metal has had a number of bands attain a degree of commercial success and it is safe to assume that most, if

⁶⁷ Kahn-Harris 2007, 145.

⁶⁸ Kahn-Harris 2007, 145.

⁶⁹ Spracklen 2010, 91.

⁷⁰ Spracklen 2010, 91.

⁷¹ Spracklen 2010, 91.

not all, bands do not play for free and earn at least a modicum of money from merchandise and music sales. As such, black metal is still subject to the currents that flow through mainstream music and business practices and, thereby, exists beyond the boundaries that fans and musicians create.⁷²

Black metal's ambivalent relationship to the market is not what sets the style apart from mainstream music and other forms of extreme metal. Rather, it is black metal's self-referencing and open-meaning setting that allow the discursive space for extremist rhetoric to expand. Extremist rhetoric in this case means not just anti-Christianity, anti-State, or anti-commercialization, but instead refers to a discursive space within which ideologies and symbol use consistent with National Socialism and overt bigotry exist. Indeed, an entire subgenre of black metal has arisen called National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) whose name accurately denotes its thematic focus. Yet, NSBM is not a prolific style and only constitutes a small number of bands in black metal. Therefore, as a whole, it is unfair to characterize all of black metal as holding such beliefs, yet at the same time, it is rare that they are outright condemned. Instead, it is far more common for bands to demonstrate reflexive anti-reflexivity in their response to being labelled as NSBM or holding National Socialist or bigoted beliefs. The typical response is that a given band is not political or that politics do not belong in black metal.⁷³ Whether politics belong in black metal or not is a moot point. The fact is that politics exists in black metal whether bands like it or not, if for no other reason than that an entire subgenre has developed that concerns itself with political expression. Moreover, to deny politics in such a way is to both narrowly define the meaning of politics and, in essence, deny the possibility of influences outside the defined boundaries of black metal impacting its thematic and aesthetic directions. Of course, the boundaries of black metal are not so closed off that they exclude overtly political perspectives. Given the genre's open-meaning setting, the potential for multiple meanings of black metal to develop is high. However, at its core black metal is, as we will see, still a fundamentalist and conservative genre that takes parts of heavy metal's core themes and aesthetic to the extreme.

In order to establish how many black metal bands there have been in Norway it is important to first have a working definition of black metal. The normalization of black metal in the ways described by the Norwegian embassy in Poland or in the press release for By Norse in New York,

⁷² Spracklen 2010, 91.

⁷³ This sort of denial has been present since the early 1990s and has increased in recent years with the rise of far right politics. Norwegian black metal has not been excluded concerning these connections, yet, as a whole, bands from Poland, Ukraine, Finland, France, and the United States have been center of attention. Essentially, every national scene has at some point been suspected of having links to right-wing extremist views.

stands against some of the primary tenets that make up this style of music. This is perhaps best expressed by the main figure in the French black metal band Blut Aus Nord. When asked in 2011 about Blut Aus Nord's use of an unconventional style and structure in their approach to black metal, Vindsval (guitarist, main songwriter) succinctly replied, "Black metal is a feeling, not a typical kind of riff, sound or attitude, and this feeling is the essence of our music. If you can understand this point of view, Blut Aus Nord will be a black metal band. If not, that's not a problem."⁷⁴ While such a comment may seem odd to the uninitiated, black metal has not always been strictly defined by the music played and is open to varying degrees of interpretation.

For some, black metal is guided by a strict adherence to a set of ideological beliefs and themes. Perhaps the person who had the most impact on how black metal would come to be defined was Øystein Aarseth, better known as Euroymous, from the Norwegian black metal band Mayhem. During Mayhem's formative years in the mid-1980s, the band embraced a rather light-hearted, if still morbid, take on life and death. Moreover, Mayhem did not consider themselves to be any one particular form of metal, but rather took inspiration from a range of metal and punk bands that would prove influential to the diversification of metal's extreme subgenres.⁷⁵ However, over the course of numerous line-up changes and efforts to connect Mayhem and the small Norwegian scene with other parts of the world, Aarseth began to cultivate an ideology that rejected humor and partying and instead focused on death, Satanism, and a disdain for civilized life.

This ideological shift to Satanism eventually became how Aarseth would define black metal. It helped differentiate black metal from death metal. According to Aarseth, "black metal has nothing to do with the music itself, both Blasphemy and Mercyful Fate are black metal, it's the LYRICS, and they must be SATANIC. If it's not, it is NOT black metal." Patterson in *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult* concisely sums up this perspective saying that for Aarseth,

'black metal' described bands celebrating 'real' Satanism (and by this he meant a genuine theistic approach, literal devil worship, as opposed to the approach of organizations such as the Church of Satan), while death metal meant 'real' death worship, the actual musical characteristics of the metal played by either party being wholly irrelevant.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Futado, 2011. The quote is reprinted in Venkatesh et. al 2016, 131. Vindsval is only known by this pseudonym and little is known about his personal life.

⁷⁵ Patterson 2013 (a), 135. Typically, the term extreme metal consists of black, death, doom, and thrash. However, these four forms of extreme metal have spawned a wide range of subgenres that have been in constant development since the mid to late 1980s.

⁷⁶ Patterson 2013 (a), 151.

Much, if not all, of Aarseth's preoccupation with Satanism and ritualized ceremony came from a desire to introduce a degree of seriousness that had been absent with Venom and other notable black metal bands of the early 1980s. This attitude became instilled into the fast-evolving Norwegian black metal scene and formed the ideological roots of black metal as a whole from that point forward. Starting as a general devotion to death and hostility towards conformity, black metal's ideology has developed into an elaborate philosophy that celebrates the strength and the will of the individual, all the while shunning community and displaying contempt for the weak.⁷⁷

Aside from the association with extreme political stances, another consequence of an openly negotiated definition is the ambiguity of what is and is not musically black metal. Though Vindsval and Aarseth have claimed that black metal is not dependent on the music played, there has been a commonality in musical style and approach over the years since the genre's rapid growth in the early 1990s. The musicologist Ross Hagen observes that along with "the mid-to-high pitched scream of black metal vocals," the guitar-playing aesthetic tends to use "full chord voicings, which produce a denser and less clearly resonant timbre when played through heavy distortion" as opposed to the root and fifth-based power chord frequently used in other styles of rock and metal.⁷⁸ Often accompanying these chord voicings is a double picking technique referred to as 'tremolo picking' which is done at fast tempos.⁷⁹ Rhythmically, many black metal bands use a type of drumming known as the blast-beat. As Hagen describes, the blast-beat is "not complicated and resembles a standard rock beat sped up to a frantic tempo until the drums begin to bear an uncanny resemblance to a prolonged burst of machine-gun fire and become a sort of sonic blast."⁸⁰ At its most simple, the blast beat is performed between the snare and bass drum with an added cymbal or hi-hat. When played with tremolo-picked guitars and bass, tempos can easily exceed two hundred and fifty beats per minute and create a totalizing sound that envelopes the listener.

⁷⁷ Disdain for weakness and the glorification of strength through Satanic-rooted social opposition is well demonstrated by numerous bands in a multitude of songs. However, few songs are as succinct in this regard as Carpathian Forest's "Start Up the Incinerator (Here Comes Another Useless Fool)" from the 2006 full-length record *Fuck You All!!!! Caput tuum in ano est*.

⁷⁸ Hagen 2011, 184. In addition to the root and fifth two-note variation of the power chord, it is not uncommon for black metal bands to add a higher octave of the root to produce a fuller sound. Of course, this is dependent on the amount of gain, distortion, or overdrive present in the tone setting. In general, fuller versions of chords lose clarity with a more aggressive signal distortion and picking attack.

⁷⁹ Hagen 2011, 184.

⁸⁰ Hagen 2011, 184.

Unlike in death metal or grindcore, the blast-beat in black metal tends to move “hypermetrically relative to the drummer, especially in passages based on chords rather than riffs.”⁸¹ When combined with tremolo picking, the blast-beat helps to establish an illusion of slowed time. It is this element in particular that gives black metal much of its atmospheric quality and a factor that distinguishes it from death metal, grindcore, and other forms of extreme metal. Many bands utilize these techniques in order to attain a trance-inducing quality. Added to these playing styles is the fact that much of black metal’s production aesthetic harkens back to a time when the originating bands had limited access to financial resources. This lo-fi production style adds to the atmospherics as it masks individual instrumental performance and accentuates the ensemble.⁸² The inclusion of synthesizers adds yet another layer of atmospheric texture to the ‘wall of sound’ played by some bands. Black metal bands, particularly those with folk influences, have included a variety of instruments on their recordings including the banjo and Hardanger fiddle.⁸³ More recently some bands have pushed aside these normative practices to expand their musical horizons. While the principal instruments used have not changed, there has been an inclusion of other musical styles such as English progressive rock, jazz, and punk.⁸⁴ Some bands have achieved a wide degree of commercial success by incorporating some of these other styles while others have moved in the opposite direction, retreating to a more primitive incarnation of black metal that was present in the early 1980s. In doing so, the bands opposing additional instrumentation have forged a new branch of black metal called black ‘n roll that mixes parts of black metal’s musical aesthetic with the head-nodding, mid-paced sensibilities of hard rock.

As can be seen in the discussion above, the definition of black metal sits on two pillars: the ideological and the musical. Though the ideological side of black metal is unquestionably important, in this thesis the decision about whether a band is black metal or not is based on their music. This is not done to play down the role of black metal ideology or belittle it in any way. However, there are practically no Norwegian black metal bands that use the musical elements described above that do not at least share

⁸¹ Hagen 2011, 184. Blast-beats are not exclusive to extreme metal, but the technique does frequently appear outside of these genres. When they do appear outside of extreme metal they tend to be used in other rock related genres. Notably examples outside of extreme metal can be heard in Graveyard’s song “From a Hole in the Wall” from the 2015 full-length release *Innocence and Decadence* and the song “Dark Prince” by the all-star jazz group Trio of Doom on an eponymous live recording from 1979 in Havana. See: Graveyard. *Innocence and Decadence*. Nuclear Blast NB 3564-2, compact disc, 2015; Trio of Doom. *Trio of Doom*. Columbia 82796 96450 2, compact disc, 2007.

⁸² Hagen 2011, 187.

⁸³ For an example of a banjo being used in black metal see: “Myr,” Taake. *Noregs Vaapen*. Svartekunst Produksjoner HOEST007/KAR064, 2011, compact disc.

⁸⁴ Venkatesh et al 2016, 132.

some of the genre's ideological tendencies. Moreover, there are a number of bands that do not outwardly share black metal's ideological stances, yet adopt its musical aesthetic. Therefore, for the purposes of this part of the study, black metal will be based on the inclusion of bands that are Norwegian and contain at least some combination of black metal's vocal styling, guitar playing aesthetics, drumming techniques, and production values. However, this is not necessarily limited by the type of instruments used, as similar effects can be replicated by other instruments. This is especially apparent when considering the synthesizer as it can sustain notes and chords for prolonged periods and accentuate the feeling of suspended time.

Though the sound of black metal is difficult to establish, it does not mean it is impossible to define. Thus, following the musicological definition established by Hagen, this dissertation starts from a position that black metal needs to be defined as music first. This means that the bands selected for analysis play what can be musically defined as black metal. However, this does not mean that an ideological definition of black metal is not considered. On the contrary, in cases where the music alone is not enough to determine whether a band is black metal or not, the band's ideological position is taken into consideration.

2.3 Source Selection and Methodology

The objective of this part of the study was to gain an idea of how many bands can be called Norwegian black metal according to the definition outlined above. This was an integral process of this study for a few reasons. First, in order to answer the question of what is 'Norwegian' about Norwegian black metal, it was important to establish how many bands that were Norwegian and play black metal. Moreover, it also helped to have a starting point in order to understand black metal's various influences. Establishing a number of bands also allowed those both familiar and unfamiliar with the style of music to understand the scope of black metal in Norway, a country with a population of just over five million as of 2017. In addition, it shows how an extreme, non-mainstream form of music can persist and flourish in the absence of major label endorsement and promotion. It was this point that made attaining an estimate of bands necessary, especially given the change in the music industry over the course of Norwegian black metal's development.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Over the twenty plus years of Norwegian black metal, music formats have seen the use of vinyl records, tapes, CDs, and digital services as means to distribute music. While some record companies and artists have bemoaned file sharing and streaming services, such activities have democratized music distribution and accessibility. The direct access to bands that mainstream music has experienced over the past ten years has been in place

2.3.1 Counting Bands

In compiling a list of bands, numerous resources were used. It was possible to gather an initial list of bands from sources including black metal encyclopedias, extreme metal magazines, and private record collections. However, early in the process of gathering sources it was clear that relying on this material alone would be insufficient and incomplete. Moreover, even the most dedicated of record collectors would still lack the means to access some of the rarer releases. It would have been too expensive and time consuming to acquire physical copies of all the releases missing. Thus, more comprehensive data-bases and virtual archives needed to be examined in order to minimize these gaps and limit the influence of personal preference for certain bands.

According to an NRK report from 2010, there have been around 700 black metal bands in Norway.⁸⁶ That amount is close to the number given by *Encyclopedia Metallum* when one searches for bands from Norway, sorts the selection by styles, and then counts the raw number of bands given. The NRK article does not cite any source or indicate how they reached a total of 700 bands nor does the article explain whether these bands reflect the number currently active or the total number of bands that have existed. Starting with the raw number of bands given by *Encyclopedia Metallum*, the bands analyzed in this dissertation were collected, compiled, and cross-referenced with numerous online and printed sources in order to confirm their validity and existence.⁸⁷ After this confirmation process, it was determined that there has been approximately 560 black metal bands in Norway from 1988 to 2013.⁸⁸ This number falls below the amount given by NRK. A count of 560 bands is more accurate as it represents bands that either are, or have been, a black metal band and accounts for bands that have changed names. Included in this number are a handful of musical projects from notable members of the scene that are musically related to black metal as it is difficult to completely dissociate the artists from their main bands.⁸⁹

with underground styles for decades through DIY and trading networks. Regardless of the economic imperatives at play, the digitization of music has made both the music and its associated release accessories more accessible and reliable.

⁸⁶ Bjørnskau, 2010.

⁸⁷ These include *Encyclopedia Metallum* (Metal Archives), Bandcamp, Spotify, Youtube, Soundcloud, NRK P3 Urørt, band pages on Myspace, Facebook, and Bandcamp as well as individual band websites when applicable.

⁸⁸ According to *Encyclopedia Metallum*, there have been roughly 1,300 metal bands in Norway. This means that black metal bands represent slightly less than half of all metal music in Norway in the years outlined.

⁸⁹ Such bands include Wongraven, Isengard, and Storm.

2.3.2 Principle of Selection

At the same time as establishing the number of black metal bands in Norway, general categories were made based on the historical themes that were consistently presented by the bands. It was determined that a total of 329 bands use at least one of the categories of history use and expressions of cultural memory—folk narratives, Vikings and Norse mythology, and nature. This means that roughly two-thirds of all Norwegian black metal bands have, at some point, used at least one of the main categories in question.⁹⁰ Of those 329 bands, 37 use folk narratives, 97 refer to Vikings and Norse mythology, and 247 use nature. However, it was apparent that within these larger categories several potential sub-categories were consistently used that reflected different periods from Norway's past. The initially determined categories became too broad to account for the variations observed. Thus, the need arose for more precise sub-categories that had the flexibility to account for what was presented by the bands.

When considering the subcategories, the number of instances a certain theme was used constituted an important factor in delineating which themes were significant in the primary categories. However, quantity was not the only factor involved. Significance was also gleaned from the position that a given band had within the genre. Establishing the position of a band within Norwegian black metal is not a simple endeavor as consumptive patterns within the genre remain elusive. This opaqueness is due to the underground character of the genre and the ever-changing nature of the way this style of music is consumed. Therefore, the bands' relative significance to the scene had to be deduced from the coverage they have received in journalistic works. For instance, it could be determined that the bands involved since the beginning of the scene, such as Darkthrone, Burzum, and Emperor, held a significant place in Norwegian black metal due to their sonic and aesthetic contributions. These bands, and others who started in the early 1990s, have been heavily featured in Patterson's series, *Lords of Chaos*, and the documentaries *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* and *Until the Light Takes Us*. In addition, the extreme metal magazines *Decibel*, *Zero Tolerance Magazine*, and *Terrorizer* were examined to see which Norwegian black metal bands were featured therein and whether these features were consistent with what was

⁹⁰ The remaining one-third of Norwegian black metal bands use only the typical themes of the genre including Satanism and the Occult. On the rare occasion that other themes are present they do not stray far from the orthodoxy of black metal.

presented in the accounts given by Patterson and in the documentaries just mentioned.⁹¹

Each of the analysis chapters contains relevant examples from the sources that were deemed significant to the scene. The reason for using these bands and releases was twofold. First, there were too many bands and releases to give each instance enough space to illustrate the significance of a given use of history or expression of cultural memory. Therefore, using these illuminating examples allowed for more in-depth analysis and contextualization. Secondly, the reason for using examples was also due to the repetitive ways Norwegian black metal bands use the themes associated with each of the categories. For all the emphasis black metal places upon individual expression, there is a remarkable level of consistency demonstrated by all the bands. Thus, for the sake of avoiding redundancy, these examples were used in place of citing every relevant band and release for each analytical category and subcategory.

With these factors taken into consideration, the subcategories were then established. Within the main category of folk narratives, three subcategories were identified including themes involving the Black Death, trolls, and a final category of general folk narratives. While the themes of the Black Death and trolls are clear, the category of general folktales is opaque. Rather than being specific to one subject, this subcategory includes tales, characters, and creatures that appear in the folk narratives recorded by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe. In the category of Vikings and Norse mythology, three subcategories were identified and include themes consistent with the Eddas and the Medieval Kingdom of Norway, the idealized Viking warrior, and mythological cosmology and mysticism. In the last primary category, four subcategories were found within the main category of nature and the landscape. These include themes and references to forests, mountains, winter, and the idealized landscape.

2.3.3 Method of Analysis – Constructing the Context

The cover art of each release was paramount to the analytical process. Black metal is visually aestheticized to a high degree and visual representation is crucial as it sets an atmosphere for the music itself. As such, cover art typically has a prominent place in the production and conceptualization of a given release. Cover art is also one of the main modes of expression used by bands to communicate their themes and self-image. Because of this, cover art was the starting point for analysis and

⁹¹ *Decibel*, *Zero Tolerance Magazine*, and *Terrorizer* are active publications with an engaged readership both online and in print. Their online archives were of particular help to determine significance.

constitutes roughly half of the material analyzed in this study. The notion of visual literacy, as proposed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen was, therefore, useful as it specified how images are intrinsically linked to their national, political, social, and cultural context. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, images are filled with semiotic information that require a particular type of literacy in order to read and understand them.⁹² Unlike what is spoken or written, images can be read without mastery of a specific language. However, images, and other forms of visual discourse, are also often shaped and honed for a given region or place. This means that images carry the potential for *specific* social and cultural meanings that can be read when the context is accounted for and known.

Although images constituted the primary material collected and analyzed it soon became apparent that text also played a crucial role in how bands used history and expressed cultural memory. These text-based sources made up the second half of the material analyzed. This included the lyrics, liner notes, song titles, release title, and the name of the band. Indeed, some form of text is always featured on a release regardless of its type. While lyrics and liner notes are not always present, particularly true of demos, every release includes at least the band name, release title, and song titles. For this reason, it is impossible to ignore the text found on a release. Even when the lyrics are not printed in the liner notes and not intelligible when listening to a given track, the song titles can provide additional information about what the bands communicate. Texts, then, can offer an extra layer of meaning which compliments the visual discourse used on each release.

In the scope of this dissertation, the context is constructed through the selection and recognition of how Norwegian history and identity was created and established starting in the early nineteenth century. After all, contexts, according to Peter Burke, are “not found but selected or even constructed, sometimes consciously, by a process of abstracting from situations and isolating certain phenomena in order to understand them better.”⁹³ When constructing the context, it was important to set aside as many preconceived notions about Norway and Norwegian black metal as possible. Of course, this is a difficult process that requires reflexive consideration of the source material and the conscious distancing from the music itself. Without this step, my previous encounters with Norwegian black metal might have had an inordinate influence and shaped the analysis based on generalities rather than what was present in the sources. At the same time, casting aside my experience with this style of music would have ignored the many years spent listening and consuming Norwegian black metal. Thus, while remaining reflexive and not

⁹² Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, 15.

⁹³ Burke 2002, 87.

dismissing bands based on personal taste, this familiarity with the genre allowed me to better refine the contextual scope.

Furthermore, Burke claims that “what counts as a context depends on what one wishes to explain.”⁹⁴ The research process started with an initial question: what does Norwegian black metal reflect about Norway? This question stemmed from an interest in Norwegian black metal’s uses of history and the anthropological works of Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marianne Gullestad relating to Norwegian identity. In categorizing my sources, it was apparent that many of the themes were either directly borrowed, or were heavily influenced by, nineteenth-century national romanticism. The field of secondary literature on Norwegian national romanticism is prolific and was thereby sufficient in creating a rich context for my primary material. However, in going through the sources, it was clear that the historical context could be extended beyond the first stages of national romanticism in the 1840s and 1850s to cover the remainder of the century. Throughout this period artistic mediums such as the visual arts, literature and music were influenced by, and contributed to the development of national romanticism.

This led to the question of whether Norwegian black metal was unique in its expression of national romantic ideals. Hence, thorough research was undertaken into the *VG-lista*, the Norwegian music hit chart, starting in 1970 until the present and the winners and nominees of the *Spellemannpris* starting in 1972. This research, along with complementary secondary material on Norwegian folk music and classical composers, revealed that Norwegian black metal was not the only style of Norwegian music to have used or be inspired by national romantic themes. Indeed, the themes of folk narratives, Vikings and Norse mythology, and nature reappear numerous times in Norwegian music over the twentieth century. This meant that themes relating to Norwegian history in Norwegian black metal were not isolated cases. Rather, there was a continuity between the first nationalist composers of the 1920s and 1930s and the black metal bands studied in this dissertation. Thus, the musical context of the twentieth century became as important in understanding black metal as the cultural context of the nineteenth century.

What is described above, although revealing of some of the wider conclusions of this study, also elucidates the dialectic between text and context that has characterized this research process. However, this process also entailed “a constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data,” something which Ruth Wodak calls an ‘abductive approach.’⁹⁵ Moving between the context and the sources opened up a broader perspective that could account for the ways folk narratives,

⁹⁴ Burke 2002, 87.

⁹⁵ Wodak 2001, 70. Wodak 2004, 188.

Vikings and Norse mythology, and nature were negotiated by the music movements that used them. In this it was important to acknowledge Norman Fairclough's contention, as presented in Chapter 1, that meanings are not static, but are subject to change. In returning to the sources, it was then possible, for example, to explain how the meaning of Kittelsen's *Op under fjeldet toner en lur* changed when used by Burzum for the cover art of *Filosofem* (Chapter 4).

Up until this point the processes—text/context and theory/empirical material—were kept separate. However, with Fairclough's argument about meaning it became apparent that the initial research question needed to be modified. Rather than focusing only on what Norwegian black metal reflected about Norway, the new question centered on the active negotiation of the genre, thus making it about Norwegian black metal first and Norway second. The new question thereby required further contextualization which spurred me to examine some of the more significant ideological contexts of cultural expression in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, the *progressive musikkbevegelse* (*progg*) of the late 1960s and 1970s, discussed in Chapter 6, was expressly political in its activism and, being a popular music style and temporally close to Norwegian black metal made me question the ideological underpinnings of Norwegian black metal as expressed in the three main categories studied. This, in turn, revealed relevant social and economic contexts that could be added to the framework. Hence, my theoretical findings led to a reexamination of the primary sources which, in turn, led to a new question, producing further contextual frameworks. As such, the adopted 'abductive approach' also included a movement, not just between theory and material, but also between sources, theory, *and* context.

The primary focus of the analytical process was to understand how Norwegian black metal, through images and text, negotiated Norwegian history and cultural memory. However, in order to detect silences in the sources, a critical discourse approach was needed. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) influenced this part of the analysis as the sources were not only read along the text but also *against* the text. According to Seantel Anaïs, reading *along* the text "involves taking the meaning created in the text at face value, paying attention to how the text is organized and to how language is deployed therein."⁹⁶ Reading against the text, on the other hand,

involves looking for silences, questioning the serialization of events, considering accounts which might run counter to the official position portrayed in the text and deliberating on what accounts might be countered by a proactive rhetoric or boldly excluded by omission.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Anaïs 2013, 133.

⁹⁷ Anaïs 2013, 133.

This approach aided in finding silences, particularly in the material concerning Vikings and Norse mythology. As evidenced by the discussion above, CDA was not used as a method of analysis beyond this approach to reading against the text. This was due to the nature of the research aim which included an expressed desire to construct a fuller picture of Norwegian black metal's history use. A CDA approach, as developed by Fairclough, would have demanded a close linguistic analysis which would have limited the scope of the study and, in extension, the contextual framework developed in this dissertation.

This chapter has shown that Norwegian black metal, and black metal in general, has been the subject of numerous studies. From having been the focus of documentaries, the work of journalists, or the subject of research in academia, it was clear that this style of extreme metal has a significant body of work devoted to understanding it. Without some of these previous works it would have been difficult to define black metal in precise terms. Whether it is the genre's ideological position as discussed by Patterson, the concept of reflexive anti-reflexivity as posited by Kahn-Harris, the notion of black metal's open meaning-setting as postulated by Spracklen, or the musical definition of black metal as outlined by Hagen, these previous works were imperative to the definitional foundation of black metal for the dissertation.

Gathering a list of metal bands from Norway was made possible using online resources such as *Encyclopaedia Metallum*. Working from Hagen's musical definition, along with the genre's ideological underpinnings presented by Patterson, it was possible to discern which bands from Norway could be considered black metal. From this preliminary list, bands were analyzed according to release cover art, lyrics, liner notes, song titles, release title, and band name to locate uses of history and establish initial categories. Through an 'abductive approach,' as outlined by Wodak, the sources were analyzed according to their context in a dialogue that move between the sources and the context, a process that also entailed moving back and forth from the theoretical frame presented in Chapter 1. In doing so, relevant contexts were established that could better highlight the significance of what was found in the empirical source base. This part of the process was aided by a CDA-influenced approach to reading *along* and *against* the text. This chapter has thus shown how research was conducted and implemented for this dissertation through the process of defining black metal, collecting sources, and highlighting how bands and releases were analyzed with context.

Development of Norwegian Black Metal: Roots and Aesthetics to the Present

Founded in the early 1980s and named after Venom's second full-length record, black metal is an extreme style of metal music that is as dependent on how it sounds as on the ideologies connected to it. Black metal's core sonic output represents an intense, fundamentalist interpretation of heavy metal that has been molded by attempts to push the boundaries of metal's musical aesthetic. Just as with the genre's sound, black metal's imagery also tends to take an extreme fundamentalist approach. Like the other non-musical aspects, Norwegian black metal's non-musical aesthetics do not occur in a vacuum. They, like the musical components, are derivative of a variety of influences that are not limited to music alone. Norwegian black metal has been influenced by an amalgam of different sources from various parts of popular culture. These include the influences found in other types of metal, such as biker counterculture, but also influences from fantasy literature and role-playing games. In exploring these other influences, the themes of transgression and escapism become apparent. These themes are prevalent in Norwegian black metal and are often expressed alongside history and cultural memory. Thus, the goal of this chapter is to establish the foundations of black metal, to place Norwegian black metal in the context of heavy metal music, and, at the same time, establish its broader cultural frame.

3.1 Roots and Aesthetics to the Present

The origin of heavy metal is generally placed at the end of the 1960s. Numerous bands are credited with establishing the heavy metal sound and, with it, the non-musical aesthetic. While Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple are often cited as early examples of bands playing heavy metal, the

American band Blue Cheer and Birmingham, England's Black Sabbath contributed not just to the sound of heavy metal but to the shaping of vital non-musical themes. Blue Cheer, like Steppenwolf and others, were indicative of a rebellious, working-class that rejected the peace and love of hippie counterculture in favor of a motorcycle, outlaw theme that paired the long hair of the late-1960s hippies with denim and leather jackets.⁹⁸ A key aesthetic component was the notion of male liberation. This was deeply connected to motorcycles and the biker counterculture which were given a prominent platform through film. A number of films from the same period dealt with these biker culture ideals. The biggest and most successful of these was *Easy Rider* (1969), which attempted to portray biker culture as young, peaceful, and politically left-leaning. Like the peace and free love ideals that were associated with the hippy counterculture movement, biker culture was a response to the perceived social and cultural rigidity following the Second World War.⁹⁹ Freedom was a key aspect in both movements. In the biker subculture, freedom was manifested through the open road and the singular experience of riding as either individuals alone or as individuals within a larger riding social group. Yet, in contrast to the hippy counterculture movement, biker counterculture had overtones of counterculture masculinist ideals and gradually came to embrace crime and asocial behavior.

3.1.1 Outlaw Bikers, Black Sabbath, and Satanism

An important aspect of the masculinist ideal was an overt expression of rebellion synonymous with the outlaw side of the counterculture. This was portrayed in the films *The Wild One* (1959), *The Wild Angels* (1966), and *Devil's Angels* (1967) which portrayed a more deviant, lawless, and violent side of biker counterculture that contrasted with the later *Easy Rider*. Though the non-conformity and rebellion of the biker counterculture appealed to the white cultural and intellectual left, these aspects alienated those unwilling to embrace the outlaw lifestyle. The violence displayed by the Hell's Angels at Altamont along with the criminal activity and racism of all the high-profile biker gangs led many on the left to distance themselves from the outlaw side of the counterculture.¹⁰⁰ From these

⁹⁸ Clifford-Napoleone 2015, 33.

⁹⁹ Zimmerman 2010, 32. The earliest motorcycle clubs formed directly after World War II with returning veterans looking for adventure while trying to settle into civilian life. While not exclusive to American veterans, the image of the outlaw biker in late 1960s counterculture is deeply connected to the United States.

¹⁰⁰ Zimmerman 2010, 163. In 1969, the Hell's Angels were hired by the management teams of the Grateful Dead and the Rolling Stones to handle security at the Atamont Speedway Free Festival where nearly 300,000 people were in attendance. By the end of the festival four people were dead along with numerous injuries and property damage. While not responsible for all the violence and mayhem that day, the Hell's Angels were

activities, biker counterculture quickly took on a transgressive status. Over time, aspects of biker counterculture were commercialized and commodified to allow white-collar, middle class males to have the look of a biker lifestyle without the associated violence and criminality.

Of course, biker subculture formed only one part of heavy metal's early aesthetic influences. Few bands are as synonymous with heavy metal as Black Sabbath. The Birmingham quartet has directly or indirectly influenced nearly every metal subgenre since the band's beginnings in the late 1960s. In terms of musical aesthetic, Black Sabbath set an important foundation from which heavy metal would blossom. However, Black Sabbath's subject matter have also remained an integral part of all of metal's various subgenres. Matching the band's ominous musical tone, Black Sabbath gained notoriety for their presumed satanic overtones and symbolism. However, besides their name, Black Sabbath had few satanic references in their music through the 1970s. The band's original members were noted more for their excessive illegal drug use and penchant for getting into trouble with law enforcement while on tour than having any real aspirations towards the Satanic.¹⁰¹ As such, the band's transgression was tied more to living the typical rock n' roll lifestyle.

The public concern for Satanism, and its alleged links with rock and heavy metal music, was grounded in the fear of cults and cultic rituals. This fear was conveyed via a moral panic from cultural conservatives and religious groups who expressed trepidation about Satanism's influence among various youth cultures. The association between music and Satan has a long history that stretches back centuries in Western music. The tritone, a musical interval equivalent to an augmented fourth or a diminished fifth, has long had an association with the sound of evil while famed blues guitarist Robert Johnson was claimed to have sold his soul to the Devil in exchange for musical talent.¹⁰² Though peaking in the 1980s and early 1990s, the moral panic surrounding rock n' roll extends back to the 1960s with Christian outrage aimed at the Beatles and John Lennon's claim that the band was bigger than Jesus and that rock music would outlive Christianity.

accountable for stabbing one crowd member to death and violently repelling the audience from the stage during the Rolling Stones's set.

¹⁰¹ The drug consumption of Black Sabbath's original vocalist, John 'Ozzy' Osbourne, is well documented and original drummer, Bill Ward, claims to have taken acid every day for one year. Along with such regular consumption of drugs, Black Sabbath has at least two notable songs, 'Sweet Leaf' and 'Snowblind' that directly reference recreational drugs.

¹⁰² The tri-tone can be heard throughout the repertoire of Richard Wagner. In addition, Black Sabbath's title track from their debut record is based around the ominous sound of the tri-tone. As for Robert Johnson, the legend of his Faustian deal was cemented in his song "Cross Road Blues" from 1937. The lyrics do not reference any deal, but instead beg God's forgiveness to save his soul. The song, known as "Crossroads," has since been made famous by the Chicago blues musician Elmore James and English rock band Cream.

The controversy over Lennon's comments caused a moral panic among American Christian conservatives. With the rise in the profile of various counterculture movements throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Christian conservatives could legitimize their moral panic as their belief in a real Satan, who actively sowed evil in the world, which was confirmed by the fact that Satanism and the Satanic Church was very much in existence.¹⁰³ Though largely confined to the southern regions of the United States before, conservative Christian evangelicals and the 'New Christian Right,' under the auspices of organizations like Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, gained significant political influence through the 1970s and into the 1980s under the Republican presidency of Ronald Reagan. Though never having large numbers, Satanists, cultic rituals, and the influence they may have had on the youth became a focus of Evangelical concern.¹⁰⁴ This was in part what prompted the bipartisan Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) to get warning labels placed on music containing strong language, sexual references, and allusions to violence and the occult.

3.1.2 NWOBHM and the Beginnings of Black Metal

Much like the 'biker flicks' of the 1950s and 1960s, heavy metal gradually began to embrace the morbid, morose, and macabre at the end of the 1970s.¹⁰⁵ Bands like Black Sabbath, Coven, and even Kiss had pushed boundaries, but never so far as to exceed the limits of commercial acceptability. Accusations of Satanism, whether true or not, had been leveled against these bands. Yet, in the case of Black Sabbath and Kiss, these accusations were likely to give them more commercial appeal through perceived transgression than hampering their ability to sell records and fill venues. However, in the late 1970s many of the bands that forged the sound of heavy metal throughout the previous decade had either broken up, undergone significant lineup changes, or changed their sound enough not to be considered heavy metal.¹⁰⁶ In their stead, younger bands that carried with them the influences of not just heavy metal, but also of punk, hardcore and to some extent new wave, pushed the boundaries of heavy metal musically and non-musically. This meant that heavy metal diversified, setting off a process of subgenre fragmentation that has continued to the present.

One of the main subgenres that developed from the heavy metal of the 1970s was initiated in Britain and later attained the moniker New Wave of

¹⁰³ Richardson, Reichert, and Lykes 2009, 554.

¹⁰⁴ Dyrendal 2008, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Osgerby 2003, 98.

¹⁰⁶ While this could apply to several bands, the cases of Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Kiss are noteworthy as they each declined in the early 1980s.

British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM). Taking significant influence from bands like Motörhead, these bands, including Iron Maiden and Judas Priest, were highly successful in taking the blueprint of the heavy metal sound and adding in new influences.¹⁰⁷ For Iron Maiden, differentiation came through playing the same venues and adopting the speed of punk. Musically, this gave the band a distinct distance from the heavy metal bands of the 1970s. In terms of Iron Maiden's subject matter, the band incorporated themes of history and classic literature into their visual and textual accompaniments starting with their earliest records.¹⁰⁸ Though other bands in NWOBHM have also used history, Iron Maiden arguably remained the most successful of the bands using this sort of thematic approach.¹⁰⁹

Like Iron Maiden, Judas Priest also expanded the boundaries of heavy metal music. Originating in Birmingham, England, Judas Priest's sound was built around the twin guitar approach of hard rock and heavy metal that came in the latter half of the 1970s. Adding to this approach was the singing of vocalist Rob Halford who boasted a wide range in vocal delivery. While Halford's vocal dynamics were no doubt a significant factor in the band's success, it was his visual appearance that pushed the boundaries of metal music. Halford embraced a look that was inspired by biker counterculture replete with studded black leather from head to toe. The look was never explicitly questioned except from those in the punk scene at the time nor was it connected to anything less than unadulterated heterosexual masculinity.¹¹⁰ Of course, with the benefit of hindsight it is quite clear that Halford, who announced that he was homosexual after leaving the band, had brought homosexual and gay bar attire into the visual discourse of metal music without so much of a hint as to where the aesthetic had originated. American anthropologist Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone summarizes Halford's influence on the metal aesthetic stating that metal music has since adopted "BDSM style and symbolism, leather subcultural cues, overt visual and lyrical images of 'abnormal' sexual

¹⁰⁷ In addition to Iron Maiden and Judas Priest other notable NWOBHM bands include Saxon, Blitzkrieg, and Diamond Head. Both Def Leppard and Motörhead are often connected to NWOBHM but their inclusion is debatable. In any case, both bands contributed to the sound and the increased exposure of the genre during early to middle 1980s.

¹⁰⁸ These themes have remained prominent in Iron Maiden's work since the start of their career. Unlike other bands that have persisted with one or two consistent themes, Iron Maiden's use of historical and literary themes has varied from Ancient Egypt to the Crimean War and from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

¹⁰⁹ Notably, Saxon has used history over the course of their career. The expression of history is particularly visible on their 1984 full-length record *Crusader* that expressly deals with themes regarding the Crusades on the title track of the record and the album's cover artwork. See: Saxon. *Crusader*. Carrere CAL 200-A, 1984, 33⅓ rpm.

¹¹⁰ Waksman 2009, 187.

behavior, and performers who defy heteronormative cultural norms of appearance and behavior.”¹¹¹ While Clifford-Napoleone and other academics dealing with the topic of queerness in metal music may tend to overstate its presence and the degree to which it is accepted, there is no denying the lasting influence non-normative sexual practice has had on the look of black metal and, in particular, the appearance of several Norwegian black metal bands.¹¹²

3.2 The First Black Metal Bands and Norwegian Black Metal

While NWOBHM can be credited with blending the sound of heavy metal with the speed and intensity of punk, the early 1980s witnessed several bands emerge in localized scenes that pushed these sounds even further. What is most noticeable about this proliferation of bands is the international context in which it occurred. From 1980 to 1985, bands from across the globe expanded on the sound forged by NWOBHM bands. Along with the development and spread of thrash metal in the United States and Germany, bands such as Holocausto and Sarcófago from Brazil, Bulldozer, Mortuary Drape and Death SS from Italy, and Master’s Hammer from Czechoslovakia increased the intensity and speed of the music.¹¹³ Along with musical contributions, these bands escalated transgressive themes and aesthetics that contributed to the foundation of black metal. As significant as these bands were, others more directly influenced Norwegian black metal’s development in the late 1980s.

3.2.1 Venom

There are generally considered to be four main bands that contributed to the foundation of black metal in the early 1980s. The first of these,

¹¹¹ Clifford-Napoleone 2015, 11.

¹¹² One needs to look no further than the proliferation of black leather through black metal in general. However, few bands black metal bands have embraced black leather, BDSM, and non-normative sexual practice as much as Norway’s Carpathian Forest particularly on the 1998 full-length record *Black Shining Leather*. See: Carpathian Forest. *Black Shining Leather*. Avantgarde Music AV031, 1998, compact disc.

¹¹³ Though the German thrash scene broke through more towards the mid-1980s, the American based bands, particularly those coming from the Bay Area scene such as Metallica, Exodus, Testament, and Possessed, formed as early as 1979. Though not technically from the same region in California, Slayer and Megadeth benefitted from the scene that had developed around the San Francisco Bay area. As for German scene, the core revolved around four main bands that included Holy Moses, Destruction, Sodom, and Kreator. Despite all three bands coming from Germany and given the moniker of ‘Teutonic’ thrash, they did not come from the same city or region.

Venom, can in many respects be considered a part of the same NWOBHM movement that produced Iron Maiden and Judas Priest.¹¹⁴ Yet, Venom's music and image were significantly different from their NWOBHM contemporaries. Firstly, Venom's music was unpolished both in terms of musicianship and production quality. Hailing from Newcastle, England, Venom's founding members recorded their early releases despite not being well financed. Founding member, bassist, and vocalist Conrad Lant, also known as Cronos, was able to offset the cost by working at the studio Venom used to record. However, the lack of funds meant that the final production and mixing was uneven and lacked the professional clarity that other, better-financed NWOBHM bands had during the same period. This gave the recording a distinctive sound that was rough and unpolished. Combined with the band's limited musicianship, this gave the recordings a feeling of immediacy and a rawness that broke with the aesthetic norms of heavy metal music of the early 1980s. Thus, despite their musical and economic limitations, Venom created a sound that was unlike much else at the time.

Venom's theme was also distinctive for the time. Granted, many bands previous to Venom had utilized satanic motifs, yet few were able to match Venom's use of the theme. This is particularly evident in Venom's 'golden era' releases from 1980 until 1982, with an argument also to be made for the full-length record *At War With Satan* from 1984 and the singles *Warhead* and *Manitou* from the same year. Between these years, Venom released arguably their most important records regarding the development of black metal. After Venom's initial demos in 1980, the single, *In League with Satan/Live like an Angel* and the full-length record, *Welcome to Hell*, were released in 1981. Both releases featured cover art that was unlike anything else in metal music at the time. Though differing slightly in color, both releases feature Venom's name and an illustrated goat's head integrated in the lines of an inverted pentagram. Both the goat's head and the inverted pentagram are symbols of Satanism and satanic religious practice.¹¹⁵ Though not as striking when compared to the cover art of more modern metal records, this artwork was likely to stand out at a record store at a time when the recordings were originally released.

Building off the visual template established with *In League with Satan/Live like an Angel* and *Welcome to Hell*, Venom followed a similar visual path with their second full-length record *Black Metal* from 1982. However, unlike the releases before it, the cover art of *Black Metal* features an illustration of an anthropomorphized goat-like figure that could be read

¹¹⁴ Before taking the name Venom, the band went by the names Guillotine and Dwarfstar and underwent lineup changes before ultimately settling into a three-piece band for the release of the *Demon* demo in 1980.

¹¹⁵ Venom. *In League with Satan/Live Like an Angel*. Neat Records NEAT 08, 1981, 45 rpm; Venom. *Welcome to Hell*. Neat Records NEAT 1002, 1981, 33⅓ rpm.

as Satan or a Devil-like character with a pentagram emblazoned on its forehead.¹¹⁶ Matching the theme of the cover art, a number of tracks, including “To Hell and Back,” “Leave Me in Hell,” and “Sacrifice,” reference Satan and similarly sacrilegious themes. Taken at face value one could be forgiven if they were to assume Venom’s references to Satan and Hell might be indicative of sincere beliefs or a promotion of violence toward Christianity. However, Venom’s approach to Satanism and its related themes should not be taken at face value. Instead, they should be seen as representative of the band’s youthful imagination that is apparent on other tracks such as “Teacher’s Pet,” which explores a lurid classroom fantasy. With this in mind, Venom’s predilection toward Satanism was motivated by shock value, vulgarity, and little else.¹¹⁷ Yet, whether coining the genre’s name from their second full-length record or the raw sound they produced, Venom’s contribution to the genre of black metal and, ultimately, Norwegian black metal is undeniable.

3.2.2 Mercyful Fate

Standing in stark contrast to Venom’s portrayal of Satanism was Denmark’s Mercyful Fate. Formed in 1981 in Copenhagen, Mercyful Fate proved to be highly influential to the nascent black metal aesthetic. Musically, the band took the twin guitar approach of late-1970s hard rock and the fast growing NWOBHM scene and coupled it with a soaring vocal delivery by lead vocalist Kim Petersen, known by the stage name King Diamond. Whereas Venom’s association with Satanism was purely done for shock and often mixed with male teenage fantasies, Mercyful Fate’s connection with the subject was more profound due to Petersen’s open affiliation with the Church of Satan. As one of the few music artists of the time to openly declare his belief in Laveyan Satanism, Petersen, and by connection Mercyful Fate, was the subject of tabloid-style castigation. Moreover, like Venom, they were placed on the PMRC’s list of explicit music. This sort of attention did not hurt the band’s reputation in the metal scene and did much to endear them to young fans looking for a source of rebellion and transgression. Yet, Satanism was not the only way in which Mercyful Fate drew attention to themselves.

Matching their lyrical themes, Petersen went to great lengths to ensure that his stage presence would capture the attention of anyone who saw him. Taking a page from Arthur Brown, Alice Cooper, and Kiss, Petersen would apply black and white face paint for the band’s live shows. This was combined with a costume that was at times completed with a top hat and a short cape, giving Petersen the appearance of a demonic, cult worshipping

¹¹⁶ Venom. *Black Metal*. Neat Records NEAT 1005, 1982, 33⅓ rpm.

¹¹⁷ Reyes 2013, 245.

Victorian gentleman. To complete his ensemble, Petersen would serenade an actual human skull named Melissa with a microphone fastened with real human femur bones to form a cross.¹¹⁸ Taken together, all of these components created a grandiose ambiance centered on Petersen. No other members of Mercyful Fate wore such attire or adorned themselves or their instruments with human bones. This did not necessarily take away from Petersen's musical performance, but it did place a lot of the focus on Petersen's appearance. While Mercyful Fate's sound does contain some elements that appear later in black metal, it was the band's sincerer approach to Satanism that arguably had a bigger impact. Moreover, Petersen's theatrics, along with those of Kiss, were an inspiration for the visual aesthetic of Norwegian black metal and helped define one of the ways black metal would distinguish itself from other forms of extreme metal. Indeed, the influence from Kiss should not be understated. The band's live show, costumes, and commitment to merchandising made Kiss a highly recognizable band. Many of those who would later become involved in the first iterations of Norwegian black metal were in their early teens or younger when Kiss was at the height of their international success. This meant that Kiss was one of the first hard rock bands many of them heard and likely left a significant impression on those discovering heavy metal.¹¹⁹ Thus, Kiss, like Mercyful Fate, had an impact on the appearance of Norwegian black metal.

3.2.3 Hellhammer/Celtic Frost

Formed roughly a year after Mercyful Fate in 1982 as Hellhammer, and changing their name in 1984, Celtic Frost is another pillar in the foundation of black metal. Originating from Switzerland, Celtic Frost is an influential band whose sound and theme have informed the development of nearly every style connected to extreme metal. Regarding black metal, the band's first EP *Morbid Tales* from 1984 blends a distinctive influence from Venom with a D-beat drum technique that would not be out of place on a hardcore punk record from the same period. The result of this blending of sounds gave *Morbid Tales* a sinister do-it-yourself sound that was unlike anything else at the time. The visual aesthetic of the EP was also striking and featured a black background upon which a red heptagram is embellished with a skull in the center and spikes protruding from the gaps in the star.¹²⁰ Though not overtly Satanic, there is a strong

¹¹⁸ The name Melissa is not completely random as it was the name of Mercyful Fate's first full-length record from 1983. See: Mercyful Fate. *Melissa*. Roadrunner Records RR 8998, 1983, 33⅓ rpm.

¹¹⁹ Patterson 2013 (a), 4.

¹²⁰ Celtic Frost. *Morbid Tales*. Noise Records N 0017, 1984, 33⅓ rpm.

occult theme in the artwork that, taken together with the music, creates an atmosphere that is both aggressive and full of cultic mysticism.

Following *Morbid Tales*, Celtic Frost released the full-length record *To Mega Therion* in 1985. This record maintained the tempo and energy of *Morbid Tales*, but benefitted from a cleaner production quality. While this allows for some differentiation between the records, it is the cover art that most separates the two. Featuring the direct use of H. R. Giger's painting *Satan I* (1977), the cover art of *To Mega Therion* shows Satan drawing back a nail on a slingshot made from a crucified Jesus.¹²¹ Such an image retrospectively highlights the band's subtle anti-Christian references from *Morbid Tales* and clearly demarcates the band's antithetical feelings regarding Christianity. Taken together, both *Morbid Tales* and *To Mega Therion* form the primary records through which Celtic Frost would influence black metal as a whole. Likewise, these albums were also highly influential to the development of grindcore and death metal that was forming in Britain and the United States. However, *Morbid Tales* and *To Mega Therion* proved to be the last records Celtic Frost made before veering their sound more towards the avant-garde. Despite this, Celtic Frost's influence is apparent in the musical and visual development of Norwegian black metal.

3.2.4 Bathory

While Venom, Mercyful Fate, and Celtic Frost all had an impact on Norwegian black metal at the end of the 1980s, the influence Bathory had on the sound and thematic content of the Norwegian scene was paramount.¹²² Formed in Vällingby, Sweden in 1983 under the prime direction of Tomas Forsberg, better known by the pseudonym Quorthon, Bathory's first three records epitomized black metal's initial thrust as a genre. Building off the band's inclusion on the now famed *Scandinavian Metal Attack* split compilation from 1984, Bathory released their eponymous debut record the same year.¹²³ Like Venom and Celtic Frost, the production quality on *Bathory* is rough, with instruments played with more energetic vigor than fine-tuned musicianship. The thematic content of the record is filled with the same satanic camp that could be found on Venom's *Welcome to Hell* or *Black Metal*, something that is attributable to Venom's significant influence on Bathory at this time.¹²⁴ This is well

¹²¹ Celtic Frost. *To Mega Therion*. Noise Records N 0031, 1985, 33⅓ rpm.

¹²² Bathory's name derives from a sixteenth-century Hungarian noblewoman who allegedly bathed in the blood of young girls to preserve her youth.

¹²³ Ekeröth 2006, 29. Bathory/Oz/Zero Nine/Spitfire. *Scandinavian Metal Attack*. Wave WAVE-LP-8008, 1984, Mercyful Fate. Melissa. Roadrunner Records RR 9898, 1983, 33⅓ rpm.

¹²⁴ Ekeröth 2006, 31.

exemplified in the lyrics from the song “Necromansy” in the lines “Heil satanic majesty, tonight we sacrifice, we drink our own blood, and blasphemy while, the moon is our only light” and from the lines “The lies of Christ will lose, the ways of hell I chose, I drink the floating blood, defy the fury of god” from the song “In Conspiracy with Satan.”¹²⁵ Following *Bathory*, the band released the full-length records *The Return.....* in 1985 and *Under the Sign of the Black Mark* in 1987. Both the music and the themes of the records are more refined versions of what is found on *Bathory*. The production quality of these records is also noticeably higher quality and reflects the fact that the band had marginally better financing.

The themes and the music played on *Bathory*, *The Return.....*, and *Under the Sign of the Black Mark* reflects Bathory’s Satanist period and the related themes of witchcraft and the occult. After *Under the Sign of the Black Mark*, Bathory’s themes and musical style shifted significantly. Rather than continuing to use the themes that predominated on the first three records, Bathory looked to Norse mythology and the Viking period with the release of *Blood Fire Death* in 1988.¹²⁶ It should be noted that Bathory was not the first rock or heavy metal band to use this subject matter. Themes of Vikings and Norse mythology can be seen in the lyrics of the Led Zeppelin songs “Immigrant Song” from *Led Zeppelin III* in 1970 and “No Quarter” from *Houses of the Holy* in 1973.¹²⁷ Moreover, Bathory was not the first Swedish metal band to incorporate this theme. The Stockholm-based heavy metal band Heavy Load has a distinctive Viking theme on the track “Son of the Northern Light” from their 1978 debut record *Full Speed at High Level* and then again on the tracks “Singing Swords” and “Roar of the North” from the 1983 full-length record *Stronger than Evil*.¹²⁸ Despite the inclusion of this theme, neither Led Zeppelin nor Heavy Load used it exclusively and it formed a small part of the two bands’ thematic content.

What sets Bathory apart from these prior uses is that with the release of *Blood Fire Death*, Vikings and Norse mythology came to dominate the band’s subject matter going forward. *Hammerheart* from 1990 and *Twilight of the Gods* from 1991 along with *Blood Fire Death* formed the so-called ‘Asatru’ trilogy.¹²⁹ These records redefined Bathory’s musical trajectory and had a significant impact on Norwegian black metal. The music and production aesthetic expanded the possibilities of extreme metal’s sound. This was particularly apparent on *Blood Fire Death*. The production is still

¹²⁵ Bathory, *Bathory*, Black Mark Production BMLP 666-1, 1984, 33⅓ rpm.

¹²⁶ Bathory, *Blood Fire Death*. Under One Flag FLAG 26, 1988, 33⅓ rpm.

¹²⁷ Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin III*. Atlantic SD 7201, 1970, 33⅓ rpm. Led Zeppelin, *Houses of the Holy*. Atlantic SD 7255, 1973, C.

¹²⁸ Heavy Load, *Full Speed at High Level*, Heavy Sound HSLP 03, 1978, 33⅓ rpm. Heavy Load, *Stronger than Evil*, Thunderload Records TLP 834, 1983, 33⅓ rpm.

¹²⁹ Bathory, *Hammerheart*. Noise N 0153-1, 1990, 33⅓ rpm; Bathory, *Twilight of the Gods*. Black Mark Production BMLP 666-6, 1991, 33⅓ rpm.

rough, but the guitars have a thicker, more substantive tone and the bass guitar is more audible amongst the rest of the instruments than on previous recordings.¹³⁰ In addition, the drums followed a two-beat pattern borrowed from punk and thrash metal that, when played at slower tempos, allows the rest of the instruments to create a greater sense of atmosphere. In addition to influencing Norwegian black metal, the musical aesthetic of *Blood Fire Death* was pivotal to the sound of Swedish death metal that developed shortly after the record was released.¹³¹ Yet, the introduction of Vikings and Norse mythology as the main theme legitimated the use of this aesthetic in extreme metal. *Blood Fire Death*, along with *Hammerheart* and *Twilight of the Gods*, are directly responsible for the creation of the so-called 'Viking' metal style.

The motivating factors behind Bathory's shift in subject matter and musical style can be narrowed down to two factors. Though Forsberg might have played fast-paced, lo-fi extreme metal, he had a distinct interest in classical music with a particular predilection for Richard Wagner's work.¹³² This influence is evident throughout the 'Asatrú' trilogy, but is particularly evidenced through the bombastic opening songs of *Blood Fire Death*, "Odens Ride over Nordland" and "A Fine Day to Die." "Odens Ride over Nordland" features whinnying horses and thundering hooves soaked in reverb effects. These continue into the second track's acoustic and cleanly sung initial verses which foreshadows the eruption of distorted electric guitars and the heavy drums that follows. After this trilogy of releases, Bathory's musical aesthetic and theme would vary from release to release. Yet, a distinct theme of the 'North' with allusions to Viking and Norse mythology consistently appeared on later records.

Though it would be easy to dismiss Bathory's thematic shift as a means to refresh the band's image and creative process, the reason for leaving behind Satanism, witchcraft, and the occult is more connected to Forsberg's interest in Asatrú and the Viking period in Swedish history. With the onset of *Blood Fire Death*, Forsberg became enamored with a national romantic conception of Swedish history. Not only did he want to convey a sense of nostalgia for the Viking period, Forsberg felt it was his obligation to use Vikings and Norse mythology as a theme in order to honor his forefathers. Forsberg considers this sentiment in an interview from 1993 in *Lords of Chaos* when discussing the song "Under the Runes" from *Twilight of the Gods*. He claims he would fight for his "father's gods' right to have a place in any form of discussion" about Sweden.¹³³ In the same interview, Forsberg continues this line of thought stating,

¹³⁰ Ekeröth 2006, 132.

¹³¹ Ekeröth 2006, 132.

¹³² Johansson and Klingberg 2011, 61.

¹³³ Moynihan and Söderlind 2003, 20.

we tend to think of ourselves as modern, down-to-earth Protestant Christians – healthy Christians. And we never talk about how Sweden was prior to that, more than 900 years ago, because we have a history of 2,000 years of being Asá-faithful, and just 970 years of Christianity. And if they don't want to talk about it, I'm prepared to fight any kind of war by the great hail, under the runes, for my father's gods. Because there are certain values, from those times, worth fighting for.¹³⁴

It is clear that Forsberg feels a direct, uninterrupted connection with the Viking period and that for him Christianity, despite having been present in Sweden for 970 years, still lacks authenticity. The implications of Forsberg's beliefs are clear in this regard. The deities of Norse mythology and the cultural practices associated with the Viking period are more Swedish than the Christian faith, as Christianity is an introduced, foreign religion. This sort of rhetoric was not unique to Bathory in Sweden at this time nor would it be unique to Norwegian black metal when it went down the same discursive path. Indeed, the strong stance asserted by Forsberg in *Lords of Chaos* echoes similar sentiments expressed by the Swedish bands Ultima Thule, whose first EP was released in 1985, and the death metal band Unleashed, who formed in 1989. Likewise, a number of right-wing populist movements such as *Bevara Sverige Svenskt*, *Sverigepartiet*, and *Sverigedemokraterna* were active in Sweden at the time Forsberg's comments were made regarding Asatrú.¹³⁵ Although Forsberg never had any explicit links to far-right movements, his sentiments would have found sympathies among some members of the aforementioned Swedish parties. In any case, Bathory supplied an easily accessible template for Norwegian black metal bands who would imagine the Viking period through their national context and make the theme their own.

3.2.5 Mayhem and the Rise of Norwegian Black Metal

While the group of bands that shaped the nucleus of the early Norwegian black metal scene were predominately formed after 1990, two bands important to the direction of black metal in Norway started in the mid-1980s. The first of these was Mayhem, whose first iterations can be seen forming as early as 1984. Yet, it would be two years before the first demo was made and not until a year later, in 1987, that the first studio recording was released.¹³⁶ Indeed, it was not until May 1994 that the band's first full-

¹³⁴ Moynihan and Söderlind 2003, 20.

¹³⁵ Löw 1998, 182-185.

¹³⁶ The releases in question are the self-produced *Pure Fucking Armageddon* demo and the Posercorpse Music released EP *Deathcrush*. Both of these releases are questionably black metal and leaned more toward a blend of German thrash and an early death metal sound. See: Mayhem. *Pure Fucking Armageddon*. Funny Farm, 1986, cassette; Mayhem, *Deathcrush*. Posercorpse Music FRANK 001, 1987, 33⅓ rpm.

length studio record, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, was released.¹³⁷ The time between the first demo and *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas* was, however, important to the formation of Norwegian black metal. Mayhem's music went from a sound similar to Venom, German thrash, and the burgeoning English and American death metal scenes to one that would become a pillar of Norwegian black metal's musical aesthetic. The shift in Mayhem's sound came around the time of a performance in Leipzig, Germany in 1990. This live performance was recorded and subsequently released as a bootleg that circulated the extreme metal underground and tape trading network before being given an official release in 1993 under the title *Live in Leipzig*.¹³⁸ This particular performance received underground acclaim at the time and has been recognized as one of the first Norwegian black metal performances recorded.¹³⁹ With this recording, Mayhem became the central point from which Norwegian black metal would flourish. However, between a lack of activity as a band and the turmoil that ensued following the suicide of vocalist Per Yngve Ohlin and murder of guitarist Øystein Aarseth, Mayhem never truly capitalized on their position within the scene.

3.2.6 Darkthrone

Along with Mayhem, Darkthrone is the other band from which the preliminary stages of Norwegian black metal were set. Founded in 1987, Darkthrone's formative years were spent playing death metal. In 1991, the band released their first full-length record titled *Soulside Journey* after signing to the English record label Peaceville Records. Like the early demos, *Soulside Journey* had more in common with the Swedish death metal scene than with anything in Norway at the time.¹⁴⁰ Yet, after becoming acquainted with and eventually befriending members from Mayhem, Darkthrone's sound shifted from death metal to black metal. In 1992, the band released *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* which featured an unpolished recording and production quality accompanied by a dark and achromatic photograph for cover art.¹⁴¹ It was a shift that contrasted sharply with what

¹³⁷ Mayhem. *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*. Deathlike Silence Productions Anti-Mosh 006, 1994, compact disc.

¹³⁸ Mayhem, *Live in Leipzig*, Obscure Plasma, 92 007, 1993, 33⅓ rpm.

¹³⁹ The importance of this performance to the development of Norwegian black metal is difficult to understate. The quality of the recording itself was rough and matched the low-fi production found on the early releases by Venom, Celtic Frost, and Bathory. The show itself was a visual spectacle replete with the gore of severed animal heads on spikes and Ohlin's blood streaming from self-inflicted wounds.

¹⁴⁰ Darkthrone. *Soulside Journey*. Peaceville Records VILE 22 CD, 1991, compact disc.

¹⁴¹ Darkthrone. *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*. Peaceville Records VILE 28 CD, 1992, compact disc. The stylistic shift between *Soulside Journey* and *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* did not go unnoticed by Peaceville Records. The change in sound was met with reservation,

Darkthrone had done before on *Soulside Journey* and it represented a clear movement away from death metal. The songs themselves at this point were more or less death metal songs recorded and played in a black metal style. The guitar tone of *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* was a thin, sharp crackle with pronounced mids and highs and differed greatly compared to the thick lows and chainsaw-like buzz found on *Soulside Journey*.¹⁴² Meanwhile, the vocals were more akin to a screeched rasp, than the low growl of before. The cover art also served as a clean break from the colorfully illustrated death metal covers at the time. The image found on the front of *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* is predominately black and punctuated only by the stark white of the band's name at the top left, record title across the bottom, and the corpse painted face of then guitarist Ivar Enger in the center. Much of the finer details of the photograph are obscured which adds an additional layer of atmosphere to the one already created through the music.

The following year Darkthrone released *Under a Funeral Moon*. Unlike *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, this full-length record was a total commitment to black metal. Both the music and the visual accompaniments were black metal in their presentation.¹⁴³ The songs found on *Under a Funeral Moon* were shorter, uncomplicated in their arrangement, and featured the distinctive trance-inducing atmosphere of black metal. Moreover, the cover followed the same stark achromatic presentation of its predecessor. As such, it was the first truly black metal release of a Norwegian band. However, by the time of the record's release in 1993, the core of the Norwegian black metal scene was already fully formed and centered at Aarseth's record shop Helvete in Oslo. In addition to owning and operating the store, Aarseth had established his own record label Deathlike Silence Productions. Owning both a record store and a label along with being one of the more senior members of the so-called Black Circle, which coalesced between 1990 and 1992, made Aarseth the de-facto leader of the scene. Fans and bands alike would gather around Helvete and use it as a sort of hangout. With its black walls, poor lighting, and ominous decorations, Helvete had an unwelcoming atmosphere to those unaccustomed to the aesthetics of black metal. Overall, the store,

yet the label ultimately relented and released the record as part of the five-record deal they had signed with Darkthrone.

¹⁴² The chainsaw buzz of death metal at this time was directly attributable to the Boss HM-2 guitar effects pedal. The Swedish death metal scene was known to use these pedals with all knobs turned to their maximum levels. Using the pedal in this manner completely saturated the guitar tone in an unsophisticated mass of distortion. Given *Soulside Journey* was recorded at Sunlight Studio in Stockholm, the same studio used by Entombed, Dismember, and Tiamat, it is perhaps unsurprising that the sound was used on the record.

¹⁴³ Darkthrone. *Under a Funeral Moon*. Peaceville Records VILELP35, 2010, 33⅓ rpm.

despite having a poor selection of records, was an important place for the solidification of the scene.¹⁴⁴

3.2.7 Murders, Trials, and Awards

While seemingly hostile to those on the outside, Helvete, and the Black Circle that congregated there, proved fertile ground for nascent bands. In addition to members of the bands Emperor, Darkthrone, and Ulver, Varg Vikernes was a semi-regular visitor who for a brief time lived in the basement of the store. Ever the self-promoter, Vikernes and his one-man band Burzum caught the attention of Aarseth with a raw and emotive brand of black metal that was simple and monotonous. In a fateful move, Aarseth signed Burzum to Deathlike Silence Productions and released the band's eponymous debut album in January of 1992. Less than a year after *Burzum* was released the world of Norwegian black metal would become the object of media and police attention for a string of arson attacks and two murders, one of which killed Aarseth himself. Helvete and the Black Circle were at the center of this attention. By 1994, the core of the Norwegian black metal scene had been irrevocably altered and within a year a number of musicians had been jailed for their part in arson, theft, and vandalism. While these arrests were significant, they were largely secondary to the two murders. The first was the murder of Magne Andreassen by Bård 'Faust' Eithun of the band Emperor in 1992. Eithun repeatedly stabbed and beat Andreassen in a forest outside of Lillehammer following a brief altercation between the two men. Though initially lacking any leads, the police were eventually able to arrest and convict Eithun from confessions obtained from other black metal musicians. These confessions stemmed from the second murder connected to Norwegian black metal. This was the murder of Aarseth in 1993 by Vikernes, an act that proved pivotal not just for the division it caused among black metal musicians and the amount of media attention it garnered, but also for the mythology it generated concerning Satanism and violence in the scene.

The subsequent trial gave Vikernes a unique opportunity to publicize his personal political leanings and sympathies for National Socialism. In doing so, it exposed what before had been only implicit links with right-wing extremism in Norwegian black metal. Vikernes was an active and highly productive musician who was even able to release two full-length records and write lyrics for a number of Darkthrone songs while serving a twenty-one-year sentence, the equivalent of life imprisonment in Norway. In addition to producing music in prison, Vikernes researched and wrote extensively on topics regarding Nordic heritage and mythology all while promoting the superiority of white Europeans. Vikernes was able

¹⁴⁴ Patterson 2013 (a), 154-155.

to create a cult of personality that was spurred on by his charisma and loyal fanbase. Moreover, Vikernes's profile meant that his sympathy for right-wing extremism reached a broader audience than it might otherwise have done. While it is difficult to attribute the rise of NSBM solely to Vikernes, his influence is hard to deny and, as such, it is difficult to understate the impact he had on the direction of Norwegian black metal and black metal as a whole.

Beyond Burzum's contributions, Norwegian black metal flourished in the years following Aarseth's death and Vikernes's imprisonment. Numerous bands formed that both increased the size of the scene and expanded the potential of aesthetic influences. Among the new bands were The Kovenant and Dimmu Borgir, both of whom won *Spellemannpris* awards in 1998 and 1999.¹⁴⁵ The Kovenant drifted into relative obscurity, but Dimmu Borgir built on this success and packed their music with just enough satanic imagery to seem transgressive while at the same time appear safe enough for broader marketing purposes. As a result, Dimmu Borgir has become one of the biggest black metal bands in the world. While some of the music of black metal has changed since the early days of Norwegian black metal, the visual aesthetics and the ideological tenets have remained remarkably consistent. Both The Kovenant and Dimmu Borgir popularized a bombastic, symphonic musical style along with attire heavily influenced by the *Matrix* films. Though Dimmu Borgir has embraced a more updated appearance in later releases, overt references to Satanism and the occult, replete with all the associated symbolic overtones, have been present over the entirety of their catalogue. As such, Dimmu Borgir is illustrative of the persistence of Satanism and occult as a means of transgression in Norwegian black metal.

3.3 Fantasy, Role Playing Games, and Escapism

Though Satanism and the occult are strongly associated with Norwegian black metal, they are not the sole themes used. The early years of Norwegian black metal illuminate some of the varied ideas and symbols that were worked into the thematic framework of many bands. Aside from Satanism and the occult, a distinct fantasy element is present in the early records of Isengard, Emperor, and Burzum. While not an explicit expression of cultural memory or use of history, the main concerns of the dissertation, fantasy elements, particularly those derived from J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth, can be seen as precursors to later themes of escapism expressed through using history and cultural memory—the main concerns of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁵ The Kovenant won in 1998 under the 'Metal' category.

3.3.1 The Influence of Tolkien and Middle Earth

According to Swedish folklorist Tommy Kuusela, eighty-five different black metal bands have used Tolkien related themes and concepts in their music since the beginnings of black metal in the early 1980s.¹⁴⁶ Though not alone in using this theme, Kuusela contends that the early Norwegian black metal scene was the first to integrate Tolkien into black metal. Previous to its use in black metal, Tolkien themes were employed in a variety of rock and rock-related genres between the 1960s to the 1980s. Kuusela notes that in addition to the references found in Led Zeppelin's "Ramble On" and "Misty Mountain Hop," a number of other bands from this time drew upon Tolkien's works for inspiration.¹⁴⁷ Other prominent examples include "The Wizard" from *Black Sabbath* by Black Sabbath in 1970 and the songs "Rivendell" off *Fly By Night* in 1975 and "The Necromancer" from *Caress of Steel* in 1975 by Rush.¹⁴⁸ However, Tolkien themes were also present and used by other bands and individuals that would have an impact on the development of black metal. Most notably, these include the song "The Dark Lord" sung by Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister in 1969 while in the band Sam Gopal before later forming Motörhead.¹⁴⁹ However, Tolkien references were not limited to the first heavy metal and progressive rock acts of the late 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the use of Tolkien themes persisted into the 1980s, as illustrated by Jeff 'Mantas' Dunn's song "Lothlorien" on the 1986 *Powertrax* compilation.¹⁵⁰

While these examples represent the extent to which Tolkien influenced Anglophone bands, Tolkien themes were not limited to areas of native English. In Germany, Morgoth and Running Wild were influenced by Tolkien. In addition, the power metal band Blind Guardian, as particularly evidenced on their 1998 full-length release *Nightfall in Middle-Earth*, has also extensively used Tolkien themes over the course of their career. In Sweden, at least one band, 220 Volt, had incorporated Tolkien references before the rise of Norwegian black metal. Moreover, the death metal bands Unleashed and Amon Amarth used Tolkien themes on some of

¹⁴⁶ Kuusela 2015, 90. Note that the eighty-five bands to use such themes are not all Norwegian, but rather come from all over the world.

¹⁴⁷ "Ramble On" can be found on: Led Zeppelin. *Led Zeppelin II*. Atlantic SD 8236, 1969, 33⅓ rpm. "Misty Mountain Hop" can be found on Led Zeppelin. Untitled. Atlantic SD 19129, 1971, 33⅓ rpm.

¹⁴⁸ Kuusela 2015, 97. Black Sabbath. *Black Sabbath*. Vertigo VO 6, 1970, 33⅓ rpm; Rush. *Fly by Night*. Mercury Records SRM-1-1023, 1975, 33⅓ rpm; Rush. *Caress of Steel*. Mercury Records SRM-1-1046, 1975, 33⅓ rpm.

¹⁴⁹ Kuusela 2015, 97

¹⁵⁰ Kuusela 2015, 98. Dunn is notable as being the guitarist for Venom during their most influential years in the early 1980s.

their first recordings in the early 1990s before later switching exclusively to Viking related subjects.¹⁵¹

Some consideration must also be given to Tolkien's presence in Norwegian music prior to Norwegian black metal. An example can be seen in the music of the *progg* rock band Prudence during the 1970s. Two songs stand out in this regard, "Gandalf" from the full-length *No. 3* in 1974 and "Bilbo and Frodo" from a 1974 two-track 7-inch single. The band was nominated for a *Spellemannpris* in 1974 for the 'Gruppe' category and won the award a year later in the 'Pop/Rock Plate' category for their full-length record *Takk de dokk*. Moreover, Prudence's main songwriter, Åge Aleksandersen, has received numerous accolades for his solo efforts and contributions to various bands and musical collectives.¹⁵² Though Aleksandersen's and Prudence's material is diverse in content, their inclusion of Tolkien themes indicates that the characters and tales of Middle Earth were not necessarily consigned to the periphery or completely unknown to Norwegians at this time. However, as both Kuusela and Norwegian author Håvard Rem note, though Norwegian translations of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* were made available in 1972 and from 1973 to 1975 respectively, it was not until a new translation of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1979 that the widespread interest in fantasy, folklore, and mythology was given an outlet through Tolkien's works.¹⁵³

3.3.2 Tolkien in Norwegian Black Metal

The increased exposure to Tolkien's work at the end of the 1970s came at a time when many of the founders of the early Norwegian black metal scene were in their early teens or younger. A decade later, Tolkien's world became an important thematic preoccupation of Norwegian black metal. One of the earliest examples of Tolkien themes in Norwegian black metal came through the music of Burzum. As the sole member of the band, Vikernes comprehensively drew upon Tolkien themes not just over the course of Burzum's early recordings, but also in his moniker and creation of the Burzum name. Calling himself Count Grishnackh, after an orc leader from *The Lord of the Rings*, Vikernes derived the name Burzum from the 'Black Speech' created by Tolkien as the language of Mordor. Indeed, even the name of his first band, Uruk-Hai, was taken from the name of Saruman's superior orc breed and indicates that Tolkien was an influence from the very start of Vikernes's career.

¹⁵¹ Kuusela 2015, 98. Cunningham 2010, 236. Unleashed did not use Tolkien after *Where No Life Dwells* in 1991. However, Amon Amarth still uses this band name which reflects their early interest with Tolkien.

¹⁵² Aleksandersen has had multiple releases appear on the Norwegian hits charts and has been nominated for and won several *Spellemannpris* awards since the 1970s.

¹⁵³ Kuusela 2015, 99. Rem 2010, 137-138.

This influence is showcased on Burzum's first full-length self-titled release in 1992. Originally released on Aarseth's Deathlike Silence Productions, *Burzum* is diverse in its thematic content. While this is not necessarily unexpected given Vikernes's later interests, the fact that a Tolkien theme persists at all during this time is somewhat surprising. Aarseth's influence on the development of Norwegian black metal was arguably at its highest point. Perhaps due to being older than Vikernes, and most of the others making up the 'Black Circle,' Aarseth's interest in Satanism did not include any overt references to fantasy or the works of Tolkien. The degree to which Aarseth influenced the content of *Burzum* is, of course, debatable and contentious given the ultimate conclusion of Aarseth's and Vikernes's relationship. However, the presence of a Tolkien theme is undoubtedly present on *Burzum* if not through its title, but through the inclusion of the short, instrumental track "The Crying Orc."¹⁵⁴ An argument can also be made for the cover art. Depicting a cloaked and hooded figure standing in a barren, desolate landscape, the illustrated, achromatic image used for the cover art shows at the very least an inspiration from Tolkien's fantasy world.¹⁵⁵ The cloaked and hooded figure bares a distinct resemblance to the Nazgul characters described in *The Lord of the Rings*. Moreover, the setting shares much in common with how Tolkien describes Mordor; a dark, desolate, and inhospitable place where only the most corrupted of beings can survive.

A distinct Tolkien theme is also present on Burzum's 1993 full-length *Det som engang var* and the EP *Aske* from the same year. Though a fantasy theme is visually present on *Det som engang var*, it is not derived from Tolkien, while the cover art of *Aske* is a photograph of the freshly burned out ruins of the Fantoft *stavkirke*, a fire that was intimately connected to Vikernes.¹⁵⁶ However, each album has at least one track that contains a clear allusion to Tolkien. On *Aske*, those familiar with Tolkien's works will recognize a reference to Sauron and his tower Barad-dûr on the opening track "Stemmen fra tårnet."¹⁵⁷ Likewise, on *Det som engang var* the track "En ring til å herske" is immediately recognizable as referring to the One

¹⁵⁴ Burzum, *Burzum*, Deathlike Silence Productions, ANTI MOSH 002 1992, compact disc.

¹⁵⁵ Jannicke Wiese-Hansen, who also contributed cover art to a number of other bands from this period, including Enslaved, Immortal, and Satyricon, drew the cover art. At present time, she is a tattoo artist based in Bergen and had a key role in the creation of *Blekk Metal*, a one-time festival held in 2015 devoted to tattoos and Bergen based Norwegian black metal before 1994. A documentary with the same name was made by Grimposium covering the event and is has been shown at independent film festivals.

¹⁵⁶ The original pressing of *Aske* was sold along with a lighter featuring the same image printed on it. Indeed, lighters, as well as a variety of other merchandise, with the same image are still made and available for purchase at various metal festivals and record stores.

¹⁵⁷ Burzum. *Aske*. Deathlike Silence Productions ANTI MOSH 005, 1993, compact disc. In English this track translates to 'The voice from the Tower.'

Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*.¹⁵⁸ While Varg Vikernes would go on to expand his conceptual repertoire in later years, the influence of Tolkien laid the conceptual foundation for Burzum. Yet, there remains the question as to how Vikernes encountered Tolkien and the degree to which this theme was present in other bands during this period in Norwegian black metal.

3.3.3 Role Playing Games and Escapism

The root of Vikernes's infatuation with Tolkien's fantasy world is directly connected to his exposure to role-playing games (RPGs). For the American scholar of religion Joseph Laycock, whose research interest lies in the intersection between religion and popular culture, RPGs are "games in which players pretend to be someone else, typically a fictional character."¹⁵⁹ Yet, such a definition only scratches the surface of what these games truly entail.¹⁶⁰ Laycock points to the definitions outlined by researchers Daniel Mackay and Jennifer Grouling. According to Mackay RPGs are "an episodic and participatory story-creation system that includes a set of quantified rules that assist a group of players and a gamemaster in determining how their fictional characters' spontaneous interactions are resolved."¹⁶¹ In addition, Grouling claims that RPGs are a "type of game/game system that involves collaboration between a small group of players and a gamemaster through face-to-face social activity with the purpose of creating a narrative experience."¹⁶² Much like the moral panic that targeted heavy metal music in the 1980s, these games were also targeted by conservative Christian evangelicals. Their concern was that these games made the youth rebellious and susceptible to nefarious cults and beliefs.¹⁶³ While popular throughout the 1980s, the anti-social behavior associated with a minority of players and the moral panic based on the 'Satanic' and 'subversive content' of some of the more popular RPGs, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, gave these games a less than positive reputation.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Burzum. *En som engang var*. Misanthropy Records AMAZON 002/EYE 001, 1994, compact disc. In English this track is titled to 'One Ring to Rule'.

¹⁵⁹ Laycock 2015, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Those familiar with the 2016 Netflix original series *Stranger Things* will recall that the RPG *Dungeons and Dragons* carried a significant role over the course of the ten episodes, reflecting the impact these games had on players and the legacy they maintain in popular culture.

¹⁶¹ MacKay 2001, 4-5.

¹⁶² Grouling 2010, 168.

¹⁶³ Laycock 2015, 6-7.

¹⁶⁴ This cover art illustration on *En som engang var* is taken from a *Dungeons and Dragons* module.

Despite the trepidation, condemnation, and stigmatization surrounding these games, a variety of content, including rule and scenario books, were published. While lamenting his mother's decision to throw out his RPG collection after he went to prison, Vikernes acknowledges that he tried a number of different RPGs, claiming he consumed

everything that had ever been released for MERP until 1993. All the D&D sets and tons of supplements. GURPS with tons of supplements.¹⁶⁵ RuneQuest. HårnMaster. Twilight 2000. Rolemaster with tons of supplements, Conan RPG, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. It was all gone forever. Almost every single penny I had gotten my sneaky hands on between age 12 and 20 had been spent on RPGs.¹⁶⁶

Yet, it was the Tolkien-based *Middle-earth Role Playing* (MERP) game that captured his interest the most. Vikernes reflects on the role of MERP and other RPGs, saying he “played fantasy RPGs...like AD&D (“Advanced Dungeons And Dragons”) and MERP (“Middle-Earth Role-Playing”) with GM (“Game Master”) rules, and was very much influenced by the fantastic world of Middle-Earth.”¹⁶⁷ Originally made in 1984, MERP gave its players a chance to act out their own narrative in Tolkien's content rich fantasy world. While exploring the connection between Tolkien and black metal, the Irish anthropologist Michael Cunningham examines the details of MERP and the impact Tolkien had on the development of Burzum and other key Norwegian black metal bands. In explaining the particularities of MERP, Cunningham asserts that the developers of the game, the American based Iron Crown Enterprises, grew Tolkien's Middle-earth with expanded maps and increased details concerning its geography and inhabitants.¹⁶⁸ It is important to note that this enlargement of Tolkien's Middle-earth was largely drawn from the extensive notes as well as the published and unpublished material Tolkien left behind following his death in 1973. Termed the *legendarium*, this material, combined with certain liberties taken by Iron Crown Enterprises, opened up the world of Middle-earth in ways not yet conceived and gave players images and storylines they could interact with and exist within.¹⁶⁹

3.3.4 Emphasizing the Visual

Vikernes was not alone in his fascination with fantasy. Though not explicitly stated as an influence, Gehenna's 1993 six song EP, *First Spell*, also has fantasy elements that are visually connected to Tolkien. Musically,

¹⁶⁵ GURPS stands for Generic Universal Role-Playing System.

¹⁶⁶ Vikernes 2016.

¹⁶⁷ Vikernes 2016.

¹⁶⁸ Cunningham 2010, 227.

¹⁶⁹ Cunningham 2010, 227.

Gehenna were important in the development of Norwegian black metal and its members figured prominently in the early days of the scene. The cover art of this EP is representative of a style that other Norwegian black metal bands employed at the time. *First Spell* has an achromatic photograph supplying the main motif of the cover art.¹⁷⁰ The photograph is grainy and employs deliberate lighting effects that allows for only a shadowy outline of the figures and their surroundings to be discernable against the gray sky. Despite this, it is possible to distinguish some of the more minor details the cover art has to offer. To start, the setting gives a rural, remote impression with a full, deciduous tree taking up the right side of the image and long, wispy grass rising from the bottom. It is possible to see that these figures are clad in robes or cloaks with hoods drawn over their heads. A pair of horses accompanies the hooded figures, upon which one of the hooded figures sits. Between the setting and the figures, a distinct fantasy impression can be read from this image. The fact that the image is set in a rural location alludes to the settings often employed by Tolkien and MERP. Yet, it is also important to note the significance of the hooded figures on the cover of *First Spell*. These figures bare some resemblance to the Nazgûl of *The Lord of the Rings*. In this way, along with the achromatic scheme, *First Spell* shares many characteristics with *Burzum*. In both examples, the cloaked figures stand shrouded by their hoods and obscured in the contrast between the light background and dark foreground. Not only does this fit with Tolkien's descriptions of the Nazgûl, it also reflects the tendency to play RPGs in costume.

While allusions to Tolkien and fantasy are present in the cover art of *Burzum* and *First Spell*, the cover art of Emperor's 1994 full-length record *In the Nightside Eclipse* is more overt in its references. As arguably one of the most important releases Norwegian black metal has produced, *In the Nightside Eclipse* was highly influential at the time of its release and remains so to this day. The cover art for *In the Nightside Eclipse* is the work of Swedish artist Kristian 'Necrolord' Wählin, an artist well-known in extreme metal for contributing iconic cover art over the last twenty years. The colors of the image are icy shades of blue and purple giving it a cold, otherworldly tone. Sitting below Emperor's logo in the upper left portion of the image is the reuse of the central figure from Gustave Doré's 1865 painting *Death on the Pale Horse* that was also used on Emperor's 1993 self-titled EP and the 1993 *Emperor/Hordanes Land* split EP with Enslaved.¹⁷¹ Beside this aspect, the majority of the image is devoted to a scene inspired from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. With thick, billowing clouds swirling around the light of the moon, a line of orc-like creatures overlook a bridge

¹⁷⁰ Gehenna. *First Spell*. Head Not Found HNF 003, 1994, compact disc.

¹⁷¹ Emperor. *Emperor*. Candlelight Records Candle002MLP, 1993, 33⅓ rpm; Emperor/Enslaved. *Emperor/Hordanes Land*. Candlelight Records CANDLE 1/2CD, 1993, compact disc.

that spans a densely forested valley leading up to the tower rising above the scene below.¹⁷²

Though sharing the Tolkien inspired fantasy aesthetic, the cover art of *In the Nightside Eclipse* differs from *Burzum* and *First Spell* in multiple ways. Rather than depicting the Nazgûl, *In the Nightside Eclipse* features creatures that bear a resemblance to Tolkien's orcs. While not necessarily significant, it is nonetheless of interest that the beings with arguably the most self-contempt in Tolkien's Middle-earth are depicted rather than the more powerful and mysterious Nazgûl. This aspect aside, another notable difference is the color on *In the Nightside Eclipse* in contrast to the achromatic scale used on *Burzum* and *First Spell*. Indeed, the color and visual styling of *In the Nightside Eclipse* was unique at the time of its release for Norwegian black metal and reflects the artistic style of Wåhlin. While an argument can be made for Wåhlin dictating the cover art's Tolkien-inspired concept, it was rather the opposite as the band presented ideas based on their inspirations and previous album art.¹⁷³ Founding member Tomas Haugen, also known as Samoth, stresses the importance of *The Lord of the Rings*, claiming "it was all very visual" and that Emperor "drew a lot of influences from artwork related to Tolkien."¹⁷⁴ Haugen also adds that, "this was ten years before you could buy a 'Lord of the Rings burger' at Burger King" and stresses the inspiration taken from dark fantasy elements that were associated with Tolkien before Peter Jackson's theatrical versions were released.¹⁷⁵ In addition, fellow founding member Vegard Sverre Tveitan, known by the stage name Ihsahn, reveals that he had not read Tolkien's works, but the associated imagery and visual aesthetics were nonetheless vital to the conceptualization of *In the Nightside Eclipse* and "capture the essence of the atmosphere of that time" for Emperor and, to some extent, Norwegian black metal as a whole.¹⁷⁶

Beside the inclusion of orc-like creatures and the use of vibrant color, the cover art of *In the Nightside Eclipse* is also notable for how nature is depicted. Though not bearing a close resemblance to any particular fantasy setting, it could well be assumed that the landscape is at least partially drawn from Tolkien. As such, the city and surrounding areas might well be an interpretation of Mordor. Yet, the nature found on the cover art of *In the Nightside Eclipse* differs from how Tolkien described the hellish, arid lands of Mordor. Rather, the nature depicted is visually akin to Norwegian geography and vegetation.¹⁷⁷ Haugen addresses the influence Norway's

¹⁷² Emperor. *In the Nightside Eclipse*. Candlelight Records Candle 186CDSE, 2007, compact disc.

¹⁷³ Bennett 2009, 289.

¹⁷⁴ Bennett 2009, 284.

¹⁷⁵ Bennett 2009, 284.

¹⁷⁶ Bennett 2009, 284-285.

¹⁷⁷ Thompson 2014, 72.

landscape had on Emperor's music at this time, stating that "the power of Norwegian nature was always an inspiration for [Emperor]" and that they "found great motivation in the vast forests and mighty mountains."¹⁷⁸ Moreover, Haugen claims that the band would actively go out in nature and "use its visual strength in [their] artistic vision."¹⁷⁹ Though not necessarily the first to combine fantasy with nature, *In the Nightside Eclipse* is an early example of how Norwegian nature was used to imply a real world setting to Tolkien's works in Norwegian black metal. While used metaphorically, this release demonstrates just how pervasive and influential nature is in the construction of escapist realities.¹⁸⁰ In addition, it shows the influence of the visual in the creation of Emperor's music and serves as an example of the emphasis given to visual aesthetics in Norwegian black metal as a whole.

Emperor would not be the only Norwegian black metal band to blend Tolkien with a Norwegian setting. Indeed, by 1994 a thematic shift was already underway that saw the overt references to Tolkien and fantasy give way to uses of Norwegian history. This is not to say that Tolkien, or fantasy in general, has not persisted as a theme within black metal. Arguably the best example of Tolkien in black metal outside of Norway can be seen in the work of the Austrian band Summoning. Save a few of Summoning's earliest releases, all of the band's material has been devoted to creating a soundtrack to Middle Earth using lyrics, imagery, and samples taken from an array of material directly associated with Tolkien.¹⁸¹ With an extensive number of releases in their catalogue, it is apparent that Tolkien themes have persisted within black metal beyond its inclusion in Norwegian black metal and that the theme of fantastical escape has been maintained. Following the tumultuous early years of the scene, other thematic content would take hold and come to be far more representative. Still, it is important to recognize how some bands used a fantasy theme to establish a context through which other themes could be pursued.

3.3.5 Fantasy as a Frame

With a name derived from Saruman's dwelling in *The Lord of the Rings*, Isengard's connection to Tolkien is clear and unavoidable. As a solo project of Gylve 'Fenriz' Nagell from Darkthrone, Isengard reflects the current of fantasy-inspired escapism that ran through the early days of the Norwegian scene. However, looking beyond the fantasy element it is also

¹⁷⁸ Bennett 2009, 284. Thompson 2014, 72.

¹⁷⁹ Bennett 2009, 284.

¹⁸⁰ Thompson 2014, 73.

¹⁸¹ This not only includes Tolkien's published and unpublished works, but also excerpts taken from the BBC's radio series adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* from 1981.

possible to see an expression of Norwegian cultural memory through references to folklore, nature, and a negotiation of identity in a Norwegian context. In what began as a doom metal related project known as Pilgrim Sands, three releases were made under the Isengard name.¹⁸² The first of these was a demo from 1989 with the title *Spectres Overs Gorgoroth*.¹⁸³ It is important to note that this release is not black metal. Rather, the style is analogous to the burgeoning death metal sound that was taking form in neighboring Sweden. However, *Spectres Over Gorgoroth* reflects Nagell's interests in Tolkien fantasy at this stage in his career and, in part, set up the thematic content that followed with Isengard.

Over the next two releases Isengard's change in sound paralleled Nagell's main band Darkthrone in switching from death metal to black metal. Yet, the sound explored differed from the stricter, monolithic black metal offered by Darkthrone. Instead, Isengard represents Nagell's more experimental side and an attempt to integrate a 'folk' metal sound that was forming in the early 1990s.¹⁸⁴ The result reflects an early effort by one of Norwegian black metal's most important members to expand the template of black metal. As much as this statement applies to the music, it also applies to the expansion of Norwegian black metal's conceptual boundaries. As such, Isengard stands apart from many of its contemporary counterparts. This process is evident on *Vinterskugge* from 1993. Comprised of three unreleased demos, it should be noted that *Vinterskugge* was never intended as a compilation and was instead conceived of as a full-length studio release consisting of three parts.¹⁸⁵ The music style presented on *Vinterskugge* demonstrates this variety. As a result, the music does not fit neatly into a singular category and exemplifies the diversification and differentiation that have come to characterize black metal.

Contrasting with the music of the record, the cover art of *Vinterskugge* still portrays many of the hallmarks of this period in Norwegian black metal. This is hardly surprising considering the prominent position Nagell

¹⁸² An additional EP was released in 2016 with the title *Traditional Doom Cult*. While this is stylistically similar to the first three releases, it falls outside of the chronological boundaries of this study. Moreover, Nagell also had a short-lived project called Fenriz's Red Planet. While the three songs were recorded in 1993, they were not released until 2009 on split record called *Engangsrill* with Nattfrost. Muscially, this project was more inclined towards doom metal. In terms of theme, the project was centered on the comic series *Jon Carter of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs. See: Isengard. *Traditional Doom Cult*. Peaceville Records VILES369, 2016, 45 rpm; Fenriz' Red Planet/Nattfrost. *Engangsrill*. Indie Recordings INDIE026CD, 2009, compact disc.

¹⁸³ Isengard. *Spectres Over Gorgoroth*. Self-released, 1989, cassette.

¹⁸⁴ The Newcastle, England based band Skyclad is arguably the first 'folk' metal band. Their sound was adopted and applied by numerous bands thus creating a diverse meaning of folk metal over the course of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

¹⁸⁵ Taken from the commentary disc on "Vinterskugge," Isengard. *Vinterskugge*. Peaceville Records CDVILED368X, 2012, compact disc.

had and indeed still maintains within the Norwegian black metal scene. In many respects the cover art of *Vinterskugge* shares the aesthetic qualities of Darkthrone's *Under a Funeral Moon* as a high contrast achromatic photograph is used. The photograph depicts a longhaired figure dressed in black robes in what appears to be a snow-covered spruce forest. Like the photograph used on *Under a Funeral Moon*, the apparent flash of the camera illuminates the setting in an unnatural light.¹⁸⁶ The resulting effect creates a sharp contrast between the light and dark portions while the grainy quality of the image makes the photograph seem old and almost timeless. While these aspects are similar to what was done on Darkthrone's first three full-length black metal releases, there are some differences that need exploring as well.

The most obvious of these differences can be seen in the band logo and themes presented in the song titles. Given that Isengard is a standalone project it is not surprising that the band logo would be different. Yet, the differences are indicative of a Tolkien influence and are most visible through the inclusion of Thuringwethil, a vampire servant of Melkor from Tolkien's *legendarium* and given visual representation in MERP.¹⁸⁷ While perhaps not as completely enraptured with Tolkien and MERP as Vikernes, Nagell was nonetheless clearly influenced by Tolkien. Once again, the importance of fantasy and escapism is brought to the fore and, when combined with the Isengard name, the extent to which these aspects found their way into the thematic content of the music is made clear. Tolkien references can also be found in some of the song titles including, "Dark Lord of Gorgoroth" and "Gjennom skogen til Blaafiellene." Yet, the song titles also reflect the ad hoc manner in how the songs were compiled for this release. In addition to the Tolkien theme, it is possible to identify not just the more traditional thematic elements of metal music, but also some allusions to Norse mythology. At least one song, "Naglfar," is a reference to the ship made from the nails of the dead described in the *Poetic Edda*.¹⁸⁸ While this is not necessarily enough to claim that *Vinterskugge* has a dominant theme predicated on a use of history, it is possible to see a conflation of Norse mythology and Tolkien as fictional realms of fantastic escape. Of course, given that Tolkien himself was highly interested in the Eddas, Germanic and Norse mythology, and specialized in Old English literature, it is perhaps unsurprising that bands using Tolkien's works might blend history and fantasy.

¹⁸⁶ Darkthrone. *Under a Funeral Moon*. Peaceville Records VILELP35, 2010, 33⅓ rpm.

¹⁸⁷ Cunningham 2010, 227.

¹⁸⁸ Naglfar is also the name of a Swedish black metal band from Umeå formed in 1992 after switching the name from Uninterred in 1994.

Unlike its predecessor, *Høstmørke* was written and made as a single, cohesive full-length release. This release sees Isengard incorporating a greater amount of ‘folk’ influence to the musical and visual aesthetic. Moreover, *Høstmørke* leaves behind the Tolkien inspired fantasy that defined Isengard to that point. Unlike Burzum, whose first recordings rely on fantasy and Tolkien as a primary concept through which the music can be understood, Nagell saw Tolkien as a foundation from which a broader conceptual universe could be explored. As elucidated by Nagell himself in Cunningham’s chapter from *Music in Middle-Earth*, he stresses that he “just needed the FRAME” for the band and that even as early as 1989 Isengard was never meant to solely deal with Tolkien.¹⁸⁹ The reason motivating this choice was twofold. For one, Nagell did not want to feel limited by restricting his thematic approach and, secondly, having a strict Middle-earth theme would potentially alienate those unfamiliar with Tolkien and the associated games. *Høstmørke* reflects these sentiments and takes a distinct thematic shift away from Tolkien or any fantasy related elements towards one that is merely *framed* by fantasy.

Given how Burzum, Gehenna, Emperor, and Isengard used Tolkien and fantasy literature, it is evident that fantasy escapism influenced key members of the Norwegian black metal scene in the early 1990s. This is not to say that all or the majority of those involved in the bands who formed the core of the scene at this time were inspired by such material. On the contrary, these bands are some of the few who actively used Tolkien as a principal subject. Yet, it is from their influence that Tolkien-inspired themes spread across not just black metal, but other extreme metal genres. More importantly, however, is that Tolkien and fantasy-inspired themes, alongside the precedent set by Bathory, established the initial frame within which the use of history and expressions of cultural memory would initially unfold in Norwegian black metal. When placing fantasy literature and games alongside the other influences on Norwegian black metal, it is apparent that escapism is as important a conceptual trait as the transgression associated with outlaw counterculture or the activities associated with Satanism and the occult. This does not diminish the role Satanism and the occult had in the foundations of Norwegian black metal, but rather shows that the music was concurrently dependent on other sources of inspiration.

Beyond the conceptual influences that added to the sense of transgression and escapism, the initial black metal bands of the early 1980s heavily influenced the musical development of Norwegian black metal. Neither Mayhem nor Darkthrone strayed too far from the lo-fi, distorted aesthetic pioneered by Venom, Celtic Frost/Hellhammer, and Bathory. At the same time, it is impossible to discount the visual influence of these

¹⁸⁹ Cunningham 2010, 228.

bands. This is particularly true for Mercyful Fate which, along with the likes of Kiss, Alice Cooper, and others in the 1970s, adopted a highly theatrical and transgressive stage presence and visual style. The transgressive aestheticism of Satanism such as inverted crosses, pentagrams, and goats' heads paired with dramatic costumes and stage makeup clearly influenced the visual aesthetics of Norwegian black metal. Such symbols, and the ideologies behind them, represented a direct affront and rebellion against the mundane normality Christianity was thought to embody. At the same time, this transgressive style can also be understood as a means of escapism as bands donned corpse paint, spikes, and medieval weapons to transform themselves on stage. While this chapter has given insight into some of the many influences and themes that are present in Norwegian black metal, it is now time to turn to the ways Norwegian history and cultural memory are used and what exactly makes Norwegian black metal a Norwegian cultural phenomenon.

Folk Narratives

Folk narratives are not exclusive to Norway and exist in numerous countries and contexts across the globe. In its popular culture associations, folk narratives are associated with tales, lore, or legends that are often understood to be “false, untrue, [and] unscientific notions of an uneducated people.”¹⁹⁰ Such a notion of folk narratives can at least be partially attributed to their relationship they have with peasant cultures.¹⁹¹ However, given the hierarchical manner with which folk narratives were recorded, collected, and distributed during the nation-building processes of nineteenth-century Europe, it is nearly impossible to disaggregate folk narratives from the bourgeois forces seeking to stimulate national awakenings.¹⁹² Yet, what exactly is meant by the term ‘folk narrative’? For folklorist Tom Mould, a more academic understanding of folk narratives includes fairy tales, local legends, lyrical ballads, or any other genre of a culture that reveals “the artistry and aesthetics of communal traditions” and “shared beliefs and values of a community.”¹⁹³ When placed into the context of nineteenth-century nation-building, this definition of folk narratives includes an implication of authenticity that is connected with a desire to build an imagined sense of collective consciousness.¹⁹⁴ Viewed within the scope of cultural memory, folk narratives have the potential to significantly contribute to individual and collective forms of identity construction and maintenance. Often, folk narratives operate this way due to their metaphorical form and metonymical character. As such, any analysis of the relationship between folk narratives and cultural memory is heavily dependent on the exploration of a local and regional context as well as a national and geopolitical backdrop.

¹⁹⁰ Mould 2011, 4.

¹⁹¹ Bottigheimer 1989, 344.

¹⁹² Bottigheimer 1989, 345.

¹⁹³ Mould 2011, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Dollerup 1999, 10-11.

4.1 National Romanticism and the Making of Norwegian Culture

In discussing Norwegian folk narratives and their connection to Norwegian black metal it is impossible to ignore the role of national romanticism and its component parts, nationalism and romanticism. While national romanticism is tied to different movements in the nineteenth century, both nationalism and romanticism are conceptually rooted in the eighteenth century and directly connected to the wider European intellectual movements of the period. Romanticism stems from a rejection of the Enlightenment and the questioning of reason. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, William Blake, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe were among Europe's leading contributors to Romanticism during this time and would ultimately prove to be highly influential in the coming century. Underlying Romanticism's critique of the cold, unrelenting pursuit of truth and reason was an attempt to understand humanity and nature in more abstract terms by celebrating the mysteries of emotion, life, and death. Such sentiments were voiced by William Wordsworth in the preface of *Lyrical Ballads* from 1800, affirming that "the Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion."¹⁹⁵ This feeling is echoed by Wordsworth's compatriot Blake in a more succinct fashion on the engraving of *Laocoön*, which bears the caption: "Art is the Tree of Life. Science is the Tree of Death."¹⁹⁶ In Norway the trend of Romanticism arrived later than it did in Britain and the German states and is typically associated with the national romantic efforts of the mid-nineteenth century. However, there were some Norwegians who were active romanticists in the eighteenth century. Among them was the lyricist and playwright Edvard Storm whose ballads would come to inspire later generations.¹⁹⁷

Nationalism and romanticism developed more or less concurrently and would come to change how states legitimized themselves. Nationalism's roots can be seen erratically developing in England, Holland, and Sweden during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries while violently rising in American War of Independence and French Revolution.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, it would not be until the end of the eighteenth century that the formation of modern nationalism began to find its ideological legs, its pertinence as a social movement, and begin to take on a form that is recognized to this

¹⁹⁵ As quoted from Blanning 2011, 24.

¹⁹⁶ Damon 1965, 28.

¹⁹⁷ Sinclair 1907, 377-378.

¹⁹⁸ Smith 2003, 1.

day.¹⁹⁹ Of course, the rate at which nationalism took hold varied from place to place. While the newly formed United States of America and post-revolution France were early practitioners of nationalism, its arrival in Norway came later and was important to the foundation of the modern Norwegian nation-state.

A key component of nationalism's development in Norway can be found in the insistence on self-definition predicated on inward and outward demarcations. Vital to this process of self-definition was the search for, and promotion of, aspects of Norwegian culture deemed to be distinctly Norwegian. One part of Norwegian culture that was used for the advancement of a distinct Norwegian 'nation' were peasant folk narratives. Over the course of the eighteenth century, folklore, among other cultural artifacts, would be emphasized and given a prominent position as a means through which distinction could be claimed. The promotion of folk narratives as a part of this process was underpinned by a movement that combined the appreciation for aesthetic beauty and wonderment of the humanity propagated by Romanticism with the pragmatic political goals and self-determination of nationalism. Simply known as national romanticism, this movement achieved a heightened status in Norway by the 1840s through several artistic media, including, but not limited to, poems, plays, paintings, music and other forms of expressive culture.²⁰⁰ Moreover, it also influenced later artistic movements in Norway that built on this foundation of cultural exceptionalism.²⁰¹

4.1.1 Norway's Political Struggle and Search for a Cultural Identity

Following the end of the War of the Sixth Coalition in 1814, the changing political realities caused by the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise had been spread across the reaches of Europe. Though defeated in the field, the ideals that had set about the consolidation of Europe's most populous country under a singular cause reverberated from north to south and east to west. Situated at the northern periphery of Europe, Norway was not exempt from these influences. Following a period of turmoil, the *embedsmanner* of Norway signed a democratic and liberal constitution on May 17th, 1814 in Eidsvoll outlining the rights of Norwegians.²⁰² As progressive a document as this constitution was, it could not secure Norway's future as an independent entity or safeguard it from the political

¹⁹⁹ Özkirimli 2000, 12.

²⁰⁰ Bø 2011, 181-182.

²⁰¹ Barton 2006, 227.

²⁰² Danielsen et al 1995, 220. *Embedsmanner* were public officials with university education or military training who were appointed to their tenured positions by the king.

realities set in motion by Napoleon's defeat. With Sweden on the victorious side of the conflict, Denmark was forced to yield Norway according to the terms of the Treaty of Kiel in 1814. At this point, Norway undertook efforts to secede from Denmark, create a constitution, and elect the Danish crown prince as their own king. Despite this, the victorious powers of Europe, particularly Great Britain, rewarded Sweden for its efforts in the conflict by supporting its claim for Norway. Within the same year, the Swedish were able to enforce their claim through coercion and negotiation and, thus, formed the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway. On the surface these events are just a side note in the greater story of a conflict-ridden Europe. Yet, in the events leading up to Norway's separation from Denmark and eventual union with Sweden, Norway's political identity had become realized. In contrast, Norway's cultural identity, insofar as it was unique and distinct from Denmark and Sweden, was in a fledgling state and it would be this aspect that would result in an inward focus to find true 'Norwegian-ness' over the course of the nineteenth century.

The impetus behind these efforts were the *embetstand* and the Norwegian bourgeoisie who saw themselves not as Danes, but as Norwegians.²⁰³ As early as the 1770s, the idea of Norway having its own identity was expressed through the writings of Gerhard Schøning who gave a national history of Norway and captured a rising awareness of Norwegian solidarity and identity from his recounting of events before the Danish union.²⁰⁴ In promoting this idea, the *embetstand* and bourgeoisie drew their inspiration from the Norwegian peasantry and their supposedly unadulterated customs. Norwegian peasants were thought to have been isolated from various trends originating in continental Europe. Although not necessarily as isolated as their continental counterparts, the Norwegian Folk aesthetic was not untouched by the on-goings of European tastes and trends. Norwegian peasants, particularly those who were sailors, were more likely to come into contact with other cultures than those who practiced agriculture inland.²⁰⁵ Indeed, at least in Amsterdam, a Norwegian community developed by the seventeenth century as a result. However, the those among the emigrant communities were unlikely to return to Norway once established abroad.²⁰⁶ Thus, if any lasting influence from Europe did find its way to the peasants it was not direct, but rather filtered through the ranks of the *embetstand* and bourgeoisie who maintained close contacts with Copenhagen.

²⁰³ Danielsen et al 1995, 198. Schøning expressed his views in a blend of geographical observation and historical account in a manner that was typical for its time.

²⁰⁴ Danielsen et al 1995, 198.

²⁰⁵ Sogner and van Lottum 2007, 164. At various times during Norway's union with Denmark, naval conscription was required of Norwegian subjects.

²⁰⁶ Sogner and van Lottum 2007, 164.

4.1.2 Collecting Folk Narratives

Following the union with the Swedish crown in 1814, it would again be the *embetstand* and bourgeoisie who drew upon the peasants to further distinguish Norway as a unique nation. As the founders of the constitution and the holders of the highest level of social class in Norway, it is in some sense unsurprising that it would be they who guided the direction from which a cultural identity would be forged. Their appropriation of peasant culture was important in two ways. Firstly, by using the expressive culture and customs of the peasantry to form a unique Norwegian identity they stressed the notion that the peasants were the holders of an authentic identity that was free from foreign influence. Secondly, it was a pragmatic way to integrate the rural and agrarian peasant communities into the Norwegian nation, which was needed to present a cohesive political and cultural identity that was distinct from its neighbors.

An integral piece in this identity-making process was the collection of folklore in the peasant communities, initiated by Peter Christian Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe in the early 1840s.²⁰⁷ While the work Asbjørnsen and Moe focused on was solely concerned with the collection of folklore from Norwegian peasant communities, their interest reflected a broader trend from elsewhere in Europe that was connected to the Romantic fascination with folklore as demonstrated by Arnim von Brentano and the Brothers Grimm.²⁰⁸ Indeed, the impetus that set off this interest in Norway was explicitly drawn from and motivated by a German model of Romanticism.²⁰⁹ What this shows, then, is that not only was the initial wave of national romantic sentiment in Norway conducted in a top-down manner, but it also had a distinct foreign influence. Only later in the century did the differences in national context become clearly demarcated.

The efforts undertaken by Asbjørnsen and Moe to catalog peasant folklore were the second attempt to record peasant folk narratives, but the first to achieve widespread success in Norway. Unlike Andreas Faye's earlier work, *Norske Folke-Sagn* originally published in 1833, their work proved highly influential to a cast of bourgeois cultural purveyors who were enraptured with the stories that had been recorded.²¹⁰ Over the

²⁰⁷ Barton 2003, 92.

²⁰⁸ Grimley 2006, 23.

²⁰⁹ Østerud 1996, 31. As quoted in Grimley 2006, 23: "The early Norwegian folklorists, in search of the 'hidden Norway,' were explicitly inspired by European, particularly German, Romanticism. This meant more than a model of scholarship. It implied an interpretation of the substance, meaning that Norwegian folklore, myths and fairy tales had absorbed, molded and adopted foreign cultural influence to a Norwegian context. It was the configuration that made non-national inputs Norwegian, and the early cultural nationalists were quite explicit about these relationships."

²¹⁰ Kaplan 2003, 496. Faye, Andreas. *Norske Folke-Sagn*. 2. Opl. ed. Christiania: Guldberg & Dzwonkowski, 1844.

course of roughly a decade, their findings were released in smaller collections while a larger, more encompassing edition was published in 1852. In the introduction to the 1852 edition, Moe addressed the importance of folklore in nationalist terms. He argued that, while indeed many similarities may well exist in terms of story structure with other national folklores, the essence of a nation's character is existent in these stories and that if one were able to gather all of Norway's folklore then all parts of the Norwegian national character would be revealed.²¹¹ To capture this national character emanating from the Norwegian peasants, Asbjørnsen and Moe needed to transcribe what was until that point transmitted by oral tradition into the written form. Drawing on precedent established by the Grimm Brothers, Asbjørnsen and Moe created the Norwegian *eventyrstil* literary technique.²¹² By doing so, Asbjørnsen and Moe formed a narrative structure around the stories and presented an air of authenticity while at the same time removing the voice of those who had transmitted the stories in the first place.²¹³ The *eventyrstil* was thus used to build a first-person narrative told through the voice of an educated man sharing many qualities with Asbjørnsen, a feature that reveals a paternalistic trait in the collecting process.²¹⁴ Through this technique, the stories collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe made middle class consumers more than just detached observers, and allowed them to participate as "authentic members of the Norwegian folk, all without ever leaving the comfort of their drawing rooms."²¹⁵

4.1.3 Folk Narratives in the Arts

Though Asbjørnsen himself was an ardent Enlightenment rationalist, the work he and Moe contributed inspired a flurry of national romantic sentiment.²¹⁶ In the years following the first book by Asbjørnsen and Moe, there came an outpouring of artistic endeavors using the folklore motifs. These national romantic works were integral in the transformation of folk narratives, and folk art as a whole, into the multitude of artistic genres found in contemporary Western art.²¹⁷ Notably, the early work of playwright Henrik Ibsen draws directly from Asbjørnsen's and Moe's narrative and mirrors elements of the *eventyrstil* type of storytelling.²¹⁸

²¹¹ Bø 2011, 173-183, 176.

²¹² Kaplan 2003, 494.

²¹³ Kaplan 2003, 495-496.

²¹⁴ Kaplan 2003, 496.

²¹⁵ Kaplan 2003, 495.

²¹⁶ Bø 2011, 179.

²¹⁷ Bø 2011, 182.

²¹⁸ Kaplan 2003, 499.

Ibsen's national romantic sentiment is visible in the works *Hærmændene paa Helgeland* and *Kjæmpevisen*, while also heavily relying on folk narratives in *Peer Gynt*.²¹⁹ He also actively collected folk narratives, including legends and ballads. In 1862, Ibsen took a walking tour through Hardanger and subsequently published his findings in a style similar to Asbjørnsen and Moe and the brothers Grimm in *Illustrert Nyhedsblad* later the same year.²²⁰ Ibsen's participation as a collector and publisher of folk narratives was brief and his later works, as evidenced through *Peer Gynt*, shows Ibsen satirically criticizing the nativity of his early national romantic obsessions.²²¹ Yet in his plays and writing style, Ibsen was able to further the imagined sameness between middle class audiences and his rural subject matter.²²²

With the publication and the retelling of folk narratives, the Asbjørnsen and Moe books and Ibsen's plays show one way in which the oral traditions of the folk were institutionalized and used in the construction of a unique Norwegian cultural identity. Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, these folk narratives became an important source of inspiration for artists who gave these tales and legends other forms of representation. Musically, folk narratives came to supply a thematic inspiration as composers and musicians worked national romanticism into their own artistic media. In addition to capturing other aspects of national romanticism, Edvard Grieg supplied music for *Peer Gynt* while Ole Bull was recruited to produce musical accompaniment for the theatrical works of the playwright Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.²²³ Inspired by the works of Grieg and Bull, composers in the early twentieth century drew conceptual influence from folk narratives as well. Among others, Farstein Valen, Eivind Groven, and Geirr Tveitt were part a group of composers during a surge of nationalist sentiment in the 1920s and early 1930s that drew upon the legends, fairy tales, and folklore of the institutionalized folk narratives to frame their compositions.²²⁴

²¹⁹ Kaplan 2003, 499.

²²⁰ Kaplan 2003, 499.

²²¹ Kaplan 2003, 507. According to Kaplan, Ibsen not only questioned his own role in this regard but the entirety of the national romantic project and its claims to authenticity. Ibsen's critique was also a reflection of his dissatisfaction with the results of the Second Schleswig War of 1864.

²²² Kaplan 2003, 502.

²²³ Grimley 2006, 86. Herresthal, 2014, 88.

²²⁴ Bø 2011, 181.

4.2 Norwegian Black Metal and Common Folk Narrative Motifs

Many of the characters and stories recorded by Asbjørnsen and Moe have been woven into the thematic framework of several Norwegian black metal bands. Unlike their integration into the music of early twentieth-century nationalist composers, the black metal bands that use folk narratives have a less explicit aim in promoting a definitive idea of Norwegian national identity. Despite this, there still lies an implicit connection to national romantic ideals due to the integration of folk narratives into Norwegian cultural memory. Indeed, it is through these uses of history that bands with seemingly unrelated content reflect how these narratives have been negotiated over time. Though other examples exist in Norwegian black metal, the bands Dingir Xul, Ancient, and Faanefjell most clearly demonstrate how these folk narratives have been employed throughout the genre. This analysis covers not just the form in which these folk narratives appear, but also the extent to which they are conveyed by each of these bands.

Folk narratives are used in a variety of ways in Norwegian black metal, but typically revolve around folkloric creatures that interact with human protagonists. Dingir Xul demonstrates one such example on their third demo, and last release, *Corpse Abuse*.²²⁵ The visual aesthetic of the demo lends itself to a minimal reading of nature-based symbolism as the trees in the photograph serve more as a coincidental backdrop to the band members and the tombstone they are standing around. The sepia tone of the image gives the scene a warm, nostalgic feeling that stands in stark contrast to how the band members are dressed and the title of the demo. Almost everything about this demo is consistent with some of the more stereotypical themes and tropes of metal in general. What does stand out, however, is the fourth track, entitled “Nøkken” which is a reference to a creature found in Norwegian folklore. In some ways having ‘Nøkken’ as a track title is not surprising as these creatures are supposed to be rather mysterious, alluring, and dangerous, thus matching the band’s attempt to cast themselves with similar attributes. However, having *nøkken* as a song title is significant as the rest of the songs on *Corpse Abuse* demo and their other two demos do not contain any such references. Those familiar with H.P. Lovecraft’s writing will recognize not only the band’s name, but also a number of references across the band’s three demos that allude to the American author’s collected works.²²⁶ As such, the reference to Norwegian folk narratives sharply contrasts to the rest of the band’s music

²²⁵ Dingir Xul. *Corpse Abuse*. Self-released, 2005.

²²⁶ For the other two demos see: Dingir Xul. *Cthulhu Arise*. Self-released, 2003 and Dingir Xul. *Chaotic Alignment*, Self-released, 2004.

and thematic content. Despite this, there is still a connection to the collection of folk narratives and to Norwegian cultural memory. While Dinger Xul's reference to *nøkken* is isolated, it shows that even bands whose primary thematic framework still uses of history and integrate parts of Norwegian folk narratives.

Another band that has integrated aspects of these folk narratives is the Bergen-founded band Ancient. With a demo called *Eerily Howling Winds* from 1993, Ancient's material dates to the end of the early period in the Norwegian black metal scene. One year after their demo was released, the band released a full-length album called *Svartalvheim*. A single from the full-length album for the track "Det Glemte Riket" was released earlier the same year and contained two tracks, "Det Glemte Riket" and "Huldradans."²²⁷ The cover art for *Det Glemte Riket* show no obvious references to Norwegian folk narratives. However, the names of the songs and title of the single allude to a nostalgic longing for a lost empire or kingdom, which could perhaps be interpreted as the medieval Kingdom of Norway. The B-side track "Huldradans" is a reference to a forest spirit called *huldra* that appears in a variety of Norwegian folk narratives. Typically, they are presented as young women who entice men from their work into the woods from where they do not return. Moreover, *huldra* is related to a number of other female enticers who lure unsuspected men into caves and the water and can, in some regard, be understood as protectors of their respective domains. These folkloric creatures are not exclusive to Norway and appear in the folk narratives in the rest of Scandinavia and elsewhere. Yet, their inclusion into the collected tales of Asbjørnsen and Moe, and subsequent visual representation by Hans Gude and Theodor Kittelsen, indicates that at the very least the *huldra* was an important motif in the formation and maintenance of Norway's cultural identity throughout the duration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²²⁸

Following *Det Glemte Riket*, Ancient's full-length *Svartalvheim* was released and features the two tracks from the preceding single. Like the single that preceded this release, there is no explicit use of history on the

²²⁷ Ancient. *Det Glemte Riket*. Self-released, 1997, 33⅓ rpm. Black Hearts Records released a bootleg version with a black and white cover in 1997; see Ancient. *Det Glemte Riket*. Black Heart Records 002, 1997, 33⅓ rpm.

²²⁸ The references of *huldra* on the *Det Glemte Riket* single is not the only time these creatures are used by Norwegian black metal bands. Notably, these include Gorgoroth's song "Huldalokk" from *Pentagram* and Hordagaard's songs "Huldra Min Naeste" from *Fødsel og død gaar haand i haand* and "Huldra sin mørke fristelse" found on *Kveldskved*. "Huldrelukk" is originally found on Gorgoroth. *Pentagram*. Embassy Productions CDTE 001, 1994, compact disc. "Huldra Min Naeste" originally found on: Hordagaard. *Fødsel og død gaar haand i haand*. Underground Propaganda Records, 2004, compact disc. "Huldra sin mørke fristelse" can be found on: Hordagaard. *Kveldskved*. Azemedoth Records AZH-CD-072, 2011, compact disc.

cover art of any of its six versions. While the 1995 Devilish Entertainment release of the record does have a cover that features a forest, the framing of the image and the superimposed image of a towered-manor or chateau breaks up the discourse so that any historically based reading of the cover art is lost.²²⁹ Another possible link to cultural memory can be read in the title of the full-length album. *Svartalvheim* is a clear reference to Norse mythology, but no other such references are used on the full-length album.²³⁰ In fact, other references or uses of Norse mythology are absent across the rest of the band's catalogue making *Svartalvheim*'s title the only time the band explores that part of Norway's cultural memory.

Trolls also appear as another way Ancient references Norwegian folk narratives. This occurs in one song called "Ved trolltjern" from *Svartalvheim*.²³¹ The significance of *trolltjern* lies in the 'troll' part of the word. Trolls are creatures that frequently appear in the folk narratives recorded by Asbjørnsen and Moe and have been an important part of this aspect of Norwegian cultural memory. In addition to "Ved trolltjern," Ancient also visually references trolls. An EP released the following year by Ancient entitled *Trolltaar* and a compilation of the band's early recordings, including a cover track of Black Sabbath's "Sweetleaf" also called *Det Glemte Riket*, references trolls as well.²³² The EP and the compilation do not offer any song title or themes beyond that which had not already been mentioned. However, both these releases have cover art that contain motifs linked to Norwegian folk narratives. The cover art for *Trolltaar* and *Det Glemte Riket* use nearly identical images that have only the slightest of differences. The image in question is an illustration of a troll's head that bears a resemblance to Kittelsen's *Skogtroll* (1906). The cover art of both *Trolltaar* and *Det Glemte Riket* are set on a light grey background with black lines used to convey the likeness of a bearded troll. The main difference lies in the coloring used for the band name and release title. While *Trolltaar* is monochromatic with black used for the band name and

²²⁹ Ancient. *Svartalvheim*. Devilish Entertainment Haze-LP0050695*1000, 1995, 33⅓ rpm.

²³⁰ Svartalvheim (also referred to as Niðavellir or Svartálfaheimr), is the name of one of the nine worlds found on Yggdrasil as alluded to in the *Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturlasson. None of the nine worlds are explicitly written about in the surviving literature, but the enough references exist to understand that Yggdrasil and the nine worlds were included in cosmology of Norse mythology.

²³¹ Trolltjern is a lake near Nes in Buskerud located in the center of some of Norway's most idealized countryside. The song title roughly translates to 'at the troll pond.'

²³² For the EP see, Ancient. *Trolltaar*. Damnation Records DAMNATION 3, 1995, compact disc. Also see the vinyl version: Ancient. *Trolltaar*. Damnation Records D03, 1995, 33⅓ rpm. For the compilation see: Ancient. *Det Glemte Riket*. Hammerheart Records HHR042, 1999, compact disc. Also see the following re-releases for the compilation: Ancient. *Det Glemte Riket*. Hammerheart Records HHR042, 1999, 33⅓ rpm; Ancient. *Det Glemte Riket*. Hammerheart Records HHR042, 2002, compact disc; Ancient. *Det Glemte Riket*. Sleazy Rider Records SR-0034, 2005, compact disc.

release title, they appear in yellow on nearly all versions of *Det Glemte Riket*. As the differences are minimal, the cover art of these releases should essentially be understood as the same. With this in mind, their connection to and repetition of folk narratives seems much clearer. Not only does the cover art strongly resemble Kittelsen's *Skogtroll*, thus linking it to that particular illustration, but it also connects to other troll-themed works of the national romantic era. Moreover, this cover art and Ancient's other troll references connects the band's use of folk narratives to Asbjørnsen and Moe's collections including the original series *Norske Folkeeventyr* and subsequent collections, such as *Norske Folkeeventyr Ny Samling* and *Norske Huldre-Eventyr og folkesagn*.²³³

Ancient is not the only Norwegian black metal band to make use of trolls as a theme to their music or visual accompaniments. Faanefjell is another such band that integrates trolls into their thematic framework.²³⁴ However, whereas Ancient's referencing of trolls is somewhat ad hoc and sits among several themes, Faanefjell's whole foundational concept is based on trolls. Released in 2010, Faanefjell's debut release *Trollmarsj* draws heavily on folkloric themes and has a distinct emphasis on trolls. The cover art, song titles, and release title of this full-length album strongly reference this part of Norway's cultural memory.²³⁵ Based on a variety of Danish and Norwegian folktales, the album tells the story of two trolls attempting to gather the rest of their kind along with other supernatural beings in an effort to win back their homeland from humanity and technology. Though the story is fictional the setting is clearly Scandinavian, evidenced by an emphasis on Norway and Jotunheimen on the sixth track of the album. Just as the release title and song titles allude to this story, the cover art does as well. Two trolls dressed in chainmail are seen mid-conversation with one standing pointing into the distance to a group of angry villagers. The latter are brandishing torches and improvised weapons led by a priest. The other troll is seated on a log holding a drinking horn wearing only a mild expression of concern. Behind them a forest gives way to a mountain landscape shrouded in a white and gray fog. Though not necessarily directly taken from any one particular source, the background of the illustration is clearly inspired by the work of Norwegian national romantic artists. Overall this release plays on numerous recurring themes found within Norwegian national

²³³ Asbjørnsen, Peter Christen and Jørgen Moe. *Norske Folkeeventyr*. 2. udg. ed. Christiania: 1852; Asbjørnsen, Peter Christen. *Norske Huldre-Eventyr og folkesagn*. Christiania: Steensballe, 1859; Asbjørnsen, Peter Christen and Jørgen Moe. *Norske Folkeeventyr: Ny Samling*. Ny udg. ed. Christiania: 1871.

²³⁴ Faanefjell is a band that straddles the line between folk and black metal. However, the band's predilection for extended hypermetric sections and its vocal delivery do push it more toward the black metal side of line in terms of its sound.

²³⁵ Faanefjell. *Trollmarsj*. Mayhem Music MMCD001, 2010, compact disc.

romanticism, but, as demonstrated, the troll motif is by far the most prevalent and can be found in the release title, song titles, lyrics, and the cover art. Moreover, Faanefjell's lyrical storytelling narrative borders on the *eventyrstil* used by Asbjørnsen and Moe, thus demonstrating another influence on the band from their folk narrative collections.

Of the numerous folkloric creatures found in Asbjørnsen and Moe's collections, trolls constitute a significant presence in the thematic content of Norwegian black metal. In addition to their use by Ancient and Faanefjell and inclusion by a number of other bands, there have been two bands with the name Troll.²³⁶ Both bands formed in the early 1990s, but only one has released more than just a single demo.²³⁷ The more active Troll was formed in 1993 in Hamar and has maintained varying levels of activity to the present, releasing four full-length records with the last in 2010. While the band's theme has shifted over time, Troll's 1995 demo *Trollstorm over Nidingjuv* and first full-length release the following year titled *Drep de kristne* both include trolls.²³⁸ Troll thoroughly use troll references in their visual and textual expressions. Aside from the band's name, the demo title and its second track, "Trollstorm over Nidingjuv," are explicit in their reference to trolls. In addition, despite their lack of a direct reference in their titles, the other two tracks of the demo, "Når natten endelig er her" and "Over daudens kolde mark," carry lyrical references to trolls.

The band expands on the troll theme on *Drep de kristne* beyond what was done on *Trollstorm over Nidingjuv*. As with the demo, *Drep de kristne* has multiple tracks that contain troll in song title, including "Trollberg" and "Troll riket."²³⁹ Unlike the demo, the cover art of *Drep de kristne* visually depicts trolls. While having a visual representation of trolls certainly expands on how they are used aesthetically, the fact that the trolls on the cover of *Drep de kristne* are attacking a village is significant in itself. In many respects, this portrayal of trolls is consistent with their antagonistic role

²³⁶ Other examples of trolls in Norwegian black metal can be found in the following releases: "Trollbunden av det vakre vemod," Enthral. *Demo 1996*. Self-released, 1996, cassette; "Troll," Kampf. *Norse*. Hammerheart Records HHR 027, 1998, compact disc; "Troll, død og trolddom," Kampf. *Fra underverdenen*. Naplam Records NPR 190, 2006, compact disc; "Troll," by Styggmyr on the split release Styggmyr/Cryptal Spectres. *Ancient Chthonic Union*. Czerni Blask Czarny Metal 004, 2008, cassette; "The Troll Dome," Ildjarn-Nidhogg. *Hardangervidda Part 2*. Norse League Productions, 2002, compact disc; "Bergtrollsets hevn," Gorgoroth. *Antichrist*. Malicious Records MR 008, 1996, compact disc.

²³⁷ The other band named Troll formed in 1993 in Åfjord and released a demo with four tracks in 1994 titled *Demo '94*. See: Troll. *Demo '94*. Self-released, 1994, cassette.

²³⁸ Troll. *Trollstorm over Nidingjuv*, 1995, cassette. Troll. *Drep de kristne*. Damnation Records D04 (D4), 1996, compact disc.

²³⁹ The track numbering differs depending on the format and release version, but typically appear as tracks number four and seven in respective order.

within Norwegian folk narratives.²⁴⁰ Moreover, trolls are attacking a Christian village, made evident by the presence of a white robed figure with a halo resembling Jesus in the foreground. Not only is this image consistent with the anti-Christian theme present in the album's title, but it is also consistent with trolls in folklore. In many instances, trolls are positioned in opposition to Christianity.²⁴¹ Though it is difficult to generalize their behavior given the many ways in which trolls are described in Norwegian folk narratives, they typically live outside of human civilization, have short and violent tempers, and, above all else, fall victim to humans who outsmart them. Added to these characteristics are the implicit traits that trolls have, namely a rejection of modernity and urbanity. Yet, not all of the traits associated with trolls are necessarily negative.

Tied to these implicit traits is a strong sense of place and a deep appreciation for rural life. Yet, what truly makes trolls significant within Norwegian cultural memory is their role as a discipliner of humans who do not live according to collective norms and behaviors. Along with threatening to punish individuals exploiting the work of others and eat those who do not attend church services, trolls feast on food that is not blessed.²⁴² They are unintelligent, dislike change, and terrorize Christians. Yet, in many cases they exist to enforce normative practice and serve as a reminder that behaving outside these norms will incur potentially dire consequences. What becomes evident then is that Troll, and indeed the other bands that use trolls, do not necessarily mean to allude to all the characteristics of trolls. While there is little doubt that Troll wishes to express the anti-Christian side of these creatures it seems unlikely that the band does this to remind their listeners of the dangers of not behaving in a normative manner, but rather to stress Christianity's perceived foreignness. In this way, trolls become an expression of an unadulterated Norwegian identity that resists foreign influence.

While ever-present in rural oral traditions, trolls, and indeed other folkloric creatures such as the *buldra* and *nøkken*, were woven into the institutional frames of remembrance by collectors like Asbjørnsen and Moe, thus forming a part of Norwegian cultural memory. However, as indicated in the releases of Dinger Xul, Ancient, and Faanefjell, it is apparent that folk narratives have influenced these bands to varying degrees. In the case of Dinger Xul the use of history is minimal and sits alone amidst other more prominent themes that might be found in metal music. Folk narratives are more prominent in the works of Ancient and

²⁴⁰ In Asbjørnsen and Moe's collections such examples can be seen in the tales "Askeladden som stjal sølvvænderne, sengteppet og guldharpen til trollet," "Herreper," "Lillekort," and "De tre bukkene Bruse."

²⁴¹ Lindow 2014, 67.

²⁴² Lindow 2014, 62-63.

Faaneffjell. However, while Ancient and Faaneffjell certainly show how folk narratives have shaped their thematic content, these two bands also demonstrate how individual negotiation operates in cultural memory. In using folk narratives, Ancient and Faaneffjell do not merely repeat parts of the stories of Asbjørnsen and Moe, but fit the narratives into their own frames. In the case of Ancient, the frame changed over the course of the band's catalogue. Indeed, after the release of *Trolltaar* in 1995, the band shifted away from any Norwegian history use to more diffuse themes that include vampires and magic. However, what this shows is that when the band was solely composed of Norwegian members, Norwegian cultural memory had a role to play in the band's thematic content. Moreover, with the inclusion of other members the band's sound began to shift away from what was performed on the *Svartalvheim*, *Trolltarr*, and both releases named *Det Glemte Riket*.

Though the shift in Ancient's sound is not connected to any part of cultural memory in Norway, when the band was all Norwegian some of the themes used were connected to Norwegian folk narratives. As with Dinger Xul, when expressing cultural memory, it is again evident that Norway as a place was important in setting a frame for Ancient. In this instance though, Ancient went a step further and not only referenced folk narratives in their song titles, but also connected to them through their cover art. In doing so Ancient moved beyond simply being shaped by collective memory and actively integrated their own negotiated expressions of Norwegian folk narratives into the band's thematic frames. In the case of Faaneffjell's *Trollmarsj*, the individual expression of cultural memory is at the forefront of the band's thematic output. As such, the individual negotiations found on *Trollmarsj* reveal an actualization of trolls that is demonstrated on the cover art and throughout the tracks of the full-length. Yet, although Faaneffjell negotiated the meaning of troll, it is impossible to detach this from the role Asbjørnsen and Moe, and others of the national romantic era, had in institutionalizing the oral traditions of Norway's peasants. Therefore, Faaneffjell exemplify the continuum of negotiation between individual and collective forms of remembrance in cultural memory. In a similar way, Troll's use of trolls also represents a negotiated meaning of these creatures. Only the characteristics that reflect what the band wants to convey were explicitly used. Yet, this individual negotiation is still actualized and connected to a broader notion of cultural memory. As such, the collective is inseparable from individual forms of remembrance and thus reflects the implicit connection to collective commemoration.

4.2.1 Folk Narratives and Resistance

The folk narratives collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe were not the only ones to become part of Norwegian cultural memory. Following the Second World War, the nationalist music movement that used folk narratives during the interwar period dramatically waned in popularity. Indeed, it took some decades before some references to the national romantic project of the nineteenth century were again acceptable. Yet, this did not mean that all folk narratives were cast away with the demise of the nationalist sentiments of the interwar period. Norway's experience during the Second World War witnessed the onset of folk narratives that were aimed at resisting their German occupiers and the collaborative Vidkun Quisling-led government, *Nasjonal Samling*. The linguist Kathleen Stokker notes that humor was a key component to the formation of folk narratives of this time. These humorous folk narratives acted as a means of non-violent opposition during the early years of the occupation. This was done by creating a shared sense of resistance and connecting individual resisters to an authentic expression of collective resistance.²⁴³ However, not all folk narratives used in this period were humorous. In addition to jokes and satirical stories about the Nazis and the *Nasjonal Samling*, other narratives were used to bolster Norway's sense of collective resistance and self-defense.

One such narrative that was used to embody the attributes of resistance and self-defense was the legend of Pillar-Guri. While Pillar-Guri was important as a symbol of Norwegian resistance during the Second World War, it was also significant throughout the nineteenth century as a symbol of independence and self-determination. As evidenced by its use under Nazi occupation, the legend instilled a collective sense of resistance and a reminder that Norway had a successful tradition in warding off invaders. The institutionalization process and preservation of Pillar-Guri was so thorough that the Danish writer Martin A. Hansen, upon being told the tale on a trip to Norway in 1947, assumed that the events described happened during World War II.²⁴⁴ Thus, both Pillar-Guri and the Battle of Kringen surfaced and became relevant at times when Norwegian identity and independence needed to be secured in the face of foreign occupation and influence.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Stokker 1997, 207-208.

²⁴⁴ Ingwersen 1995, 89.

²⁴⁵ Ingwersen 1995, 89.

4.2.2 The Battle of Kringen and Pillar-Guri

Pillarguritoppen is a mountain situated in Otta i Sel county of Gudbrandsdalen in Oppland.²⁴⁶ The mountain is notable for being named after the Pillar-Guri legend and standing in the same region where the Battle of Kringen took place. Occurring in 1612, the Battle of Kringen has persisted as an important event within Norwegian cultural memory as evidenced through its preservation in place names, folklore, and national romantic works. Known as *Slaget ved Kringen*, or *Slaget i Kringom* depending on dialect, the battle was in many respects only a minor skirmish during the Kalmar War fought between Denmark-Norway and Sweden from 1611 to 1613. While the Kalmar War started in 1611, it was only one war in a series of conflicts between Sweden, Denmark-Norway, Poland, and Russia, which defined an extended period of conflict over dominance in the Baltic region. Due to the prolonged nature of these various conflicts and the lack of battle-ready manpower, it was common practice to recruit mercenary companies from neighboring regions.²⁴⁷ This practice was well established and utilized with some regularity in Sweden. However, the years prior to the outbreak of the Kalmar War saw a sharp increase in the hiring of Scottish officers serving in the Swedish military. In fact, between 1600 and 1611 Karl IX hired a total of ninety-one Scottish officers, which was triple the number of those hired in the 1590s.²⁴⁸ Though Scottish officers were employed for, and operated in, campaigns against Poland-Lithuania in 1611, new Scottish recruits were required to meet the demands of the Kalmar War.

Despite a Stuart alliance with the Danish crown and the difficulties of reaching their Swedish employers, Scottish recruiters such as James Spens, who served as inspector-general for all foreign troops in Swedish service, were successful in raising troops in Scotland. Though a number were recruited to join with their Protestant brethren to fight against Poland-Lithuania, the problem of passage through the Danish Straits proved difficult to solve. Neither the Stuart alliance with the Danish crown nor the fact that the Scottish recruits were destined to fight Catholics stopped the Danish from hindering the passage of these Swedish-hired mercenaries. Indeed, Danish harassment of Scottish recruits, regardless of their destination, was present before the start of the war as even Spens himself fell victim to Danish detainment a month before hostilities

²⁴⁶ This region is a popular tourist destination for domestic and international tourists alike and is typified by rolling, rounded mountains and lush valleys that set an idyllic backdrop to Norway's agrarian traditions.

²⁴⁷ While not necessarily the case for Denmark-Norway, as Christian IV distrusted foreigners, Sweden had developed a reputation for employing foreign soldiers in the years before and after the Kalmar War. Despite Christian IV's distrust, Denmark-Norway had thousands more mercenaries employed at the start of the Kalmar War than Sweden.

²⁴⁸ Grosjean 2003, 31.

officially began in April of 1611.²⁴⁹ Efforts to avoid the Danish Straits forced Scottish officers to land their recruits in Western Norway and make their way to the Swedish frontier overland on foot. As might be expected, this endeavor too proved difficult not only due to the logistics of landing soldiers along the formidable coastline of Western Norway, but also because marching through enemy territory was bound to meet some form of resistance. According to Alexia Grosjean, these crossing attempts “culminated in the infamous massacre of some 350 Scots at Kringen in Norway in August 1612.”²⁵⁰ Though Grosjean notes that this was a massacre perpetrated by Norwegians upon largely unarmed Scottish recruits who had committed no acts of war or violence, the event has since become known as the Battle of Kringen and was given near Thermopylae-like significance in Norway over the following centuries.²⁵¹

The events at Kringen were not the first nor the last time Scottish recruits attempted to cross Norway to reach Sweden.²⁵² Yet, this particular occasion has been remembered and celebrated over generations by Norwegians. Though known in local tradition around Gudbrandsdalen before, the Battle of Kringen was the central theme to Edvard Storm’s ballad *Zinklars vise* that gained romantic significance during the 1800s. The son of a minister, Storm grew up in Vågå near the location of the battle and wrote the ballad in 1781 telling the story of George Sinclair and his demise at the battle.²⁵³ Although second in command to Alexander Ramsay, the poem and all of the folklore surrounding the battle places primacy on Sinclair. In fact, Ramsay is never mentioned in *Zinklars vise*, which focuses solely on a series of fateful episodes that ultimately lead to Sinclair’s death. While Storm’s ballad intertwines parts of the folklore surrounding the battle, including Sinclair being told of his impending doom by a mermaid upon his arrival to Norwegian shores, the ballad makes no mention of Pillar-Guri.²⁵⁴ Several spellings of Pillar-Guri and variations of the tale exist, likely reflecting the oral tradition from which it was founded, yet most agree that Pillar-Guri was a young girl who used her *prillarborn* to send a warning to the local militia that the Scottish recruits

²⁴⁹ Grosjean 2003, 32.

²⁵⁰ Grosjean 2003, 32. As with the numbers of Norwegian militia present, the number of Scottish recruits varies between legend and sources. However, sources contemporary to the battle and modern scholars tend to have lower figures than those suggested in folklore.

²⁵¹ Grosjean 2003, 32. Sinclair 1907, 378.

²⁵² Grosjean 2003, 33. These crossings were not just a pragmatic solution to reaching their employers but was also the result of numerous operations conducted by Swedish employed Scottish privateers that raided the coastline and Norwegian ports.

²⁵³ Munch 1999, 63.

²⁵⁴ Munch 1999, 66.

were making their way through the valley.²⁵⁵ This part of the folklore concerning the Battle of Kringen is one that has been used not just as the name of a mountain in Oppland, but has been captured in visual form as a statue on Pillarguritoppen, on the crest of Sel municipality, and as the main subject of Theodor Kittelsen's painting *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* (1900).

Along with Pillar-Guri, Storm's ballad concerning the Battle of Kringen gained national romantic significance and became cemented within the recital repertoire in the struggle for a distinct Norwegian identity. Indeed, the ballad was not just learned and practiced in the nineteenth century but has persisted in living memory.²⁵⁶ The Norwegian folk-rock/*progg* band Folque showcases one such example. Among other tracks inspired by folk music and traditional ballads, Folque's 1974 eponymous debut full-length album features their own version and arrangement of the ballad titled "Sinclarwise" set to a traditional Faroese melody.²⁵⁷ Like Storm's original ballad, Folque makes no reference to Pillar-Guri, but does include the foretelling of Sinclair's death. While no Norwegian black metal bands have recorded their own version of Storm's ballad, Pillarguritoppen provides the setting for the cover art of Isengard's 1995 full-length record *Høstemørke*. It is not obvious that the photograph used for the cover art was taken at the mountain, yet the origin of the cover art is detailed by Isengard's sole member Gylve 'Fenriz' Nagell on the commentary track for "Nestlepaks" from a special edition re-release of *Høstemørke* in 2010.²⁵⁸

In discussing the photograph, Nagell gives some insight into origin of the release's cover art and the personal relationships that some within Norwegian black metal shared. As Nagell states, the photograph was taken from a trip he and Sigurd 'Satyr' Wongraven of the band Satyricon "took in September of 1994 to go to Pillarguritoppen, also known from the seminal folk album from the Norwegian band called Folque from the

²⁵⁵ Munch 1999, 65. A *prillarhorn* is a instrument made from goat horn with finger holes added for playing.

²⁵⁶ Munch 1999, 62

²⁵⁷ Folque. *Folque*. Round 2 R2LP001, 2015, 33⅓ rpm. Originally released in 1974. This release was produced by the renowned Norwegian folk artist Øystein Sunde. In addition, the Faroese folk metal band Tyr released their own version of the ballad called 'Sinclair's Visa' from the 2008 full length record *Land*. See: Tyr. *Land*. Napalm Records NPR 247, 2008, compact disc.

²⁵⁸ Isengard. *Høstemørke*. Peaceville Records CDVILED307X, 2010, compact disc. For the other versions see the following: Isengard, *Høstemørke*, Moonfog Productions, FOG 007, CD, 1995; Isengard. *Høstemørke*. Moonfog Productions FOG-003-4, 1995, cassette; Isengard. *Høstemørke*, Morbid Noizz Productions 090, 1995, cassette; Isengard. *Høstemørke*. Iron Records IROND CD 08-1447, 2008, compact disc; Isengard. *Høstemørke*. Moonfog Productions FOGLP 007, 2008, 33⅓ rpm; Isengard. *Høstemørke*. Peaceville Records VILELP417, 2013. 33⅓ rpm.

‘70s.’²⁵⁹ In terms of visual presentation, the cover art of *Høstmørke* itself does not give any clear indication of the place it was taken. Nagell is merely standing in front of an older wooden building with his arms crossed.²⁶⁰ Yet, what stands out about the comment is not necessarily the revelation of where the picture was taken, but that Nagell connects Pillarguritoppen to Folque. No other references to the Battle of Kringen or Pillar-Guri can be found in Folque’s discography. This leaves Folque’s version of Storm’s ballad the only link between Folque and the mountain. Given that, like Storm’s original version, Folque’s rendition of the ballad makes no reference to Pillar-Guri, there must be another explanation for why Nagell saw them as being related. Aside from showing his appreciation for Folque, Nagell’s statement concerning the ballad and the legend of Pillar-Guri is one that is informed by the institutionalization of the folklore surrounding the Battle of Kringen. While this might indicate a personal interest in folklore or in the Battle of Kringen itself, it is difficult not to attribute Nagell’s individual knowledge of the folklore to collective commemorative practices surrounding the battle.

4.2.3 Pillar-Guri, Kittelsen, and Burzum

If Nagell was indeed informed by broader commemorative practices of the event, it is fair to ask how else the Battle of Kringen, and any of its associated folk narratives, are demonstrated in Norwegian cultural memory. Besides its use during the national romantic period and during World War II, the battle has also influenced the perceived origins of a plant species local to Gudbrandsdalen.²⁶¹ Yet, the question persists as to how it has influenced Norwegian black metal beyond a visit by some black metal musicians to Pillarguritoppen and admiration shown for Folque. While indeed no Norwegian black metal band has released their own version of *Zinklars vise* or overtly drawn upon the events from Kringen in song, the folklore of Pillar-Guri can be seen on the album art of one of the genre’s most renown releases—Burzum’s 1996 full-length record *Filosofem*. Though not attributed to the artist, the cover art for *Filosofem* is a near

²⁵⁹ ‘Nestlepacks,’ Isengard. *Høstmørke*. Peaceville Records CDVILED307X, 2010, compact disc.

²⁶⁰ Indeed, a similar picture of Wongraven featuring the same background is found in the liner notes of Satyricon’s record *The Shadowthrone* from 1994. This was in all likelihood taken on the same trip mentioned by Nagell on the ‘Nestlepacks’ commentary track.

²⁶¹ Alm 2015, 2. Besides being present on Storm’s ballad and the legend of Pillar-Guri, the Battle of Kringen and its folklore were captured in visual medium by Hans Gude and Adolph Tidemand through their painting *Sinclair’s landing i Romsdal* (1876) and Georg Strømdal’s painting *Kringen* (1897). In addition, Henrik Wergeland, a leading national romantic, told the fate of Sinclair in the tragic play called *Sinklars Død* from 1840.

direct reuse of Kittelsen's *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur*.²⁶² As a visual representation of the Pilar-Guri folktale, Kittelsen's original version shows a young woman standing center-right in the foreground sounding a lur across the slight slope of a valley ringed by a coniferous forest.²⁶³ The color tone of the image is muted and could almost be considered achromatic if not for subtle tones of green and a rich shade of cream used in place of white. The version used for the cover art of *Filosofem* is nearly identical to that of Kittelsen's original. The main differences exist in the re-framing of the image to fit the constraints of the medium and the presence of the band name in the upper left corner and the release title in the lower right corner.

The use of *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* as cover art on *Filosofem* stands in stark contrast to many other black metal releases of its time. Though released in 1996, *Filosofem* is largely composed of material that was both written and recorded years before. Vikernes's extracurricular activities and subsequent jailing forced delays in the recording and releasing of material. In fact, at the time of *Filosofem*'s release in 1996 Vikernes had already begun serving his twenty-one-year prison sentence for Aarseth's murder and arson-related charges. With the aid of his mother, Vikernes was able to dictate the details of the full-length album including its song selection and visual content in captivity. In terms of the song selection, *Filosofem* is somewhat ad hoc and lacks the cohesive track ordering of its 1994 predecessor *Hvis lyset tar oss*. There is little doubt that the tracks and their ordering on the full-length reflect the circumstances in which Vikernes found himself. Songs recorded years in advance and a loose track structuring are at odds with the meticulous attention to detail typical of Burzum's releases. Yet, what *Filosofem* lacks in track structure finesse it reveals in its use of *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* as its cover art. Notably, black, nor any other hallmark of black metal, is not present anywhere on the cover art. This shows that no significant alterations were made to Kittelsen's work, but it also highlights a significant difference between Burzum and the band's contemporaries.

Though not the first Norwegian black metal band to break from using black, Burzum had arguably the highest profile of all black metal bands at the time due to Vikernes's arrest and trial. In addition to his crimes, Vikernes used the trial, and the publicity it afforded him, as a platform from which to express his sympathies for National Socialism. This was combined with a complete change in his appearance over the course of the trial. Rather than the long, straight, black-dyed hair and all black clothes which typified those involved in black metal, Vikernes cut his hair

²⁶² Thompson 2014, 70. Burzum. *Filosofem*. Back on Black BOBV019LP, 2005, 33½ rpm.

²⁶³ While the folklore of Pilar-Guri derives its name from the *prillarhorn*, Kittelsen's painting shows a standard looking lur that lacks finger holes.

and donned attire that resembled the look of a skinhead. While in prison Vikernes continued to hone his extreme political views and produced material that pushed the limits of political expression in black metal. As his first release of three while imprisoned, *Filosofem* might be expected to contain overt references to Vikernes's political sympathies. However, this is not necessarily the case. While the liner notes include a tale that alludes to the racial superiority of Northern Europeans, *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* is not an image or symbol typically associated with skinheads or Neo-Nazis.

Indeed, that a painting of Pillar-Guri is used at all is strange given Vikernes's political and ideological sympathies. Pillar-Guri is inseparable from the Battle of Kringen and the battle itself is inextricably connected to collective narratives of foreign resistance, particularly during the Second World War. Yet, it may be for this very reason *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* was used at all. Rather than seeing the inherent contradiction between his own beliefs and the meanings of the battle in collective memory, Vikernes perhaps saw his own personal struggle as one that also sought to preserve an 'authentic' Norway in the face of global capitalism and increased immigration. Of course, this sort of antagonism toward globalization and immigration is commonplace with right-wing extremists. Yet, what *Filosofem* indicates is that Vikernes has applied his own interpretation to Kittelsen's work and used it to actualize his beliefs while staying within the broader frame of cultural memory. The case of *Filosofem* shows how Burzum utilized *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* to break with the typical aesthetic generally associated with black metal. More significantly though, it shows Vikernes's interpretation of a historically significant symbol in Norway's cultural memory. By using *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* Vikernes's intent is clear to see. His personal politics and ideology are expressed through the historical discourses of resistance against foreign invasion connected to the legend of Pillar-Guri.

Yet, there is more to the painting than just Pillar-Guri. Indeed, *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* is part of a series of watercolor paintings Kittelsen based loosely on the tale of Tirilil-Tove as recorded by Faye.²⁶⁴ Like the legend of Pillar-Guri, the tale of Tirilil-Tove also centers on the feats of a young woman. While in captivity after being abducted by twelve thieves, she composes a ballad and then plays it on a birch horn across the valley to summon help. Thus, it is evident that *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* itself is layered with multiple meanings that may well have been intended as such by Kittelsen. As with other works in the series, not all of the paintings were necessarily directly related to Tirilil-Tove, though some of the works

²⁶⁴ Østby 1975, 132. In addition to being recorded by Faye and depicted in visual representation by Kittelsen, Tirilil Tove was also the subject of a poem by the national romantic writer J.S. Wellhaven from 1859.

are more explicit than others with their connection to the folk narrative. For example, *Elgen kommer for Tørsten at skukke* (1900), *Blege Taager vandrer Vandet* (1900), and *Troldfuglen basker og slaes derinde* (1900) all have motifs that do not directly relate to Tirilil-Tove.²⁶⁵ On the other hand, *Tolv Mand i Skoge* (1900) and *Tirilil-Tove* (1900) are explicit in their reference to the folk tale.²⁶⁶

As can be seen from the names of the paintings, they do not all share the same thematic motif. Thus, it is fair to ask how these images are related. The overarching concept binding the paintings together is a common atmosphere of contemplative sincerity that comes through in the backdrop and color tones of the paintings.²⁶⁷ Yet, deeper meanings can be read if enough context is applied to the individual pieces as well. In the case of *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur*, the image suits both folk narratives of Pillar-Guri and Tirilil-Tove as each revolves around a young girl playing a horn across the countryside. As the central figure in the painting is performing this very action it is obvious how the painting connects to the stories. However, it is also important that both stories stress a sense of independence and freedom, notions that coursed through the national romantic project in Norway during the nineteenth century. More precisely, both are based on the concept of a call to arms. In Pillar-Guri the call is to alert the militia of the presence of foreigners who dared to march across Norwegian land and the call in Tirilil-Tove serves to summon aid and free the main character from captivity. In both cases the main character, a young female peasant, can be understood to represent Norway whose call is meant to either repulse invaders or gain freedom from those who do not adhere to collective values.

It is apparent that *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* is an image imbued with a considerable amount of national romantic sentiment that stresses the value of resistance and independence. While this particular work from Kittelsen has significance for Burzum through its connection to Norwegian national romanticism and the theme of resistance, two important questions remain to be addressed regarding Kittelsen. Namely, who is Kittelsen in relation to his Norwegian contemporaries that also depicted folk narratives and how have other Norwegian black metal bands used his work?

²⁶⁵ In respective order the English translations are 'The Elk is coming to quench his thirst,' 'Pale mist hovers over the water,' and 'The troll birds go at it hammer and tongs deep in the woods.' A troll bird as depicted by Kittelsen appears to be a *storfugl* known in English as a Western capercaillie, which is a type of grouse. Østby 1975, 134-137.

²⁶⁶ In respective order the English translation are 'Twelve men in a woodland grove' and 'Tirilil-Tove.' Østby 1975, 139-141.

²⁶⁷ Østby 1975, 131.

4.2.4 Kittelsen, *Svartedauen*, and the Black Death

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kittelsen was one among many Norwegian artists actively working on projects concerning national romanticism. Gerhard Munthe and Erik Werenskiöld were two other prominent examples among several artists who gave folk narratives pictorial form. Munthe's illustrative style had a near wood-cut quality while retaining the finesse of a hand drawing. While the subject matter of his works did include folk narratives as recorded by Asbjørnsen and Moe, his work often dealt with other aspects of Norway's imagined past such as Norse mythology and the Viking era. Werenskiöld, on the other hand, was widely recognized for his illustrations that accompanied the republished volumes of *Norske Folkeeventyr* in 1879 and the adapted version for children in a series called *Eventyrbog for Børn: Norske Folkeeventyr* that was released over a period from 1882 to 1887.²⁶⁸ These illustrations help launch Werenskiöld to the forefront of the Norwegian art world and allowed him a platform from which to develop an extensive portfolio of works. As prominent as both Munthe and Werenskiöld were in the visual representation of Norwegian folk narratives, it is impossible to ignore the contributions of Kittelsen. As evidenced by *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur*, Kittelsen was an accomplished artist who employed a style that oscillated between a Neo-Romantic and an early naïve style. In addition to the watercolor series that included *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur*, Kittelsen is known for his illustrative accompaniments to a number of folk narrative collections, including, but not limited to, later editions of Asbjørnsen's and Moe's original publications. This included a series devoted to Askeladden, as well as motifs centered on trolls, *nøkken*, and other folkloric creatures for a variety of books and standalone pieces.

Kittelsen's representations of various legends and fairy tales have made a long-lasting impression on the visual conceptualization of Norwegian folk narratives. Not only have his works been institutionalized on stamps and included in national galleries, but many of his illustrations have been used as artwork for Norwegian black metal bands. In this respect, Kittelsen's personal negotiation of Norwegian folk narratives has arguably had the same, or perhaps even greater, impact than when they were initially collected in the 1840s. By giving some of these stories visual representation he was able to bring them to life in a way that would not be possible through text alone. In addition, by illustrating some folk narratives and not others Kittelsen himself acted as a curator of collective memory by individually actualizing the collected narratives existing in Norwegian cultural memory. We have seen Kittelsen's influence on collective commemoration through Burzum's use of *Op under Fjeldet toner*

²⁶⁸ Werenskiöld 1999, 81.

en *Lur* as cover art for *Filosofem*. Yet, Kittelsen's influence on the visual aesthetic of Norwegian black metal is not limited to this one record. Indeed, bands have used a number of his illustrations and paintings as cover art.

One reason for this is that, along with depicting the gentler sides of Norwegian folk narratives, Kittelsen also had a predilection for the macabre and grotesque. Such interests are demonstrated in some of his earlier works such as *Draugen* but are clearly evidenced in the *Svartedauen* series dedicated to the Black Death, which was completed over the course of two years from 1894 to 1896. Kittelsen's interest in the dark and disturbing was coupled with a desire to illustrate an event in Norway's past that was glossed over by contemporary writers and artists wanting to celebrate Norwegian history. The reasoning for this choice was complex. Kittelsen had attempted and failed to produce a coherent series devoted to Norse mythology and the heroic figures of the medieval period. Yet, Kittelsen was determined to contribute a set of works toward a national history of Norway. An unlikely source of inspiration was found in the Black Death. Though traumatic, the Black Death was a truly national event in Norwegian history in that it affected every Norwegian regardless of social standing.²⁶⁹ In this way, taking on a subject like the Black Death suited Kittelsen's social and political sensibilities. Unlike Edvard Munch, Christian Krohg, and other celebrated Norwegian artists of this time, Kittelsen did not come from a privileged middle-class background, had little formal training in his craft, and took no interest in urbanity or "sexual mysticism" as subject matters.²⁷⁰ Instead, Kittelsen came from a modest, rural beginning that gave him an appreciation for nature and sharpened his critique of the bourgeois professional class. Thus, the Black Death was a theme that combined Kittelsen's aesthetic sensibilities with a poignant social critique while at the same time allowing him a platform from which he could deal with a historical subject.

The *Svartedauen* series was not the first time Kittelsen had approached the subject of the Black Death. In a previous series called *Glemmebogen* from 1891-1892, which was later part of the book *Folk og trold* first published in 1911, Kittelsen first introduces the Black Death in anthropomorphized form as an old woman named Pesta and describes her as

²⁶⁹ Østby 1975, 103.

²⁷⁰ Østby 1975, 8-9.

small, lean, and bent, her face greenish-yellow with black spots. Her eyes were squinting, dark and restless and set deep in her skull; now and again a strange, evil light shone in them, and they flickered around in every direction, so that it was impossible to fix her gaze. Her head bobbed up and down. Her mouth moved rapidly – sharp and bitter. She was worse than the plague itself...hence her name.²⁷¹

Kittelsen was not the first to conceptualize the Black Death as an old woman and, in fact, borrowed from Faye's *Norke Folke-Sagn* that depicted Pesta the same way.²⁷² Only used in two illustrations from *Glemmebogen*, the character was again used but this time as the main subject in the visual accompaniment to the fifteen poems of *Svartedauen*.²⁷³ Unlike the illustrations from *Glemmebogen*, the drawings from *Svartedauen* had no color and were instead drawn in an achromatic gray scale. Pesta is almost exclusively shown bent over shambling with the support of a rake in one hand and a broom in the other. Only in *Pesta drar* (1894-95) does Pesta appear more mobile as the character takes flight with bat wings extended while straddled upon a broom, an image that likens Pesta to a witch. That Pesta carried a broom and rake was significant in of itself. They symbolized the degree to which the Black Death would ravage a given location. When the rake was used a portion of the population would escape death, but if the broom was used all lives would be swept away by the disease.²⁷⁴ In addition, Pesta carries with her a book containing the names of those who are to die. Even when someone performs a service for Pesta, as described in the tale "Pest and the Ferryman," she is unrelenting. The ferryman asks to be spared, but his name appears in Pesta's book. In exchange for his aid in crossing a lake, Pesta grants the man a quick death and subsequently sweeps the life from her destination on the other side of the lake.²⁷⁵ A scene from this tale is captured in Kittelsen's *Over sjø of elv* (1894-95) with the ferryman sitting with his hands clasped in prayer opposite Pesta who thumbs through her book on a small rowboat.²⁷⁶ Aside from perpetuating the idea that Pesta could not cross

²⁷¹ "Hun var liden, mager og kroget, ansigtet gulgrønt med sorte prikker. Øinene skjeled, var mørke og urolige og lå dybt i skallen; ret som det var, kom der er uhyggeligt, ondskabsfuldt blink i dem, og så virred de om til alle kanter, saa det var umuligt at faa tag i dem. Hovedet rokket op og ned. Munden løb rapt, - skarp og bitter. – Hun er værre end selve pesta, tænkte jeg, og saa fik hun navenet." Theodor Kittelsen as quoted in Østby 1975, 106. For *Glemmebogen* in *Folk og Trolde* see "Paa Skaatø" in: Kittelsen, Theodor. *Folk og Trolde: Minner og Drømme med Skizzer, Tegninger og Malerier*. Oslo: Bjørn Ringstrøms antikvariat, 1997.

²⁷² Østby 1975, 116. According to Østby, Faye describes the Black Death as an old woman wearing a red dress.

²⁷³ Kittelsen, Theodor. *Svartedauen*. Kristiania: L.E. Tvedte, 1901. This edition of the book lacks individual page numbers.

²⁷⁴ Kvidleland and Sehmsdorf 1991, 345.

²⁷⁵ Kvidleland and Sehmsdorf 1991, 345.

²⁷⁶ Østby 1975, 110.

water without the aid of humans, it conveys the idea that Pesta was not simply a disease, but Death itself.

Though “Pest and the Ferryman” was initially collected by the folklorist Hans Ross who conducted his work in the Telemark region, *Svartedauen*’s poems are extensively informed by Faye’s collection of folk narratives. Though not as celebrated as Asbjørnsen and Moe’s collections, Kittelsen’s use of Faye’s work shows its influence despite the criticism it had received when it was originally published. In addition, the settings of the illustrations are contemporary to Kittelsen and reflect not only his own preferences for the countryside, but also the rural origins of the folk narratives.²⁷⁷ Kittelsen was thus able to repurpose Faye’s folk narratives through his own negotiation of the Black Death, give the event contemporaneous relevance, and ultimately allow Faye’s work and the devastating disease to gain added significance in Norwegian cultural memory. A similar repurposing process can be observed in Norwegian black metal bands’ use of Kittelsen’s *Svartedauen* and their negotiation of the Black Death. While there are some bands that nominally reference the Black Death, others have employed it in more concrete ways. That something like the Black Death is used as a theme or influences the content of black metal is not surprising and fits within the genre’s established aesthetic boundaries. Plague, pestilence, and disease are far from uncommon themes in the stereotypical repertoire of black metal and transcend national divisions.²⁷⁸ Yet, Norwegian black metal bands tend to utilize the Black Death in specifically Norwegian terms that connect them to Norway as a specific place and other instances of the disease’s representation in Norway.

4.2.5 The Black Death in Norwegian Black Metal

The band 1349 exemplifies one of the clearest instances of referencing the Black Death. In this case, the band’s name itself is a direct reference to the year of the disease’s arrival in Norway and harkens to the legend of a lone ship that drifted into Bergen’s harbor carrying a cargo of dead crew and the Black Death.²⁷⁹ While 1349 does not reference the Black Death in any

²⁷⁷ Østby 1975, 110. Østby notes that Kittelsen resented the living in Hvitsen, a town near Akerhus, we wrote to a friend complaining there was “No unspoiled scenery – no mountain moors..., I am determined to exchange this place for mountain air, etc. I need it physically and mentally.”

²⁷⁸ Bands such as Peste Noire from France, Marduk from Sweden, and Krieg from the United States have all at some point referenced the Black Death in their catalogues.

²⁷⁹ The exact year of when the disease reached Norway has been a topic of debate. The late Norwegian historian Kåre Lunden was adamant that the traditional year and spread of the Black Death is consistent with legend. Yet, some epidemiologists, such as Ole J. Benedictow, argue that the Black Death arrived in 1350 given its unsustainable lethality rate and subsequent population recovery. For Benedictow’s comments on Lunden see:

other meaningful way in their catalogue, this year looms ominously in Norwegian cultural memory and cultural expressions. Gjenferdsel's 2004 demo ...*Det kom et skip til Björgvin...* exemplifies how this has been done both by explicitly referencing Norway in terms of place and implicitly connecting to the other expressions of cultural memory derived from the same event. Originating from Lom, Gjenferdsel's demo contains six songs, each telling a part of the tale starting with the arrival of the disease on the first track to the silence that settles on the countryside after its departure on the sixth and final song.²⁸⁰

Beyond the demo and track titles there are no other explicit references to the Black Death on ...*Det kom et skip til Björgvin...* Yet, the title of the demo reveals more than just a passing reference to this event in Norwegian history. The demo's name is shared with a children's novel from 1980 titled *Det kom et skip til Björgvin i 1349* by author Torill Thorstad Hauger that is based on the folk narrative of Jostedalsrypa.²⁸¹ This folk narrative, which has also supplied the story for at least two film productions in the last twenty years, is derived from Jostedal in the Sogn og Fjordane region and tells the story of a young girl who survives the devastation of the disease despite it killing all others in the valley.²⁸² Though those assessing the wake left by the disease eventually find her, she evades them with the aid of powers gained by living in nature.²⁸³ Accompanying the folkloric trope of acquiring magical powers in nature, the folk narrative belies the extent to which the plague devastated the countryside, the trauma it inflicted on the survivors, and the degree to which this trauma was integrated into the very fabric of commemorative practice as an oral tradition. As such, Gjenferdsel, whether aware of the book and Jostedalsrypa or not, reflects the Black Death in distinctly Norwegian terms which connects the band to the related folk narratives. This is done not just through directly referencing Bergen and the year of the plague's arrival, but by an implicit connection to the Jostedalsrypa folk

Benedictow, Ole. *The Black Death and Later Plague Epidemics in the Scandinavian Countries: Perspectives and Controversies*. Warsaw and Berlin: De Gruyter Open, 2016.

²⁸⁰ Gjenferdsel. ...*Det kom et skip til Björgvin...* Self-released, 2004, compact disc. The track listing is as follows: (1) Forpestelsen Inntog, (2) 1349 – Dödens Vilje, (3) Når Mørket Faller På, (4) Pestens Röst, (5) Dödshymne, (6) Stillhetens Leven.

²⁸¹ The children's book in question is: Hauger, Torill Thorstad. *Det kom et skip til Björgvin i 1349*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1980. The author, who died in 2014, was a well-known children's writer in Norway who has written several books and received accolades for excellence.

²⁸² Rees 2003, 399. The films in question are *Trollsyn* (1994) and *Kristin Lavransdatter* (1995). See: *Trollsyn*. Screenplay by Anja Breien. Directors: Ola Solum and Anja Breien. Norsk Film AS, 1994; *Kristin Lavransdatter*. Directed and written by Liv Ullmann and Sigrid Undset. Norsk Film AS, 1995.

²⁸³ Rees 2003, 401.

narrative along with the repetition of this narrative in other mediums of remembrance.

Both 1349 and Gjenferdsel demonstrate how Norwegian black metal represents the Black Death in distinctly Norwegian terms. Regardless of the contentions surrounding the year of the disease's appearance in Norway and the commonalities of the Black Death's arrival by a ship with similar legends in northern Europe, it is nonetheless apparent that the year 1349 and the story of a lone ship coming to Bergen have a significant place in Norwegian cultural memory. However, they are not the only bands to have been influenced by Kittelsen's *Svartedauen* illustrations. Often times, this influence is made evident through a direct use of the images as cover art. It is not uncommon to see the illustrations used elsewhere on a release or printed on merchandise. There are also a number of bands who reflect an influence from the series by utilizing a similar visual aesthetic and representation style that is found throughout *Svartedauen* and Kittelsen's other darker works. This is not just limited to using an illustration style that closely resembles Kittelsen's technique, but is also evident through photographs employing a similar style and tone that are used for cover art.

4.2.6 Reusing and Negotiating Kittelsen

The use of *Svartedauen* as Norwegian black metal cover art starts with some of the scene's most recognized and influential bands. Here again Burzum's use of *Svartedauen* is important in setting the visual aesthetic frame of Norwegian black metal, as the band was one of the first to incorporate the series into its material. Before *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* was used for the cover art of *Filosofem*, Burzum's preceding album *Hvis lyset tar oss* featured *Fattigmannen* (1894-95) on its cover.²⁸⁴ As on *Filosofem*, Kittelsen's original work is unaltered save the band name in the upper left corner and the album's title in the lower right corner. None of the album's songs refer to the image nor do they allude to any of Kittelsen's class critiques. Instead, the four tracks suggest only a sense of loss and emptiness that are abstract and detached and relate more to the fact that the record was intended to induce a trance before ultimately drifting to sleep.²⁸⁵ In some sense, Vikernes's approach to the album suits the use of *Fattigmannen* for the record's cover. The achromatic image of a deceased old man whose remains have been withered by time resting in a semi-reclined position on the side of an overgrown forest path perpetuates a sense of timelessness. Most of the skin and soft tissue seems to be absent, suggesting that the

²⁸⁴ Burzum. *Hvis lyset tar oss*. Back on Black BOBV016LP, 2008, 33 1/3 rpm.

²⁸⁵ Vikernes shares his perspective about Burzum's material before his incarceration in an interview with *Guitar World* magazine in the April 2010 issue. Though the issue is out of print and sold out, the article by Brad Angle is available at guitarworld.com/burzum-heart-darkness and from Burzum's official site.

figure has been in the forest for prolonged time. Moreover, the fact the body remains unburied, derives either from the remoteness of the location or the apathy of any who have passed, thus representing a physical and spiritual distance from humanity.

Given the work's title and the isolation of the deceased man, Kittelsen's message is clear. The old man represents the poor and the others of Norway's underclass who have been forgotten and cast aside by the bourgeoisie. Moreover, it is possible to see the setting in which the dead man lies as a reminder of Norway's rural roots. Yet, given the concept behind the creation of *Hvis lyset tar oss*, one that revolves around stages of sleep, Kittelsen's perspective is likely lost. Instead, *Fattigmannen* is distanced from its original meanings and another, more mystical interpretation is made possible through the way the image is combined with the concept of the record. In this way, the appropriation of *Fattigmannen* makes it more identifiable as a work associated with Norwegian black metal than it is with Kittelsen himself. An indication of this can be seen through the cover art of a number of Norwegian black metal releases that have been released since *Hvis lyset tar oss* in 1994.²⁸⁶

Another example of this is Fordervet's on 2005 demo *Av alle tapte tanker* which employs a visual motif that closely matches Kittelsen's approach on *Fattigmannen*.²⁸⁷ Fordervet was a short-lived band from Trondheim which released a total of two demos.²⁸⁸ Each demo was limited to a small number of copies thus making both the band and the releases quite obscure. However, obscurity is not necessarily a problem in black metal. It is not uncommon for limited releases to generate high demand among fans. As such, even the most limited of releases are still able to hold significance in the genre. With this in mind, the cover art for *Av alle tapte tanker* has a visual aesthetic that is similar to Burzum's *Hvis lyset tar oss*. The cover art is not a reuse of Kittelsen's *Fattigmannen*, but a black and white photograph that shares many similarities. The likeness is particularly visible in how the darkness is balanced in conjunction with the light that penetrates the gloom of the forest and the angle from which the viewing perspective is shown. The social critique that permeates through *Fattigmannen* is lacking. Instead, isolation and solitude are the primary elements that can be read in the image, thus reflecting Burzum's use of *Fattigmannen*. These differences indicate that there has been a negotiation of how *Svartedauen* is understood. Kittelsen, with his firm class critique, created these images to convey a sense of imagined sameness with the viewer. Whether rich or poor, the disease affected everyone, making the Black Death an episode

²⁸⁶ See the following releases as examples: Souls Domain. *Travel to the Underdark*, 1994, cassette. Nordavind. *Bekning*, 2009, compact disc.

²⁸⁷ Fordervet, *Av alle tapte tanker*, Black Blood Records, 2005, cassette.

²⁸⁸ This is according to *Encyclopaedia Metallum*. However, only the *Av alle tapte tanker* release details can reliably be confirmed.

of Norwegian history that all Norwegians had in common. In this way, Kittelsen's contribution to the collective remembrance of the Black Death can be seen to reflect his own concerns about his contemporary time. Yet, neither Burzum nor Fordervet make any reference to Kittelsen's social critique and instead emphasize the dark, macabre atmosphere.

Burzum was not alone among Norwegian black metal bands in the early 1990s to use Kittelsen's works in their visual content. The Kovenant are another band that has used Kittelsen's *Svartedauen*. This is demonstrated on their first demo from 1994 called *From the Storm of Shadows*.²⁸⁹ The cover art features what seems to be a photocopy of *Pesta i trappen* framed to fit the measurement constraints of a folded cassette insert. This demo was independently released by the band and the image is of poor quality. Yet, it remains clear that the cropped image is taken directly from *Pesta i trappen*. In the years following *From the Storm of Shadows*, The Kovenant would change their name to Covenant and in 1998 became the first Norwegian black metal band to win a *Spellemannpris* for the album *Nexus Polaris*. However, the band is not typically regarded as an integral part of Norwegian black metal. The reasoning behind this most likely stems from the band's embrace of a symphonic-centric sound and a visual aesthetic that black metal purists would likely reject. This included not just the inclusion of a synthesizer that sits high in the recording mix, but also the liberal application of operatic female vocals. In addition, the band pursued a visual appearance that took on a cybergoth aesthetic. Despite these significant shifts, Covenant's use of Kittelsen on *From the Storm of Shadows* shows the influence of his works in the visual imagining of Norwegian black metal and his importance in providing an aesthetic tone.

Along with Burzum's and Covenant's use of images from *Svartedauen*, Satyricon also uses the piece *Pesta Kommer* from the series on their debut full-length record *Dark Medieval Times*.²⁹⁰ However, unlike the other instances of this series in Norwegian black metal, Satyricon does not use *Pesta Kommer* as cover art. Instead, the image is prominently displayed on the record's liner notes and accompanied by the text "Pesten 1349" below the image. Though Satyricon places the image on the liner insert, *Pesta Kommer* still significantly contributes to the overall visual aesthetic of the record as it matches the achromatic drawing used on the cover art. A similar process is apparent on Satyricon's following full-length record *The Shadowthrone*. As found on *Dark Medieval Times*, Satyricon uses Kittelsen's *Husmand* (1913) on the liner insert of the record. Again, *Husmand* with its dark tones and deep shades of blue and red match the visual theme present on the cover art. Though *Husmand* is not a part of *Svartedauen*, the same

²⁸⁹ Covenant. *From the Storm of Shadows*. Self-released, 1994, cassette.

²⁹⁰ Satyricon. *Dark Medieval Times*. Moonfog Productions FOG001, 1994, compact disc.

dark and brooding atmosphere is present. Satyricon's appreciation for this side of Kittelsen's work is noted on the back of the cover of the record stating "Takk til Th. Kittelsen for din mørke kunst."²⁹¹

Kittelsen's other darker works also appear in Norwegian black metal. Two releases exemplify this through the use of the same illustration. The work in question is *Til den grønne ridder* which comes from a set of illustrations that accompanied a version of Asbjørnsen and Moe's *Samlede Eventyr* from 1871. Unlike Kittelsen's other illustrations for the series, this image is achromatic, heavy in tone, and carries with it many of the 'dark' qualities that featured later in the *Svartedauen* series. The two releases that use *Til den grønne ridder* were both released in 1995 and each use it as cover art. These releases, *Through Chasm, Caves and Titan Woods* by Carpathian Forest and *Fjelltronen* by Wongraven, each use the illustration in the same way with only minor variations.²⁹² The biggest difference is color. On *Through Chasm, Caves and Titan Woods* the band name and EP title are in vibrant fuchsia while the band name and album title are black on *Fjelltronen*. Though the releases are quite different from one another musically and the presence of color on *Through Chasm, Caves and Titan Woods* defies the achromatic aesthetic of black metal, both Carpathian Forest and Wongraven are using the illustration's heavy, dark tone to provide the visual frame for their music. The same can also be said for Draugsang's 2005 three-track EP *Seil på skyggans hav*.²⁹³ As with *Through Chasm, Caves and Titan Woods* and *Fjelltronen* the illustration found on the cover art is not taken from *Svartedauen* but still contains a dark, foreboding atmosphere. The work in question is titled *Draugen* (1895) and depicts a wraith with its arms aloft aboard a weather-beaten sailing ship cast about in a stormy sea. As with *Til den grønne ridder* and the illustrations of *Svartedanden*, *Draugen* has a heavy, achromatic coloring that amplifies the haunting appearance of the folkloric creature after which the illustration is named. Again, the use of *Draugen* highlights the dark and macabre side of Kittelsen's work, an aspect that complements many of the stereotypical fascinations, aesthetic, and preoccupations of black metal.

²⁹¹ Satyricon. *The Shadowthrone*. Moonfog Productions FOG003, 1994, compact disc. The translates as "Thanks to Theodor Kittelsen for your dark art."

²⁹² Carpathian Forest. *Through Chasm, Caves and Titan Woods*. Avantgarde Music, AV011, compact disc; Wongraven. *Fjelltronen*. Moonfog Productions Fog 006, compact disc.

²⁹³ Draugsang. *Seil på skyggans hav*. Northern Silence Productions NSP 002, 2005, compact disc.

4.3 Summary

As can be seen, folk narratives have been influential for several Norwegian black metal bands. Whether the influence comes from folk tales concerning folkloric creatures such as *nøkken*, *buldra*, and *trolls*, legends associated with thwarting invading armies, or stories connected to the death and despair caused by the Black Death, there is no doubting the impression folk narratives have had on these bands. Due to the way these folk narratives were positioned in the creation of a unique and independent Norwegian culture, a direct link between the bands and this romantic notion of Norway can be established. On its own, this aspect is elucidatory of how the 'Norwegian' in Norwegian black metal is more than just a signifier of place. Yet, more can be said of Norwegian black metal's use of folk narratives and their connection to cultural memory. The use of folk narratives reveals how Norwegian black metal expresses egalitarian individualism and the tensions present in the notion *likehet* by using a thematic medium that was vital to the construction of an imagined Norwegian nation. Just as Asbjørnsen and Moe wanted to bring readers out of the comforts of their bourgeois homes in the mid-nineteenth century to experience authentic Norwegian culture, the bands using folk narratives are communicating to their listeners that what they are experiencing is an authentic Norwegian phenomenon. In doing so, these bands further the imagined sentiments binding together Norwegian national identity and reinforce the cultural boundaries that *likehet*.

This aspect is clear when considering the social overtones Kittelsen's *Svartedauden*. It is probable that Burzum and the other bands using illustrations from the series did not intend to spread Kittelsen's social critique. Yet, in using these images some semblance of Kittelsen's original intent remains, especially if the viewer has foreknowledge of the images. However, when the illustrations are used a process of negotiation is evident. While Kittelsen's social critique might well be absent, the fact that these illustrations are dark and melancholic pair well with the preexisting aesthetics of black metal. These illustrations were brought into the visual aesthetics of the music and, thus, demonstrate Norwegian black metal's repurposing of these illustrations. At the same time, it is difficult to disaggregate the fact that these illustrations are Norwegian and depict the Norwegian experience of the Black Death. As such, even though the specific class critique might be missing when these works are used in Norwegian black metal, they still communicate the Norwegian trauma that has persisted in cultural memory. The same can be said of the other bands using the theme of the Black Death. Whether it is 1349's straightforward reference to the year the disease arrived, the mythologized way it arrived, or the use of illustrations from *Svartedauden*, the content originates from

Norway and is specifically Norwegian insofar as it is framed within commemorative practices that have been maintained over time.

A similar process is at work when considering the Pillar-Guri legend, Kittelsen's *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur*, and Burzum's use of the painting for the cover of *Filosofem*. Not only is this again representative of Kittelsen's influence, it further establishes that this influence was not solely confined to the illustrations from *Svartedanden* or his other dark, brooding works. In addition, it stresses the significance Kittelsen has in the visual aesthetics of Norwegian black metal, but, at the same time, highlights the folk narratives that his work depicts and the degree to which these narratives have a place in cultural memory. This is particularly evident in the case of Pillar-Guri and the Battle of Kringen. As shown, the battle has been heralded as a moment exemplifying the will for independence and lengths to which Norwegians would resist foreigners. These notions had relevance during the process of independence from Sweden throughout the nineteenth century until 1905 and then again during the Second World War under German occupation. While Burzum's use of *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* is likely tied to Vikernes's personal politics and antipathy towards foreigners, it is apparent that he did not have to look far for thematic material that would suit his needs. Of course, Kittelsen himself did not hold the same political sympathies as Vikernes does now, yet it remains a salient point that a discourse of resistance and violent opposition to foreigners exists in Norwegian cultural memory and is readily accessible for those who want to use it.

As this chapter suggests, a significant emphasis is given in Norwegian black metal to establishing clear lines between those who are Norwegian and those who are not. This furthers the construction of an imagined and unified collective that has clearly defined lines. Though evident in the Pillar-Guri legend, the folk narratives collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe do not explicitly make such claims. Yet, as they are encountered at an early age and pass from generation to generation through their codification in institutionalized forms of commemoration, they become the banal reminders of an imagined authentic and primordial Norwegian culture and identity. From this, they help enable the boundaries that demarcate Norwegian culture and identity. Likewise, the folk narratives and imagery associated with the Black Death function in a similar manner as they are framed within the Norwegian experience. *Svartedauen* is such an example as there is an express attempt to portray an event that affected all Norwegians regardless of social status. Thus, it stresses *likhet* based on a shared history and a negotiated construction of history that ignores temporal limitation. Though Norwegian black metal bands reflect this aspect of cultural memory in their own way, an 'imagined community' is reaffirmed. Being Norwegian is central to this imagining and is therefore a quintessential aspect of what makes those bands 'Norwegian.' The folk

narratives of the Black Death operate in a similar manner to those collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe and the Pillar-Guri legend in that they too emphasize a shared and imagined past that is expressly Norwegian. When these folk narratives, including the characters and creatures found in them, are used in Norwegian black metal as thematic content the same process occurs. True, the bands using these themes negotiate them to fit their own needs, but this is still done through the frame of Norwegian cultural memory and ultimately defines the bands as authentically Norwegian.

Vikings and Norse Mythology

Few stereotypes about Norwegian history spark the imagination like the Vikings and their religious practices. In recent years, both Vikings and Norse mythology have risen in popular culture status due to television shows like *Vikings* and films featuring the *Marvel Comics* character Thor.²⁹⁴ These characterizations of the past, plus the rise of heritage tourism, have done much to encourage viewers to seek out other sources that have similar thematic content.²⁹⁵ This is one route by which many people might encounter extreme metal music. The theme has proven so popular among fans and musicians alike that an entire subgenre called ‘Viking metal’ has been created. True to its name, bands playing Viking metal focus almost solely on Viking-related themes and Norse mythology. Though this subgenre lacks a distinctive or consistent musical style, it still illustrates the extent to which Vikings and Norse mythology have persisted in the various forms of metal music. For Norwegian black metal, themes involving the Viking period and Norse mythology have been present since the initial phase of the genre and have persisted ever since.

Though not the first to use the themes in metal-related music, Norwegian black metal enjoys an implicit claim to authenticity given the degree to which Vikings and Norse mythology are associated with Norway. Much of this ‘authenticity’ is driven by stereotypes that have been externally attributed to Norway and its history, yet there is a strong impulse to celebrate Vikings and Norse mythology that was integrated into cultural memory started during the national romantic period which has persisted to the present. As with the collection of folk narratives, Vikings and Norse mythology were instrumental in creating an idea of a Norway with its own unique and independent past. From the 1840s to the end of the nineteenth century, Vikings and Norse mythology constituted a

²⁹⁴ In addition, the Netflix series *The Last Kingdom*, the films *Valhalla* and *Northmen: A Viking Saga*, and the highly acclaimed game *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* are but a handful of examples in a recent spate of movies, series, and games that have extensively integrated Vikings and Norse mythology into their contents.

²⁹⁵ Halewood and Hannam 2001, 566-567.

common theme and a prolific motif in the cultural landscape of Norway. In addition, between the 1920s and the 1930s these themes influenced to a wave of nationalist composers who reached prominence before World War II. As with folk narratives, the subsequent shift from the overt nationalism of the 1920 to a more subdued expression of national feeling after World War II meant that the themes of Vikings and Norse mythology became more understated in public discourse. After some decades these themes, as with those connected to peasants, gradually became a thematic base used in popular culture. With the onset of Norwegian black metal in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Vikings and Norse mythology came to occupy an important conceptual space for some of the bands wanting to distance themselves from Satanism. To explore how Vikings and Norse mythology have been used and expressed by Norwegian black metal, it is important not just to see how some bands have done this but also to understand how these themes have been expressed at other points in Norwegian history and how these expressions connect to Norwegian cultural memory. While these uses of history are varied, they can still be understood as parts of a long-standing commemorative foundation that has shaped and continues to shape notions of the past and practices of remembrance to this day.

5.1 The Medieval Kingdom of Norway in National Romanticism

In framing the use and expression of Vikings and Norse mythology, it is again imperative to turn to the fateful year 1814 as a point of rupture in Norwegian history. With their political autonomy secured at Eidsvoll with the May 17th Constitution, there came a need not just to find an authentic Norwegian cultural identity but to locate parts of the past that could legitimize the idea of an independent Norway. While nominally joined in a personal union with the Swedish crown according to the Act of Union in 1815, Norway was essentially an independent entity, at least in terms of domestic politics, thanks to the terms of the union established by the Convention of Moss and the subsequent constitution of November 4th.²⁹⁶ In the brief period between the end of their union with Denmark and the start of their union with Sweden, the *embetstand* and others involved in the creation of Norway's constitution took it upon themselves to move for an independent Norway. In doing so, the crown prince to the throne in Copenhagen, Christian Frederick, was appointed as regent after pledging

²⁹⁶ Barton 2006, 222.

his loyalty to an independent Norway.²⁹⁷ Despite efforts to maintain its independence, Norway was eventually forced into a union with Sweden and it would not be until 1905 that Norway became fully independent.

Yet, the years between 1814 and 1905 witnessed an increasing amount of cultural production that sought to establish an identity that was independent and unique from both Denmark and Sweden. As seen with the promotion of peasant culture and folk narratives, these efforts were multifaceted and effective in creating a notion of Norwegian identity built around supposedly authentic expressions of culture and history. Along with these notions of Norwegian identity came a mounting interest in the medieval Kingdom of Norway and its formation as a means to demonstrate a tradition of independence and self-determination. State formation holds a place of special importance in Norwegian historiography. The reasons for this stem from the fact that Norway has only been 'completely independent' for limited times during its history.²⁹⁸ Only the kingdom that existed before 1319 and the modern state after 1905 can be said to be truly independent in the sense that there were no unions or power sharing with their Scandinavian neighbors.²⁹⁹ For this reason, it is perhaps unsurprising that the medieval Kingdom of Norway became a touchstone of inspiration and a means of authenticating the idea of an independent Norway during the nineteenth century.³⁰⁰

5.1.1 Reimagining the Sagas in Nineteenth-Century Historiography

The inspiration for histories of the medieval kingdom of Norway came from the sagas and semi-fictional legends written by the late medieval Icelandic author Snorre Sturlasson. The historical validity of Sturlasson's material has been debated for centuries. Yet, from the various sagas, a picture of an independent and influential Norwegian kingdom was constructed. Though not limited in its content, a significant focus was put on the stories and legends dealing with Norwegian kings called *Heimskringla*. True, the *Heimskringla* is not exclusively devoted to Norwegian kings, as the saga begins with tales of the semi-legendary

²⁹⁷ Danielsen et al. 1995, 210. Included in the terms of the union was a strict separation of powers between the king, representing the executive powers, and the *Storting*, who was responsible for laws and taxation. See also: H. Arnold Barton, "Finland and Norway, 1808-1917: A comparative perspective," 221.

²⁹⁸ Bagge 2010, 11.

²⁹⁹ While the long-standing union with Denmark until 1814 and subsequent union with Sweden after are better known, the Norwegian crown had at other points been unified with those of their immediate neighbors on more or less equal terms for various periods of time as well.

³⁰⁰ Berge 2009, 40.

Swedish Yngling dynasty. Yet, the *Heimskringla* covers a period from the ninth to the twelfth century and is heavily centered on the deeds and actions of Norwegian rulers. While numerous kings are included in the *Heimskringla*, special emphasis was placed on Harald Hårfagre and the unification of Norway after the late-ninth century Battle of Hafrsfjord near present-day Stavanger. To be sure, the geographic boundaries that demarcate modern Norway were not yet established at this time, yet Harald Hårfagre and his victory at Hafrsfjord were and have remained the key starting point from which the narrative of independent Norway begins.³⁰¹ Thus, modern modes of remembrance of Norwegian unification began in the nineteenth century with the publication and translations of the *Eddas*.

Influential Norwegian historians throughout the latter half of the 1800s, including Peter Andreas Munch and Rudolf Keyser, encouraged this interest in *Heimskringla*, other medieval source material, and the people and events detailed in them.³⁰² Inextricably bound to this interest was the idea that the Old Norse medieval texts, or *norron* literature, such as those produced by Sturlasson, were exclusively tied to the histories of Norway and Iceland.³⁰³ As well as perceiving the Vikings and the medieval kingdom of Norway as belonging to the country's heroic period, Munch and Keyser were drawing on a theory that had been postulated in the eighteenth century by Gerhard Schønning.³⁰⁴ This concept revolved around the idea that Norwegians came to Scandinavia under different circumstances and had other origins than either the Swedes or the Danes.³⁰⁵ Within this differentiation from their neighbors was the idea that Norwegians were the oldest and, therefore, the 'purest' of all the Scandinavians.³⁰⁶ The implications of such claims were explicitly linked to the idea of a free and independent Norway and were legitimated by the idea that Norwegians, as the oldest Scandinavians with the longest and richest history, had a right to self-rule and independence.

Contemporary Danish and Swedish historians understandably opposed this notion of Norwegian exceptionalism as they too saw these texts as fundamental to their own national histories. In fact, many of the Old Norse texts, especially the *Ynglinga saga*, were deeply intertwined with the

³⁰¹ A monument to this battle and the unification of Norway called *Sverd i fjell* was built in 1983 on the shores of Hafrsfjord.

³⁰² Barton 2006, 226.

³⁰³ Falnes 1933, 135. Barton 2003, 94. Barton 2006, 226.

³⁰⁴ Barton 2006, 226.

³⁰⁵ Barton 2003, 94.

³⁰⁶ Barton 2003, 94.

imagining of a Scandinavian history in general.³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, *norron* literature came to form an important part of how Norway's medieval past was conceived and remembered. *Norron* literature, including Sturlasson's texts, were translated to make them more accessible to the Norwegian public at large. In doing so, these texts went from academic obscurity into the larger public sphere and, thus, spread from a closed off institutional form of remembrance to a broader sense of collective imagining. Along with *Heimskringla*, it was not uncommon for these texts to be published in volumes that included artistic renditions of some of the stories found within them. Just as with the collected volumes of folk narratives and their accompanying illustrations, the stories, when paired with visual images, enabled a process of imagining the past that would have been impossible through text alone. This gave the artists who contributed to the translated publications of *norron* literature an important part to play in visualizing history and communicating these visualizations to a mesmerized readership.

5.1.2 Civilized Democratic Christian Kings

Along with other artists, Erik Werenskiöld and Gerhard Munthe contributed visual accompaniments to the *norron* works and supplied several iconic images. Yet, in contrast to folk narratives, these images have not informed Norwegian black metal's aesthetic sensibilities to any significant degree. Rather, it has been the Eddas and the sagas themselves that have had a greater impact. This includes not just the stories, but also the explicit sense of Norwegian exceptionalism that was attached to them by P.A. Munch, Keyser, and other Norwegian historians with similar perspectives. Such an attitude, along with its dissemination to the public at large, is well demonstrated in Munch's multi-volume work *Det norske Folks Historie* originally published between 1852 to 1863.³⁰⁸ Totalling over seven thousand pages, these tomes were condensed and simplified for broader consumption and featured pictorial accompaniment in a single book called *Billeder af Norges Historie* with images supplied by the painter Peter Nicolai Arbo and text written by Munch. The images and the texts

³⁰⁷ Barton 2003, 95. One need only look to the attempts to legitimate a Pan-Scandinavian movement that sought to conjoin the crowns of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway under a single state.

³⁰⁸ *Det Norske Folks Historie* includes the following books: P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. B.1.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1852; P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. B.2.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1853; P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. D.2.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1855; P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. D.3.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1857; P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. B.1.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1858; P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. B.2.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1859; P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. D.1.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1862; P.A. Munch. *Det norske Folks Historie. D.2.* Christiania: Tønsbergs Forl., 1863.

of this much-abbreviated version are almost entirely concerned with Olaf Tryggvason and his impact on Norway. Olaf Tryggvason's persona and deeds attain near legendary status in this book. The story of his ascent to the Norwegian throne emphasizes not just the re-establishment of Harald Hårfagre's line but also his piety as Norway's first Christian king.³⁰⁹ Munch minimizes his time as a Viking raider as well as his foreign land holdings, merely referring to them as a reflection of his wealth and leadership. In some respects, the book assumes foreknowledge on the part of the reader and a tacit approval of the explicitly Christian partiality that Munch weaves into the narrative. Over the course of the brief text, which also happens to appear in three languages, the reader is reminded that Olaf Tryggvason's ascent to the throne was achieved by defeating his 'Heathen' rivals and elected position of king.³¹⁰

The final third of *Billeder af Norges Historie* is devoted to Olaf II Haraldsson who is perhaps better-known outside of Norway as St. Olaf. As with Olaf Tryggvason, Munch details the events surrounding the king's eventual martyrdom at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030.³¹¹ Over the course of this description, Munch describes at great length the manner in which Olaf Haraldsson died, including the three wounds that led to his ultimate demise. Along with the sequence of his death, a great deal of attention is afforded to Olaf Haraldsson's piety and unwillingness to accept the unbaptized into his army. As a consequence, the king's army was decidedly outnumbered and defeated in due course by a 'rebel' army loyal to the king of England and Denmark, Cnut Sweynsson, better known as Cnut the Great. Neither the detail that the rebels were loyal to Cnut nor the fact that Cnut himself was also of the Christian faith is mentioned by Munch. Instead, Munch contends that though dying and losing the battle, Olaf Tryggvason was ultimately victorious by ensuring that Christianity endured in Norway.³¹²

The sort of praise given to the two kings in *Billeder af Norges Historie* is not equally applied to all of the medieval kings of Norway. While the others are recognized, their importance is minimized compared to that of Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf II Haraldsson. The reason for this derives from the fact that these two kings were the ones largely responsible for the arrival and spread of Christianity in Norway. Munch and Arbo were ardent Christians and there is little doubting the influence their beliefs had in the way these two kings were depicted. This is not to suggest that *Billeder af Norges Historie* should be understood as the exclusive source for these kings

³⁰⁹ Arbo and Munch 1860, 1.

³¹⁰ The three languages include Norwegian, German, and English.

³¹¹ The traditional date is held to have been August 31, 1030. Of note is that Olaf Haraldsson's saga in the *Heimskringla* mentions the occurrence of an eclipse during the battle.

³¹² Arbo and Munch 1860, 5.

being remembered in this way. Rather, the book serves as a barometer of how Munch, Keyser, and other like-minded theologians and historians of their generation sought to construct an idea of a medieval Norwegian kingdom that was civilized. Of course, the specific type of Christianity practiced by the two kings was ignored by these Protestant academics in favor of a more generalized Christian consensus. More attention was given to their efforts at conversions and the importance of establishing Christianity in Norway. As such, the fact that medieval Norway was Catholic was downplayed in their accounts. Moreover, these academics promoted the idea that Norway was less subservient to papal authority than other kingdoms of the period.³¹³ This was not just due to Norway's distance and peripheral geographic position in Europe but also attributed to the independent spirit of the people and their kings. However, Olaf Trygvason and Olaf II Haraldsson were not the only Norwegian kings to encourage the spread of Christianity in Norway. The sagas, as well as surviving stone crosses dating from the period, indicate that Sverre Sigurdsson, who reigned in the late twelfth century also undertook a great effort to convert the populace and enforce a Christian hierocratic agenda.³¹⁴ Yet, it was the two Olafs who received attention in *Billeder af Norges Historie* and were lifted up as the great, civilized Christian kings of Medieval Norway.

Christianity was not the only aspect that was deemed to demonstrate the civility of medieval Norway. Tied to this notion was the belief that this time was also in some way democratic. This idea was partially derived from the sagas stating that some kings, such as Olaf Trygvason, were given the right to rule through an election among elders and noblemen. Such a notion is, of course, fallacious if one considers the circumstance and connection to power that the kings had before their acquisition of the throne. Both men were able to ally themselves with powerful nobles who provided support in their efforts for the crown. Moreover, the support both kings received calls into question the exaggerated personal deeds and qualities that have been attributed to them in their respective sagas. Foremost among their ascribed attributes is the righteous, steadfast adherence to their faith. What is neglected, however, is that both kings were for the most part self-made men who profited greatly as leaders of Viking mercenaries during their time in England. They came to Norway to exploit advantageous political situations with the aid of powerful allies, both in Norway and abroad, and as established, wealthy, and powerful men. True, both men were Christians, but Munch makes no mention of the repression faced by followers of the old pagan religion. While Olaf Trygvason's Saga in *Heimskringla* does indeed make mention of his

³¹³ Bagge 2005, 108.

³¹⁴ Bagge 2005, 108.

conflicts with pagans, particularly those in the Trøndelag region, the fact that it is omitted by Munch suggests that the historian is attempting to present a picture of the kingdom that was unified and unbroken since the time of Harald Hårfagre. This is, of course, a spurious notion. It is highly unlikely that Olaf Tryggvason had any relation to Harald Hårfagre and the idea that Norway had existed as a single polity to this point ignores the significant influence of the earls, the shifting of alliances that saw various warlords claim to rule, the delicate balance of power with regional neighbors, and the fractured state of religious belief.

Likewise, Olaf Haraldsson's arrival and conquest of Norway is never mentioned in *Billeder af Norges Historie*. Only the king's martyrdom, the manner of his mortal wounds, and the implied treachery of the pagan 'rebels' is given space in the text. There is no mention that Olaf Haraldsson had successfully invaded and seized Norway from Cnut the Great nor is there any indication that the 'rebels' were, in fact, fighting to restore Norway under the rule of Cnut. Indeed, what is not mentioned at all is that Olaf Haraldsson was himself a former ally of Cnut who broken with him to seize a portion of power for himself. Yet, for all details omitted and the obvious prejudices of *Billeder af Norges Historie*, this does not negate the lasting perception of the contents of this book, and others like it, have had in shaping the perception of what medieval Norway was like. Of course, Munch's concept of medieval Norway was not ubiquitous during the nineteenth century. Other historians, those with decidedly less Protestant conviction, tended to celebrate Norway's Viking age. These proponents, such as Ernst Sars and Edvard Bull, tended to portray the Viking as an independent, proud individual who boasted a high degree of self-confidence, and resisted the degradation of Catholicism and priestly celibacy.³¹⁵

5.1.3 Spreading the Gospel of the Sagas

This notion of the Medieval kingdom of Norway as unique and independent was also given institutional authority through the translation and publication of the Poetic Edda, also known as the *Elder Edda*. As with *Heimskringla*, the *Elder Edda* were also originally recorded by Sturlasson in the twelfth century. Included in it are a number of verses that outline some of the tenets of Old Norse pagan mythology and its associated cosmology. Of the numerous verses found in the Poetic Edda, those belonging to Codex Regius are the ones associated with the original manuscript. These include the well-known first two poems *Völuspá* and *Hávamál*. There are also other poems that belong to the Poetic Edda that date from a later period and are not connected to Codex Regius. Despite

³¹⁵ Bagge 2005, 108.

this, these are still regarded as Eddic poetry and pertain to a similar subject matter.³¹⁶ Primary among these additional verses is *Baldur's draumar* that is directly connected to the *Gylfaginning* section of the *Völuspá* and illustrates how close the non-Codex Regius verses are to those of the Codex Regius.³¹⁷ The verses found in all parts of the Poetic Edda proved to be very influential to national romantic literature and artwork. In Norway, the Eddic poems were inspirational to a variety of writers and artists including the staunchly religious Arbo, whose *Asgårdsreien* (1872) and *Valkyrie* (1864 and 1869) depicted some of the fantastically imaginative imagery these texts inspired.

Of course, the Poetic Edda, and indeed all the Old Norse texts, also had an impact in other parts of Scandinavia. Danish and Swedish artists, such as Lorenz Frølich and John Bauer, were also inspired by the verses of the Poetic Edda. Beyond Scandinavia, the Poetic Edda was also highly influential. Given that the Norse pantheon and their associated mythology are the same in all but name to those in the Germanic traditions, the Eddas served as an important source of inspiration for English and German Romantics as well. In fact, interest in this subject matter occurred in these latter regions earlier than it did in Scandinavia. The English writers Thomas Gray and William Blake both incorporated the myths of the Eddic poems and the semi-historical deeds of the prose into their work. Gray's most well-known works dealing with the Old Norse texts are *The Fatal Sisters* (1768), taken from *Njáls saga*, and *The Descent of Odin* (1768), which derived from *Baldur's draumar*.³¹⁸ Blake, whose work often bordered on the strange and eccentric, provided ten illustrations each for *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*.³¹⁹ In these images, Blake managed to capture the essence of the original sagas while at the same time conveying a sense of the sublime and Romantic nostalgia. Likewise, German Romantics were as, if not more, enraptured with the Old Norse texts as their English counterparts. However, it would not be until Romanticism was paired with the sentiments of German nationalism in the late nineteenth century that these themes were given a definitive significance. The timing of German romantic nationalism is, of course, related to parts of the legitimating processes undertaken during the German unification.

No single individual is more identifiable with the cultural side of this process than Richard Wagner, one of the most popular composers in

³¹⁶ Quinn 1990, 106.

³¹⁷ Quinn 1990, 99.

³¹⁸ O'Donoghue 2007, 112, 115. *Njáls saga* tells the story of an Icelandic family whose feud eventually boils over to violence when Njáll and his family are burnt alive in their home. Njáll's killers are eventually forced to leave Iceland. The saga is deemed to demonstrate the long-lasting and destructive blood feuds that had the potential upset the social order of society-at-large in Iceland during the time of Christian conversion.

³¹⁹ O'Donoghue 2007, 119.

Europe during the late nineteenth century. Following the revolutions of 1848, the tone of nationalism in Europe began to darken and shift away from democratic liberalism.³²⁰ Nowhere was this more prevalent than in the German states leading up to the unification in 1871. Through his blending of politics and music, Wagner helped turned cultural romanticism into a political performance with nationalist overtones.³²¹ Wagner produced several musical works including the opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, largely inspired by Germanic and Norse mythology. The Poetic Edda and the Völsunga saga are important elements throughout the four operas. Indeed, these elements were so influential that Wagner integrated almost every aspect of Norse mythology into *Der Ring des Nibelungen* including dwarves, Valkyries, and legendary heroic characters.³²² Wagner's fortunes during his own lifetime were mixed and his legacy remains tainted by his ardent anti-Semitism and the appropriation of his works by the Nazis. Yet, his work stands as a testament to the influence that Old Norse literature had at the height of national romanticism in Europe and the impact it had on the collective imagining of this historical period.

5.1.4 Reimagining the Viking

Of course, the legends and myths of Old Norse literature are near impossible to imagine without the omnipresent figure of the Viking. The stereotypical image of the horned helmed and bearded Viking was born from the imaginations of nineteenth-century romantics. Though this clichéd construction has been largely discredited by archaeological finds, it is an image that has nonetheless proven powerful and difficult to erase due to its persistence in popular culture. Yet, this is not the only way Vikings have been imagined. In Norway, a different conceptualization of Vikings was promoted to meet the social, political, and cultural needs of Norway around the turn of the nineteenth century. Rather than the barbarous, marauding pagans who attacked Christians and terrorized a sizeable portion of European coastline, scholars and the intellectual elite of Norway promoted a gentler side of the Vikings. As such, parallels were drawn between contemporary emigration and the life of scientist and explorer Fridtjof Nansen. In both cases, exploration was a key component in how they were connected to Vikings. Yet, differences exist in how they were conceived which has had a lasting impact in how Vikings have been remembered in Norway in general and, more specifically, in how they are represented in Norwegian black metal.

³²⁰ Grimley 2006, 17.

³²¹ Grimley 2006, 17.

³²² O'Donoghue 2007, 133.

With high levels of emigration in the nineteenth century, there was an attempt to legitimize the number of people leaving Norway by equating them with the Vikings who had established themselves throughout the Northern Atlantic. In leaving, the emigrants were deemed to be spreading the greatness of Norwegian culture—a venture not unlike that of their Viking forefathers. This idea was neatly summarized at a pavilion called “Det utflyttede Norge” in 1914 that was connected to the events celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of the Norwegian constitution.³²³ The pavilion was filled with exhibitions that included images of departing migrants paired with paintings of sailing Viking ships. Different sections of the exhibit showed a selection of the various places Norwegians had relocated positioned next to items relevant to those regions. Explicit in the different exhibitions was a sense that these outward-bound migrants were as brave and adventurous as the Vikings before them. Moreover, it was assumed that those leaving Norway to settle elsewhere created a sort of cultural ‘empire’ that took Norwegian culture and values to new places.³²⁴

It was also implied that those Norwegians who had left would maintain contact with Norway and function as some sort of perpetual ambassadors, an idea that also likened them to the Vikings who travelled back to Norway and maintained a connection with their homelands. Some emigrants did correspond with relatives and sent money back to Norway.³²⁵ Yet, net emigration prior to 1915 suggests that an estimate of 155,000 migrants returned between 1891 and 1940.³²⁶ When compared to the 780,000 who left between 1865 and 1930, it is evident that many of those who left did not return.³²⁷ Also, they were going to destinations that were already established and functioning states, such as the United States and Canada. As such, those Norwegians who stayed would have been more inclined to assimilate than those living in Viking enclaves. Nonetheless, this perspective was a recurring motif throughout the earlier twentieth century. Moreover, equating Vikings with emigrants was promoted by groups like *Nordmann-Forbundet*. This institution was formed in 1907 by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson with the express purpose of promoting Norway throughout the world. As such, the endorsement is illustrative of the institutional support given to the idea of the ‘perpetual ambassador.’ The idea that emigrant Norwegians would serve as ambassadors was specious for other reasons as it parallels a more peaceful conceptualization of

³²³ Nielssen 2014, 180.

³²⁴ Nielssen 2014, 187.

³²⁵ Lovoll 1999, 16-18. Semmingsen and Haugen 1980, 164.

³²⁶ Bævre, Riis, and Thonstad 2001, 474-475. Before 1915 return migration was not recorded by Norwegian authorities.

³²⁷ Bævre, Riis, and Thonstad 2001, 474. Emigration from Norway was tracked by Norwegian authorities beginning in 1836. Detailed data was collected starting in 1869.

Vikings. Even in their various conflicts and clashes with other cultures, Vikings were still seen as bearers of Norwegian culture that influenced the cultures they contacted.³²⁸

Yet, the parallel between emigrants and Vikings is also tacitly connected to an idealized form of masculinity. Along with the other common tropes of nationalism promoted by “Det utflyttede Norge,” a decidedly masculine discourse was woven into the frame of how the modern day ‘Vikings’ were compared with their ancient counterparts. Traits such as strength, toughness, and bravery were employed to convey the qualities needed to bare the difficulties of long-distance travel and exploration. These attributes, however, were not solely reserved for comparing emigrants with Vikings. Such masculine qualities were also ascribed to Fridtjof Nansen. Though Nansen was a respected academic and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, he embodied the ideal of *friluftsliv*. In its modern meaning, *friluftsliv* is a term associated with outdoor activities, such as foraging, hiking, and cross-country skiing, and is connected to an ethos that places an emphasis on the environment and ‘green’ lifestyles.³²⁹ *Friluftsliv* is not solely a Norwegian phenomenon as the term also exists in Swedish and carries roughly the same meaning in its present form. Yet, the term’s origin lies in Norway and is directly connected to Nansen as he used it to title a collection of hunting narratives in 1916.³³⁰ As such, he was the first to use the term and, while not explicitly defining its meaning, Nansen was clear that *friluftsliv* was as much about masculine ideals as it was about immersing oneself with nature. Nansen was not one to simply talk about the need to experience nature, but personally immerse himself in it. Nansen is arguably most famous for his expedition seeking to find a direct route across the Arctic. Though wrought with problems and failure in its original ambition, the expedition was nonetheless fruitful as it provided important oceanographic research. Beyond the academic scope of the expedition, it cemented Nansen’s fame and legacy as the ideal of masculine perseverance in nature. For the acclaim he received for exploring the Arctic and embodying the masculine ideal Nansen was deemed a Viking in modern form. Along with Nansen’s physical attributes, his willingness to brave the elements and face the unknown fit the mold of the exploring Viking. As such, it is possible to see how the notion of the non-violent, intrepid Viking carrying the spirit of freedom and independence through exploration persisted in Norwegian cultural memory through the early twentieth century with the idealization of Nansen.

³²⁸ Nielssen 2014, 187.

³²⁹ Gurholt 2008, 55.

³³⁰ Gurholt 2008, 58.

5.1.5 The Nationalist Music Movement

In the decades prior to the outbreak of World War II, the move toward nationally inspired music had reached a highpoint. While folk influences had persisted in Norwegian music since Grieg, there were several reasons for nationalism to peak at this time. The first is that the two leading composers, Alf Hurum and Arvid Kleven, who were unassociated with nationalism, ceased to be present in Norwegian musical life. Hurum moved from Norway in 1924, ultimately ending up in Hawaii, and Kleven, who had a prolific but short career, died in 1929.³³¹ Second, the nine-hundredth anniversary of St. Olav in 1930, the patron saint and prominent figure in the Christianization of Norway, had stirred up a significant interest in all things Norwegian.³³² Lastly, primitivism, in the vein of Béla Bartók and Igor Stravinsky's early works, was used to defend nationalist music through its connection to folk traditions, thereby blunting the critique aimed at nationalist sentiment at the time.³³³ These three aspects combined created the right conditions for nationalist music to flourish and it would not be until the outbreak of World War II and the occupation of Norway that the popularity of overtly nationalist music diminished.

While there were many composers who became caught up in the wave of nationalist fervor, key figures exemplify the scope and breadth of the movement. One such figure was Eivind Groven, a folk music expert who served as an NRK consultant from 1932 until 1946. Perhaps his biggest contribution to folk-influenced music was his ability to reconcile the differences in folk music's traditional time signatures and work the Hardanger fiddle into his compositions, most notably in "Margit Hjukse."³³⁴ Other key contributors to the development of nationalist music were Sparre Olsen and Klaus Egge. Both composers did much to move beyond the Grieg tradition that had long dominated the integration of folk music in classically oriented compositions. For all their success in incorporating folk traditions, Groven, Olsen, and Egge were moderate in their nationalist expressions. However, the same cannot be said for either Geirr Tveitt or David Monrad Johansen as the two composers were heavily involved in the rise of the nationalist music movement in Norway. Aside from his ballet "Baldurs draumar," based on the Eddic poem of the same name, Tveitt is also known for constructing a compositional theory in which modal scales were given Old Norse names.³³⁵ For his achievements, he was given an annual salary by the Norwegian government in 1941. This was later revoked following the end of World

³³¹ Grinde 1981, 10.

³³² Grinde 1981, 10.

³³³ Grinde 1981, 10.

³³⁴ Grinde 1981, 39.

³³⁵ Samson 2006, 63.

War II as a result of Tveitt's sympathies for National Socialism and his support for the German occupation government serving as head of the Nazi selected *Kulturting* (Cultural Council).³³⁶

Like Tveitt, Johansen was directly involved with the *Nasjonal Samling*. Between 1943 and 1945, he served on the *Kulturting*, an act that would cost his reputation following liberation. However, before the war and his involvement with the Quisling government, Johansen was arguably the foremost figure in the nationalist music movement in Norway. In 1924, Johansen delivered a series of lectures on Norwegian national music which were later published as articles in *Aftenposten*, for whom he wrote as a music critic.³³⁷ In the lecture Johansen asserted that,

the slogan 'Art is international' has been repeated so many times that it has become tedious. Yes, of course art is international insofar as good art can be adopted to and comprehend any place where there is culture. But it is a far cry from this to deny that art is peculiar to the locality from which it originates and that it takes its form, color and character to a large extent from its surroundings. Art is determined by its environment to such a great extent precisely because it is the most sensitive expression of national character.³³⁸

Included within this call for the expression of a 'national character' was the desire for national renewal. This meant a return to the self-sufficiency of peasants and regaining the toughness of Vikings.³³⁹ The demand for national renewal also called for the removal of foreign influences, particularly communist ones, in an attempt to resurrect the ancient, more authentic spirit of Norway.³⁴⁰ Johansen's beliefs, combined with a well-received repertoire of compositions based on folk ballads and being awarded an annual income, had cemented him as the leader of Norway's nationalist music movement by 1925.

There was some resistance to the nationalist music movement during this period. One source of criticism came from the composer Pauline Hall. As a composer strongly influenced by French impressionism and as a music critic, Hall was able to pick out some of the hypocrisy from the nationalist music movement in Norway. Writing in 1930, Hall "criticized what she regarded as an over-facile view of the relation between nationalism and folk music."³⁴¹ Hall also questioned the authenticity of the romantic sentiment attributed to the nationalist musical ideals claiming

³³⁶ Samson 2006, 63.

³³⁷ Grinde 1981, 14. Samson 1981, 61.

³³⁸ Johansen as quoted in Grinde 1981, 14-15.

³³⁹ Samson 2006, 62.

³⁴⁰ Samson 2006, 62.

³⁴¹ Samson 2006, 63.

that they “were ‘as much French as Norwegian.’”³⁴² Despite criticism of this type, the nationalist music movement remained influential and was quite hostile toward styles perceived to be non-Norwegian. It would not be until after the end of World War II that the nationalist music movement would fall out of favor, a factor due more to the movement’s political affiliations rather than its thematic influences. What this shows then is that fundamental characteristics of the music and its influences were not seen as the problem. It was only the political sympathies of Johansen and others like him that were perceived as problematic. The themes and inspiration, while toned down following the War, remained unequivocally Norwegian and thus reflected their ubiquity in the negotiation of cultural memory.

5.2 Vikings and Norse Mythology in Norwegian Black Metal

Norwegian black metal was not the first to introduce Vikings and Norse mythology in metal-related music styles. As with Tolkien-related themes, these subjects were used by some of heavy metal’s very first bands. Arguably the most notable among them was Led Zeppelin, who after visiting Iceland on tour, became enamored of Vikings and Norse mythology. This interest is demonstrated on at least two tracks over the course of their catalog, namely “Immigrant Song” from *Led Zeppelin III* in 1970 and “No Quarter” from *Houses of the Holy* in 1973.³⁴³ Led Zeppelin’s use of these themes is indicative of how they were used in rock and metal-related styles until the late-1980s when Bathory shifted their thematic emphasis on *Blood Fire Death*. The impact *Blood Fire Death*, and the subsequently themed albums *Hammerheart* from 1990 and *Twilight of the Gods* from 1991 had on the thematic possibilities of metal-related music was significant for Norwegian black metal. Several bands belonging to the initial thrust of Norwegian black metal, including Enslaved and Hades, integrated Vikings and Norse Mythology into their thematic concept and thus cemented its place in Norwegian black metal.³⁴⁴ Over the course of Norwegian black metal’s existence, these themes have been used in several ways. Often this corresponds to how Vikings and Norse mythology are represented in negotiations of Norwegian cultural memory. Yet differences are also apparent and indicate that the use of themes pertaining

³⁴² Hall as quoted in Samson 2006, 63.

³⁴³ Led Zeppelin. *Led Zeppelin III*. Atlantic SD 7201, 1970, 33⅓ rpm; Led Zeppelin. *Houses of the Holy*. Atlantic SD 7255, 1973, 33⅓ rpm.

³⁴⁴ Hades has since changed names to Hade Almighty in 1998. Along with Vikernes, founding member Jørn Inge Tunsberg was convicted for the arson of Åsane church in 1992 and served two years in prison.

to Vikings and Norse mythology have been negotiated through the individual interpretations of the bands themselves. Thus, it is evident that both collective and individual forms of remembrance have influenced the way these themes have been presented in the scene.

5.2.1 Norwegian Exceptionalism and the Medieval Kingdom

In keeping with the approach of Munch and Keyser, several Norwegian black metal bands echo a sense of Norwegian exceptionalism in the use of *norron* literature and the application of the word ‘Norse.’ For example, the term ‘Norse’ appears in song and release titles from Ildjarn-Nidhogg and Kampfar. For the latter, the *Norse* EP from 1998 proves to be one of the few times this sort of sentiment is openly expressed in the band’s catalog. As well as being the EP’s title, the first track is also called ‘Norse.’³⁴⁵ The lyrics of this song express a sincere pride in being Norse and the direct connection the band feels with their ancestors despite the significant temporal distance that separates them. The song would again appear on the band’s second full-length record *Fra underverdenen* from 1999.³⁴⁶ Though this version of ‘Norse’ is slightly different from the EP version, the lyrics remain unchanged. In the case of Ildjarn-Nidhogg, their EP *Norse* from 1994 makes use of the term only as a release title with no other overt references made.³⁴⁷ Yet, a similar perspective to that of Kampfar can be gleaned through the band’s distinct pagan overtones. Ildjarn-Nidhogg’s thematic content reflects its component parts—Ildjarn and Nidhogg. Both members were active in Norwegian black metal’s early days. While Nidhogg was primarily involved with smaller projects, Ildjarn forged a connection with Emperor and had several solo releases that were renowned for their primitive, lo-fi production aesthetic. In their solo works, both Ildjarn and Nidhogg utilize a ‘Norse’ theme that is predicated on an implicit referencing of an untamed and, thus, independent and unadulterated place that is Norway.³⁴⁸ The artists bring a conceptual aesthetic to their joint effort that is analogous to their individual work on *Norse*. Hence, it is possible to argue for a similar strand of Norwegian exceptionalism through the rest of Ildjarn and Nidhogg’s collaborative efforts.

³⁴⁵ Kampfar. *Norse*. Hammerheart Records, HHR 027, 1998, compact disc.

³⁴⁶ Kampfar. *Fra underverdenen*. Hammerheart Records, HHR 034, 1999, compact disc.

³⁴⁷ Ildjarn-Nidhogg. *Norse*. Nocturnal Art Production ECLIPSE 002, 1994, 45 rpm.

³⁴⁸ For other releases using an abstract ‘Norse’ theme see the following: Bark. *A Funeral for Knowledge*. Self-released, 2003; Demonaz. *March of the Norse*. Nuclear Blast NB 2434-0 / 27361 24340, 2011, compact disc; Svartpest. *Ved den drabelige inngang til Helvete*. Baphomet Records BAPH 115, 2003, compact disc.

This more abstract notion of ‘Norse’ propagated by Ildjarn-Nidhogg and Kampfkar contrasts with more explicit references to *norron* literature and the medieval kingdom of Norway found in other Norwegian black metal. One such way bands did this was through direct use of Eddic poetry as lyrics. Examples include the full-length albums *Wolf-Father* from 2010 by Nidingr, *Umskiptar* from 2012 by Burzum, and *Red for Fire: An Icelandic Odyssey Part 1* from 2005 and *Black for Death: An Icelandic Odyssey Part 2* from 2006 by Solefald. In each case, the lyrics were drawn directly from, or were heavily influenced by, Eddic poetry, including both Codex Regius and non-Codex Regius verses. However, each band utilizes the verses in different ways. For Nidingr, all the lyrics of *Wolf-Father* are taken from a 1936 English translation of the Poetic Edda by American author and journalist Henry Adams Bellows.³⁴⁹ In some ways, the use of an English translation of Eddic poetry stands out as strange and begs the question why a Norwegian band would use an English translation when numerous Norwegian versions exist. Yet, at the same time, it is understandable given the prevalence of English in metal music styles in general. Indeed, English is common in Norwegian black metal and it is therefore not completely out of place that Nidingr uses Bellows’s translation. At the same time, the fact that English is used does not negate Nidingr’s expression of Norwegian cultural memory. Rather, because Nidingr is a Norwegian band, they can express the idea of a Norwegian exceptionalism through the use of *norron* literature, even though not using one of the two official forms of Norwegian.

Standing as a contrast to Nidingr’s use of an English translation of Eddic poetry is Burzum’s *Umskiptar*. As the third of a trio of black metal releases following Vikernes’s release from incarceration, *Umskiptar* reflects Burzum’s preoccupation with Northern European mythology. Vikernes demonstrates that his knowledge of mythology goes beyond a mere interest and indeed that he could be regarded as an amateur scholar on the topic. All of the lyrics of the eleven-track record are verses directly taken from the *Völuspá* and are delivered through a variety of vocal mediums in their original Old Norse.³⁵⁰ In utilizing segments of the *Völuspá* for lyrics, Burzum establishes a clear link between the ‘Norse’ of the ancient past and the present. Though the exclusive use of Eddic poetry is notable, it is the fact the lyrics are in their original Old Norse that cements the connection with the past and the present. Coupled with using Old Norse is the usage of modern Icelandic in lyrics, song titles, and release titles. As the closest modern language to Old Norse, several bands have also made use of Icelandic as it allows them practical access to a language descended

³⁴⁹ As printed in the liner notes of: Nidingr. *Wolf-Father*. Jester Records TRICK 045, 2010, compact disc.

³⁵⁰ Burzum. *Umskiptar*. Byelobog Productions BYE010DBK, 2012, compact disc.

from the inhabitants of ancient Norway. This sentiment is neatly summarized by Grutle Kjellson of Enslaved who claims the band “used to sing in Icelandic because of that language’s similarity with Old Norse.”³⁵¹ By using Old Norse and Icelandic for their lyrics, a facet that is always paired with other forms of history use, there is an aspiration to authentically actualize history—a history that was co-opted during the nineteenth century to position Norway as exceptional compared to their neighbors and claim Iceland’s past as their own.³⁵²

The lyrical content and use of Old Norse are not the only ways Old Norse literature is used on *Umskiptar*. As with earlier Burzum releases, *Umskiptar* features the work of a renowned Norwegian national romantic artist as its cover art. Previously Burzum made use of several of Kittelsen’s works, but *Umskiptar* instead uses Arbo’s *Nótt* (1887). The motif of *Nótt* is not altogether dissimilar from Arbo’s *Valkyrie* in that a female rider is depicted atop a horse in stride. However, this is where the similarities between Arbo’s two paintings end. Rather than riding into battle in the light of day as in *Valkyrie*, *Nótt* rather fittingly is a darker image showing the eponymous rider dashing across an evening sky with a tranquil child grasping her waist. The painting shares a striking similarity with that of the Christian motif of the Virgin Mary and Jesus as an infant. As with the figures in *Nótt*, the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus are typically depicted with expressions of complete serenity and placid ease. Though, at the same time, using a well-known motif as a template could give the viewer a sense of recognition of a subject that might otherwise be regarded as exotic or mysterious. Whatever Arbo’s intentions might have been with *Nótt*, Burzum’s use of the image is almost certainly exclusively bound to *Nótt* and her place in the verses of the *Völuspá*, thus connecting it directly to the lyrics of *Umskiptar*. As such, Burzum’s use of the *Völuspá* as lyrics, delivering the vocals in Old Norse, and the utilization of Arbo’s *Nótt* as cover art fit within a frame of cultural memory that was established in the nineteenth century and serve as an example of how such uses of history can be integrated into a given release.

In contrast to Nidingr’s *Wolf-Father* and Burzum’s *Umskiptar*, the full-length records *Red for Fire: An Icelandic Odyssey Part 1* and *Black for Death: An Icelandic Odyssey Part 2* by Solefald demonstrate another way in which Old Norse literature and Norwegian exceptionalism has been integrated in Norwegian black metal. As their titles suggest, these two records are

³⁵¹ Sannah 2007.

³⁵² See the following examples of how Old Norse and Icelandic have been used in Norwegian black metal: Enslaved. *Hordanes Land*. Candlelight Records CANDLE001LP, 1993, 33⅓ rpm; Enslaved. *Vikingligg Veldi*. Deathlike Silence Productions ANTI MOSH 008, 1994, compact disc; Helheim. *Heiðindómr ok mótgangr*. Dark Essence Records KAR062, 2011, compact disc; Wardruna. *Rúnaljód - gap var Ginnunga*. Indie Recordings INDIE24CD, 2009, compact disc; God Seed. *I Begin*. Indie Recordings 13014-2, 2012, compact disc.

conceptually linked, each forming half of a story that spans the length of the two releases. Rather than directly using a particular verse or saga for their concept, Solefald endeavored to create their own saga based on a desire to present a narrative that paid homage to their ‘ancestors.’³⁵³ In addition, these albums along with the full-length record *Norron livskunst* from 2010, form a sort of trilogy that explores Solefald’s interest in wanting to “know their own history.”³⁵⁴ The history in question, of course, is Norwegian and not Icelandic despite their titles. What this reveals then is the assumption that Icelandic and Norwegian history are one and the same. Such a notion is entirely consistent with the attitudes expressed by Norwegian historians in the nineteenth century and reveals a desire to give Norway a ‘golden’ past that is as distant as it is legendary and heroic. Connecting to an abstract concept of ‘Norse’, using Eddic verses as titles and lyrics, using artwork from the National romantic era, and having lyrics in Old Norse and Icelandic demonstrates various ways bands reproduce an idea of historical exceptionalism. While this sort of historical exceptionalism formed an important part of Norwegian historiography in the nineteenth century, it was merely one of the ways used to legitimize the idea of an independent and unique Norway.

5.2.2 Battles in the North

The Medieval Kingdom of Norway is also a theme that has been used by several bands over the course of the scene’s existence. Though perhaps not as prevalent as the ambiguous uses of ‘Norse’ and Eddic poetry, the fact that a historiographic notion of the Medieval Kingdom of Norway is used at all in Norwegian black metal indicates the strength this notion has in commemorative practices whether they be at the individual or collective level of cultural memory. Referencing notable battles from this time is one of the ways bands have utilized this aspect of Norwegian cultural memory. Sturmgeist is one such band. The battle in question is the Battle of Hafrsfjord and it is alluded to on the fourth track “Army of Odin (Hafrsfjord)” from the 2005 full-length record *Meister Mephisto*.³⁵⁵ As the solo project of Cornelius Jakhelln, whose main band is Solefald, it is not entirely surprising to find history being used in this way. Though Sturmgeist is a different musical project than Solefald, it is clear that Jakhelln’s interest in Norwegian history spans both bands. “Army of Odin (Hafrsfjord)” stands out on *Meister Mephisto* as the only track that deals with Norwegian history among a number of other songs using Johan Wolfgang von Goethe’s poetry for lyrics. Moreover, “Army of Odin

³⁵³ Woods 2015.

³⁵⁴ Woods 2015.

³⁵⁵ Sturmgeist. *Meister Mephisto*. Season of Mist SOM094, 2005, compact disc.

(Hafrsfjord)” is notable for its blending of English and Norwegian lyrics on a record that has four tracks in German with the remainder of the songs sung in English or Norwegian alone. Nevertheless, this track stands out from the others not just on the record in terms of language, but also in the perspective taken on the Battle of Hafrsfjord.

Rather than referencing Harald Hårfagre’s success as the first to unify Norway under a single ruler, Sturmgeist instead praises the king’s pagan army and the strength they derived from being an army of Odin. There is little doubt that Sturmgeist is celebrating their pagan ancestors and the victory won that day, yet at the same time there is a sense of loss. This sentiment is illustrated in the following lines:

Watch out for the Northern Light
We’ll rise again to show you we’re right
The past is present history is ours
No one shall strip us of Odin’s powers
Governed by slaves for a thousand years
They killed what was ours and will by their fears
Pagan stealth lives on in the warriors’ blood
Odin shall forever be our god.³⁵⁶

This notion of loss seems strange when considering the song is dedicated to the event associated with the founding of a cohesive Christian Norwegian kingdom. However, as the sampled lyrics suggest, Sturmgeist laments a history of ‘slave’ rule. Though not explicitly named in the lyrics, the so-called slaves who ruled for a thousand years is a clear reference to Norway’s conversion to Christianity. The sentiment expressed by Stormgeist in these lines is not an isolated one in Norwegian black metal. The idea that Norway is truly pagan in its ‘blood’ and that Christianity is foreign is a theme expressed by several bands. It is also an idea that is propagated in certain neo-pagan circles, particularly those affiliated with hate groups.³⁵⁷ This is not to suggest that Sturmgeist or Jakhelln are directly associated with such groups, as many bands claim to be non-political and maintain no overt political affiliations. Yet, these lyrics when taken together with Jakhelln’s own statements in an interview with Pete Woods from *Ave Noctum*, reveals that the claim to be non-political is often a poorly concealed effort to avoid answering difficult questions regarding potentially damning content.³⁵⁸ Regardless of the justifications for the use of this type of discourse and symbolism, it remains difficult to disassociate this strand of anti-Christian rhetoric from the implicit ethnic boundaries it puts on the meaning of Norway.

³⁵⁶ ““Army of Odin,” (Hafrsfjord),” Sturmgeist. *Meister Mephisto*. Season of Mist SOM094, 2005, compact disc.

³⁵⁷ Gardell 2003, 165. von Schnurbein 2016, 129.

³⁵⁸ Woods 2015.

Windir is another band that has referenced a battle from this period. Releasing their final full-length record in 2003, Windir is noted for extensively using the history from their home region of Sogn og Fjordane. The driving force behind Windir's history use was vocalist, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist Terje Bakken, known by the stage name Valfar.³⁵⁹ Over the course of Windir's four full-length records, the band explores several topics relating to events and legends emanating from Sogn og Fjordane. In addition, Windir's regional concept is demonstrated by the use of the local dialect Sognemål for the lyrics on a number of tracks.³⁶⁰ While this regional history use occurred throughout the band's discography, they are particularly evident on the 2001 record *1184*.³⁶¹ The title of the record is a direct reference to the Battle of Fimreite that occurred in 1184 in the middle of a period of internal conflict and power struggles in Norway between 1130 and 1240.³⁶² Windir's reference to this battle comes in two ways, both through the title of the release and also on the tracks '1184' and 'Heidra'.³⁶³ The battle, which took place in the waters of Sogndalsfjorden, was a pivotal moment in this period of Norwegian history and saw the Birkebeiner forces, led by the pretender Sverre Sigurdsson, defeat the Norwegian king Magnus Erlingsson.³⁶⁴ Following the battle, Sverre Sigurdsson became king of Norway and reigned until 1202. Sverre Sigurdsson proved a strong, capable leader who held power despite conflicts with those loyal to Magnus Erlingsson's faction as well as the Baglers, an assemblage largely comprised of aristocrats, merchants, and the clergy. Despite opposition during his rule and the fractured state of Norway following his death, Sverre Sigurdsson has lived on as an important figure in the history of Medieval Norway.

Windir's referencing of the battle demonstrates not just their personal interest in local history but how local history has influenced the band's conception of this nationally historic event. Jarle 'Hváll' Kvåle, former

³⁵⁹ Though other members have remained musically active and formed other black metal band, Windir ended following Bakken's death in 2004 after dying in a snowstorm from hypothermia.

³⁶⁰ In addition to Songemål, Windir makes frequent use of English lyrics as well.

³⁶¹ Windir. *1184*. Head Not Found HNF 051, 2001, compact disc.

³⁶² Bagge 2010, 40. The conflicts that defined this period were largely the result of the customs of traditional succession that divided land between all male heirs, including those illegitimately born. Though not a unique practice in Europe at this time, it was nonetheless a source of contestation that continued some decades after Law of Succession of 1163/64.

³⁶³ Claassen 2000.

³⁶⁴ The Birkebeiner were a peasant faction whose name, 'Birch Legs', was meant as an insult because they were so poor, they could only afford birch bark shoes. However, their fame was cemented during this period for the heroic journey of two men who skied from Lillehammer to Østerdalen and then on to Trondheim carrying the two-year old future king Haakon IV Haakonsson to safety from rival factions in 1206. The Birkebeiner name is now used for cross-country skiing events held in the United States and Canada as well as a trek that follows the traditional path the Birkebeiner took across Norway.

bassist of Windir, discusses this subject in an interview from the time of *1184*'s release. When asked about the meaning of the album's title and its relation to Norwegian history, Kvåle mentions that though *1184* is not a conventional concept album, local medieval history—specifically the Battle of Fimreite—influenced the themes of the record. Furthermore, Windir's reference to the Battle of Fimreite and Sturmgeist's positioning of the Battle of Hafrsfjord indicate a degree of individual negotiation within the larger framework of representations of this period.

5.2.3 Exploration and Violent Vikings

Beyond using history in a way that connects to nineteenth-century historiography, Norwegian black metal bands link to cultural memory by referencing Vikings in two specific ways. These include the use of Vikings, and their related imagery, as adventurous explorers exporting Norwegian culture to the rest of the world, and the portrayal of Vikings through violence and as the masculine ideal. There are several Norwegian black metal bands that directly reproduce how Vikings were imagined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, even when Vikings are used and portrayed along these lines there is still a degree of negotiation involved in how they are represented. These negotiations prove a useful starting place when dealing with Vikings and how they are portrayed in Norwegian black metal.

Given the high degree of visibility of Vikings and their related themes in popular culture over the last decade and their historical association with Scandinavia in general, bands using these themes are afforded a certain degree of commercial attention and are often perceived as 'authentically' Norwegian. Yet, attention and authenticity are also possible because bands like Enslaved or Helheim use these themes in ways that appeal to a larger framework of cultural memory. One of the ways this is conveyed is through the idea that Vikings were explorers, taking Norwegians to far away lands. This is most commonly done by the visual representation of the Viking long ship on the cover art of a given release. Three bands and their releases, including *Helgards Fall* by Arvinger, Framferd's album *Landgang*, and Voluspaa's releases *Ása* and *Av sin Klokenskap*, demonstrate this through their visual imagery.³⁶⁵ In each of these cases Viking ships are portrayed in similar ways. The cover art of every release features the unmistakable visage of a Viking long ship. While the covers of *Helgards Fall* and *Landgang* show the ships sailing over rough seas, the others show the ships on calmer waters. Regardless of the state of the water they are

³⁶⁵ Arvinger. *Helgards Fall*, Self-released AB 01, 2003, compact disc; Framferd. *Landgang*. Black Lotus Productions, 2009, compact disc; Voluspaa. *Ása*. Aurora Australis Records AAR 001, 2010, compact disc; Voluspaa. *Av sin klokenskap*. Aurora Australis Records AAR 003, 2010, mp3 audio.

sailing on, each image implies movement and with it a sense of exploration. In this way, these covers implicitly connect to the romanticized idea of Vikings as explorers who took Norwegian culture to distant lands. This recalls the sentiments expressed in the “Det utflyttede Norge” exhibit. Thus, the use of Viking ships on the cover art of these various releases show that there is a possible connection with an imagining of Vikings that is less associated with violence and shows a continuity with previous imaginings of the Viking era from the early twentieth century.

At the same time, it is difficult to disassociate Vikings from their overt connections to violence and the way they embody a masculinist ideal that glorifies violence and strength over weakness. Though this aspect of Vikings is not one typically found in national romantic historiography of the nineteenth century, violence and masculinity have been conspicuously integrated into their imagining in popular culture and especially into the entertainment industry of the twentieth century.³⁶⁶ Norwegian black metal bands have used these themes since the early days of the scene and have typically employed them through textual and visual representations of fighting. In some cases, violence is implied through weapons, as done by Windir on the full-length releases *Sóknardalr* from 1997 and *Arntor* from 1999.³⁶⁷ In these instances, the letter ‘I’ in Windir is switched with swords, whose points are down and rounded pommels facing up, allowing the weapons to have the semiotic quality of the letters they are replacing. Added to this is that the sword type is consistent with those associated with the Vikings, thus lending a veneer of authenticity to their use in this context.

The inclusion of these swords, and indeed the sword propped against the door on the cover of *Arntor*, add to the overall Viking theme of the records. This aspect is amplified further when taking into consideration some of the song titles from the two records. The track “Sognariket sine krigarar” from *Sóknardalr* and the songs “Arntor, ein windir” and “Kampen” directly reference warriors or fighting in their titles.³⁶⁸ Taken together, the swords and references to fighting and warriors all add to the imaging of Vikings as wielders of violence. At the same time, there is an implicit masculine ideal reinforced through the glorification of combat as a means to defend one’s land against interlopers. This is evidenced on almost nearly every track of the two records and is also an ongoing theme throughout the rest of the band’s catalogue. Windir presents Vikings as the protectors of the homeland against outsiders and not as the pillagers

³⁶⁶ Cederlund 2011, 6.

³⁶⁷ Windir. *Sóknardalr*. Head Not Found HNF 037, 1997, compact disc; Windir. *Arntor*. Head Not Found HNF 048, 1999, compact disc.

³⁶⁸ “Sognariket,” Windir. *Sóknardalr*. Head Not Found HNF 037, 1997, compact disc; “Arntor, ein windir,” Windir. *Arntor*. Head Not Found HNF 048, 1999, compact disc; “Kampen” Windir. *Arntor*. Head Not Found HNF 048, 1999, compact disc.

of foreign lands. This notion stands in contrast to the raiding and seizing of foreign territory often associated with Viking imagery.

Of course, other bands present the violent side of Vikings as well. Further examples of this theme are presented on the releases *Klampklar* by Graabein, *Tordenkrieg* by Frostmoon, *Forthcoming Storm* by Svartahrid, *For Blood, Honour, and Soil* by Twin Obscenity, and *The Underground Resistance* by Darkthrone.³⁶⁹ In each case Vikings are visually depicted on the cover art as armed, armored, and displaying their masculinity through fighting or heroic poses. In addition to these visual displays, all four of these releases have song titles that directly reference either battle or fighting. The references to battle found on both *Kampklar* and *For Blood, Honour, and Soil* are not as explicit as they are on the others. The cover art of both releases shows Viking warriors posing and triumphant, but not actively engaged in combat. Despite this, the men in the images look ready for battle. In the case of *Kampklar*, a single helmeted Viking warrior is standing with his back to the viewer and holding his sword aloft at an angle in a form of salute. As for *For Blood, Honour, and Soil*, there are a number of warriors present of which four are clearly shown. While one is shown with a shield and spear in the background standing in front of a mass of similarly outfitted men, two others are on horseback bearing swords while the fourth kneels with an axe in hand in the foreground seemingly giving thanks to the heavens. Though no violence is actively portrayed in either image, the warrior on *Kampklar* is dressed and prepared to fight while those shown on the cover of *For Blood, Honour, and Soil* seem gathered in the aftermath of a battle. In either case, their masculinity becomes idealized from their appearance as warriors brandishing weapons and the violence that these weapons suggest.

Though violence is only implied in the case of *Kampklar* and *For Blood, Honour, and Soil*, it is clearly evident on the covers of *Forthcoming Storm*, *The Underground Resistance*, and *Tordenkrieg*. However, there are differences in the way violence and idealized masculinity is portrayed. In the case of Svartahrid's *Forthcoming Storm*, the cover art is a direct reuse of Arbo's painting from 1870 portraying a pivotal moment in the Battle of Stamford Bridge. The painting shows the moment when the Norwegian king Harald Hardråde is struck in the throat by an arrow.³⁷⁰ Around him the battle is swirling with men in intense poses, some lying dead on the ground and

³⁶⁹ Graabein. *Kampklar*. Nordlig Frost, 2003; Frostmoon. *Tordenkrieg*. Oskorei Records OP003, 1998, 33⅓ rpm; Svartahrid. *Forthcoming Storm*. Napalm Records NPR 071, 1999, compact disc; Twin Obscenity. *For Blood, Honour, and Soil*. Century Media Records 7929-2, 1998, compact disc; Darkthrone. *The Underground Resistance*. Peaceville Records CDVILEF425, 2013, compact disc.

³⁷⁰ The Battle of Stamford Bridge was fought only less than a month before the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Though the English threw back the Norwegians at Stamford Bridge, the invading Normans led by William of Normandy at Hastings were ultimately victorious and thus significantly altered the course of England and the British Isles.

others locked in combat with their adversaries. The painting itself is neo-classical and, while it shows a pivotal moment, the battle is presented in a romantic way. Added to this presentation of battle, is the implied sense of masculine heroism. The men of both sides are remarkably unsoiled, bearing no sign of dirt or gore despite the battle raging around them. Dying in battle, at least according to this image, is clean, glorious, and free of the indignities of dying. Outside of the band name and logo in the upper left corner, the rest of the image is unaltered beyond the scaling of image to fit the constraints of the format. As such, it allows the cover art to be fully focused on Arbo's painting and its neo-classical representation of violence and heroic masculinity.

In contrast to *Forthcoming Storm*, the artwork of *The Underground Resistance* and *Tordenkrig* represent violence and masculinity through active combat.³⁷¹ The cover art on both releases center on an armed and armored male figure. In the case of *Tordenkrig*, the male figure is standing in the mid-ground of the image gazing into the sky with a hammer held high. The figure is muscular and clad in a chainmail hauberk, leather bracers and leggings, a thick fur cloak, and a winged helm. With this figure's well-developed build, hammer, and winged helmet there is considerable reason to assume that it is a representation of Thor as it matches many of the romantic stereotypical representations of the Norse god. Along with this depiction of Thor, there are several other figures shown on the cover art. Almost all of these figures are clad as Viking warriors and are performing various actions that are consistent with the violence often associated with Vikings. Though violent acts are not shown, they are heavily implied via brandished weapons and a pile of bodies resting at the feet of the Norse god. As for *The Underground Resistance*, the central figure bears no resemblance to Thor or any other Norse god. However, the muscle-bound Viking looks just as imposing and powerful as Thor does on the cover of *Tordenkrig*. Standing tall above his enemies, the central figure on *The Underground Resistance* appears ready to strike the enemies before him. His arm is locked, muscles are flexed, and long hair thrashes under a horned helm as he readies to deliver a sweeping blow with his sword to the man before him. Behind his immediate opponent, a line of other warriors await their turn to take on the large, muscle-bound Viking. While difficult to determine the exact size of the Viking warrior in question, the sword he is holding looks remarkably small in his hands, making him look even more hulking in comparison to his enemies.

In neither case is it clear from the image of where the scene is set. Yet, on *Tordenkrig* some travel is implied with the presence of the long-boat

³⁷¹ Frostmoon uses the same cover art again on a compilation of the same name a year later. Aside from the track listing being different, the biggest difference is that while the EP version is achromatic, the compilation cover art is in color.

behind the triumphant visage of Thor, suggesting that these Vikings have arrived by sea. The presence of the ship connects with the notion of Vikings as explorers taking their culture to distant lands. As such, it also recalls the notion of Viking as expressed in “Det utflyttede Norge” exhibition. However, the potential links with these more pacified notions of Vikings on *Tordenkrig* is broken by the overt display of masculine power and violence. While the Vikings on the cover of *Tordenkrig* may have travelled to a distant land by sea, their intent is not to trade, explore, and spread their culture but rather to kill and loot. In representing Vikings this way, it actively breaks with the conception of the non-violent Viking in favor of the explicitly violent, male pagan warrior. In addition, the type of masculinity portrayed on the cover art of these records are demonstrated through overt muscular strength and an aptitude for fighting. However, there is a distinct absence of sexual violence when Vikings are described or depicted by these bands. Whether it is done to whitewash this aspect of Viking history or reflects ignorance of the degree to which sexual violence occurred, it is nonetheless a telling silence.³⁷² Overall, Norwegian black metal’s notion of Vikings contrasts sharply with the early romantic masculine ideal embodied by Nansen who fulfilled this role by testing himself against nature and exploring remote parts of the world. While these ideals were ascribed to Vikings and Nansen at the time, these notions of masculinity have been supplanted by ones more associated with violence and, thus, indicating a negotiation of Vikings in Norwegian black metal’s expression of cultural memory.

5.2.4 Anti-Christianity and Asatrú

For all the ways that battle and fighting are depicted and described by the bands using Vikings and Norse mythology in their thematic material, it is worth questioning *who* the violence is directed towards. For Twin Obscenity, the reference to battle and violence is made in relation to Vikings and their presence in the British Isles between the eighth and eleventh centuries.³⁷³ Likewise, the cover art of *Forthcoming Storm*, and its use of Arbo’s painting of the Battle of Stamford Bridge of 1066, indicates a particular point of known opposition that is based on a historical event. The same can be said of *1184* and certain tracks from *Arntor*. Windir is

³⁷² Sigurdson 2014, 253. Indeed, the fear of rape is described in the surviving texts from the period from nuns who are said to have gone to great lengths to disfigure themselves as a means of discouraging any potential Viking rapists. When rape is not explicitly acknowledged in the sources, it is typically a result of those writers describing Viking attacks in generalized terms.

³⁷³ This period also witnessed a time when Vikings held significant portions of the British Isles. Along with seating a king on the throne of East Anglia, most of nowadays Northern England that was ruled and governed by Vikings from Denmark as well as Norway.

clearly showing an imagined opposition to Sverre Sigurdsson, as it was he who was deemed to have destroyed Songedal's regional independence in order to create a greater Norwegian kingdom. In addition to Windir's regional loyalty demonstrated through their fixation on the Battle of Fimreite, Windir also incorporates a definitive opposition toward Christianity that is made evident in "Kampen." Numerous times throughout the song, the lyrics express a desire to resist and fight the spread of Christianity and its source of power in the cities who trick true Norwegians into becoming slaves of a foreign faith. In this way, Windir shows consistency with the anti-Christian discourse demonstrated by Stormgeist on "Army of Odin (Hafsråfjord)." However, Windir and Stormgeist are not alone in positioning Christianity as foreign and the focal point of resistance in this way nor were they the first to do so in Norwegian black metal.

5.2.5 An Authentic Belief

While both bands have long histories in the Norwegian black metal scene, the anti-Christian sentiment they express is rooted in some of the scene's earliest recordings. One of the foremost bands in the scene, Enslaved is also widely recognized for using themes related to Viking and Norse mythology. Originating from Haugesund, Enslaved developed a thematic approach that was different from what prevailed in Oslo at the time. Rather than Satanism and the occult, Vikings and Norse mythology influenced Enslaved. Grutle Kjellson, founding member, bassist, and vocalist of the band attests that this influence came early in his life, but not through school or any formalized form of education. In Kjellson's case, his interest arose after watching a television show. This, in turn, lead him to ask his mother who was an educator and author on the subject of Norse mythology.³⁷⁴ According to Kjellson and fellow founding member Ivar Bjørnson, pursuit of this subject had to occur outside school, as the subject was not at this time taught in Norwegian classrooms. Religion, as a subject, was dominated by Christianity and any references to Norse mythology was placed in the context of folklore. As a result, any detailed interest needed to be pursued in spheres separate from formalized education which may have enabled Kjellson's and Bjørnson's exposure to occult understandings of Asatru and Norse mythology.

In any case, a clear sense of antagonism towards Christianity is found on the band's 1997 full-length album *Eld*.³⁷⁵ This is made clear on the first song of the record, "793 (Slaget om Lindisfarne)." Over the course of the sixteen-minute track, Enslaved builds a narrative about longboats bearing

³⁷⁴ Patterson 2013 (a), 392.

³⁷⁵ Enslaved. *Eld*. Osmose Productions OPCD 053, 1997, compact disc.

men from Hordaland, Rogaland and Adger reaching the shores of the island. Home to a monastery, this island off the coast of Northumbria was the site of what is regarded as one of the first Viking raids on British shores in 793.³⁷⁶ This event, as recorded in the northern recension version of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, is seen as the starting point for other such raids that followed over the course of the next century.³⁷⁷ While hardly a battle as the song title suggests, *Enslaved* portrays the attack on the monks and the monastery at Lindisfarne as a sort of retribution against Christianity itself. As demonstrated in the lines “Sverdslag knuste kristmanns skalle,” an aversion to Christianity is expressed through violent means.³⁷⁸ In their hostility to Christianity, these Western Norwegian men choose death over conversion to a foreign belief as made clear in the lines “Vi falt som men. Derfor døde vi ei hen. Veik er den som fiender elsker. Svik ei ditt opphav.”³⁷⁹ Added to the idea of Christianity being foreign is the notion that those who have converted are treacherous and weak. This presents Christianity as a corrupting force and those who follow the faith as being untrue to their pagan roots. As such, it stands as an example of anti-Christianity expressed through the lens of an imagined past that ignores the historical context of the event itself as well as the over two-hundred-year gap before Christianity came to Norway. Moreover, this period is presented in a way that conflicts with Norwegian historiography of the nineteenth century. Instead of seeing the Christianization of Norway as a step toward development on par with other parts of Europe at the time, it is perceived as a betrayal of Norway’s true cultural heritage, a betrayal which led to the enslavement of its people under a foreign belief.

Enslaved, *Sturmgeist*, and *Windir* are not alone in expressing anti-Christian sentiment in Norwegian black metal this way, but they indicate how this period of Norway’s past is negotiated to meet the overarching themes found in black metal. However, seeing Christianity as something fundamentally foreign to Norway is not necessarily a feature that is original to black metal. This conception is found in radicalized segments of reconstructed Norse religious belief systems such as *Asatru* and *Odinism*. For the most part these religions are a product of the 1960s and related to numerous other movements that sought solace and meaning within an idealized conception of nature and heritage.³⁸⁰ Yet, this does not mean

³⁷⁶ Downham 2017, 2.

³⁷⁷ Downham 2017, 2.

³⁷⁸ Though sung in Norwegian, English translations are provided in the liner notes in the later re-releases of *Eld*. The line in question according to the liner notes translates as “Strokes from the sword crushed the skull of the Christian.”

³⁷⁹ According to the liner notes these lines translate to “We died like men. Therefore we never vanished. Weak is the one the enemy loves. Never betray your origin.”

³⁸⁰ Broadly speaking, *Asatru* and *Odinism* can be understood in the larger context of the many counter-culture movements that were present in the Western world such those

neo-pagan practices and beliefs did not exist before the 1960s. On the contrary, Asatrú, and its related belief systems, are rooted in the various pan-Germanic *völkisch* movements of the later nineteenth century.³⁸¹ As a political movement and ideology, pan-Germanism had been a significant factor in the unification of Germany and, earlier, in the promotion of German culture between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth century. As an intellectual movement, it stressed the need for nature, language and history to be combined to form a coherent unified people or *Volk*.³⁸²

5.2.6 *Völkisch* Preludes to Asatrú

The *völkisch* promotion of Germanic mythology and folklore throughout the nineteenth century was influential in Scandinavia and set a frame for how Norway would interpret its own indigenous cultural *folk* heritage. While the concepts of *Volk* and *folk* are similar, there are distinct differences in how they ultimately developed. These differences are most apparent in how the concepts were utilized politically. While the *folk* were used to bolster liberalism and later social democracy in Norway, the *Volk* was co-opted by a conservative narrative that suppressed calls for liberal reforms in Germany during the nineteenth century. The assimilation of the *Volk* by conservative forces in Germany was realized through *Sturm und Drang* nostalgia to build a holistic community in an otherwise fractured Germany.³⁸³ New utopian dreams of the nation led to the rejection of Enlightenment ideals in favor of *Blut und Boden* mysticism that tied blood, soil, and heritage together in a manner that often rejected modernity.³⁸⁴ Beyond the realm of politics, the *volk*, and its conceptualization through *Blut und Boden*, significantly influenced the rise of *völkisch* cults and the development of radical conservatism in the early twentieth century.

The cults that formed in Germany during this time were preceded by earlier attempts to create an authentic German religion that could help establish a better sense of unity in the newly created Germany. An early advocate was the German intellectual Paul de Lagarde who wished to create a version of Christianity devoid of its 'foreign' and 'Jewish' influences.³⁸⁵ While not successful himself, de Lagarde's ideas were a platform from which the search for an authentic German religion was taken up by the likes of Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Arthur

associated with hippies and *progg*. Along with Asatrú and Odinism, these movements were also interested in mysticism from around the world.

³⁸¹ von Schnurbein 2016, 17.

³⁸² von Schnurbein 2016, 17.

³⁸³ Sørensen and Stråth 1997, 3.

³⁸⁴ Witoszek 2002, 52.

³⁸⁵ von Schnurbein 2016, 29.

Bonus.³⁸⁶ While Chamberlain was largely responsible for introducing a French strain of anti-Semitism, Bonus furthered the claims for a reconstructed Christianity that was free of Judaism and authentically ‘Germanic.’ In the search for a truly Germanic religion, Bonus turned to the Eddas as evidence of how a pure Germanic society behaved and perceived morality. Bonus’s work and influence provided an impetus for the Edda’s translation into German.³⁸⁷ In 1911, German versions of the Eddas were published by the avid neo-classicist and leading *völkisch* reformer Eugen Diederich whose publishing company was responsible for supplying and promoting the works of Lagarde and other prominent *völkisch* intellectuals. Inspired by these publications, a number of *völkisch* groups began to form, predicated on a variety of ideals such as life reform, spirituality, and hiking. Though disparate on the surface these groups were implicitly linked by their holistic approach to self-betterment through being in nature and promoting alternative medicine, gardening, and among other things, nudism.³⁸⁸ Integrated into these approaches was an implicit anti-Semitism and a focus on the North as a place where one could authentically connect with nature.

Despite the interest these groups garnered, it would not be until later that these *völkisch* movements became radicalized and coalesced to form a more coherent ideology based on racial purity, the rebirth of the German spirit, and a concerted sense of mysticism that cast ancient Germanic pagans as holders of a sophisticated culture that was accessible through racial memory. Ultra conservative groups casting themselves as conservative revolutionaries readily participated in *völkisch* neopagan religious and occult practices that included runic chanting and the worship of Odin. While the numbers involved in these extreme *völkisch* movements were never high, their members were nonetheless influential to key members of the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*), including Heinrich Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg and their respective branches of the Nazi party.³⁸⁹ Following World War II and the downfall of the Nazis, support for *völkisch* neopaganism waned. However, this did not mean that it disappeared entirely. In the late 1960s, *völkisch* neopaganism resurfaced again in the United States under the direction of the Danish immigrant and right-wing radical Else Christensen who founded the Odinist Fellowship in 1969. Christensen’s efforts were paralleled by Stephen McNallen, a Texan, who formed the Viking Brotherhood in the same year. Christensen’s group was politically and

³⁸⁶ Chamberlain was in fact the son-in-law of Richard Wagner and Bonus was a theologian and former Lutheran minister.

³⁸⁷ von Schnurbein 2016, 30.

³⁸⁸ von Schnurbein 2016, 32-33.

³⁸⁹ von Schnurbein 2016, 45-46.

racially focused and had distinct national socialist overtones. McNallen's vision of Germanic neopaganism was more religious and concerned with ethnicity.³⁹⁰ From these initial movements, numerous other groups were established and continued to attract followers across the globe.

Though some Asatrú groups are welcoming to all races and creeds, racism and ethnic chauvinism, whether explicit or not, are prevalent as a result of the historical development of Germanic neopaganism. Thus, some groups openly espouse racism and Germanic elitism, particularly ones associated with Odinism. Intertwined with this racism and bigotry is an explicit hostility toward Christianity. This opposition is derived from a belief that Christianity is fundamentally a religion of weakness that dulls the minds of its followers making them placid and malleable. Though there may be a degree of tolerance towards more Aryanized conceptions of Christianity, a significant amount of disdain is generated from Christianity's perceived foreignness, Middle Eastern and Semitic roots, and alleged lack of a reliable source base.³⁹¹ Asatrú's critique of Christianity for lacking reliable historical sources is, at best, indicative of unreflexivity and, at worst, utterly delusional given the unreliability of the Norse sagas and Eddas. Nonetheless, the animosity shown towards Christianity parallels that of many Norwegian black metal bands though their departure point tended, at least initially, to be Satanism. Given the preexisting animosity felt towards Christianity, it should come as no surprise that Asatrú, with its claim to an authentic heritage, and its rejection of Christianity, might appeal to young Norwegian black metal fans and musicians not totally satisfied with the message of Satanism. Moreover, even though Satanism is fundamentally opposed to the tenets of Christianity, it too could be considered foreign, as its existence is entirely predicated on its oppositional relationship to Christianity.

5.2.7 Runes, Mjolnir, and Wolves

Given the anti-Christian discourse used by bands with themes of Vikings and Norse mythology, it should come as no surprise that this sort of rhetoric is often linked to Asatrú. Ever since the earliest incarnations of pan-Germanic *völkisch* beliefs, Christianity was deemed foreign because of its Semitic origins, thus making it incompatible with the idealized German. As these *völkisch* beliefs transformed into cults and became radicalized the racial component was amplified, reaching fever pitch with the ascent of the Nazi party. Though Enslaved and many others are not affiliated with

³⁹⁰ Gardell 2003, 152. According to Gardell, the differences between Odinism and Asatrú can be understood through how Christensen and McNallen oriented their groups. While Odinism is more on politics and race focused, Asatrú is a blend of mysticism and the occult with ethnic overtones.

³⁹¹ Gardell 2003, 129.

any Asatrú organizations, there is a discursive similarity in the way both Asatrú and black metal deem Christianity foreign and not authentically Norwegian. However, this positioning of Christianity is not the only way in which Norwegian black metal relates to Asatrú and neo-Germanic paganism. There is also consistency when it comes to how certain symbols associated with Vikings and Norse mythology are used, namely the use of runes, Mjolnir and wolves.

In Asatrú, runes play an important role in how the mystic elements of the religion are manifested and conceived. In their original context, runes were the primary forms of written language for Germanic peoples before the Latin alphabet was introduced. The runic alphabet, or futhark, was not consistent among the various peoples who used it but survives to this day in three distinct forms: the elder futhark, the younger futhark, and the Anglo-Saxon or Frisian futhark.³⁹² Though there are several commonalities, differences can be seen through the number of letters of each version. While the elder futhark has twenty-four runes and the younger futhark has sixteen, the Anglo-Saxon/Frisian futhark has the most, with thirty-three runes. In a historical context, the study of runic inscriptions allow researchers to glimpse legal, religious, and social practices as early as the early Viking period and are indispensable to the academic pursuit and understanding of this era.³⁹³ However, when it comes to the use of runes in Asatrú, the individual letters are believed to have magical properties that can be activated when sung, recited, or laid out tarot-style as a form of divination. Moreover, runes can be put together to form a bindrune that combines two or more runes to enhance their respective mystical characteristics and esoteric qualities.

When used in Norwegian black metal, runes typically appear integrated into a release's cover art or in the logo of a given band. In the case of Svartahrid, all the band's full-length releases feature their logo in one of the corners of a given cover art.³⁹⁴ The band's name itself is unaltered, however an *odal*, or *othala*, rune appears superimposed below the name in each instance. This rune appears in both the Elder and Anglo-Saxon/Frisian futhark variants and represents a 'æ', 'ö', or 'ø' sound. In Asatrú, this rune is credited with the meaning of 'estate', 'property', and 'ancestral home'.³⁹⁵ As such, it is deeply connected to a sense of home and place of origin, and has an assumed connection with the actions and deeds

³⁹² Gardell 2013, 160. The word futhark is an anagram of the first six letters of each runic form and means 'alphabet.' Within these three broader types, finer regional and temporal variations also exist which further complicate the translation of original source material.

³⁹³ Williams 2008, 281.

³⁹⁴ The only time this does not occur is with the first demo from 1998 called *Herskende i blod* which has no cover art at all.

³⁹⁵ Thorsson 1984, 68.

of one's ancestors. Though this symbol could be an attempt to link to a more recent past, it is more likely that the rune is used to connect to Viking era ancestors who may have shared a similar belief system. The same can be said when it is used by Svartahrid given the band's prominent Viking theme. Moreover, Svartahrid's link to the past also implies a deep concern for positioning themselves as authentically Norwegian as they oppose Christianity. Likewise, it demonstrates that they are not corrupted by foreign influences. Therefore, Svartahrid's use of the odal rune complements the band's other Viking themes. It also reproduces notions of the homeland, nature and anti-Christianity conceived within Asatrú, and the *völkisch* movements, in order to reinforce their romantic infatuation with authenticity.

Of course, Svartahrid is not alone in using runes in Norwegian black metal. Numerous bands have made use of runes to enhance their connection to Norway and demonstrate their authenticity as true non-Christian Norwegians. Taake, a band known for their energetic and sometimes controversial performances, has used runes to spell out the band's name on merchandise and has used runes for text on numerous releases throughout the band's catalogue. Notably, this includes the lyrics, record title, and band name written in runes on *Noregs Vaapen*, an album that earned Taake a *Spellemann* nomination in 2012 and garnered controversy for anti-Islamic lyrics on the track "Orkan."³⁹⁶ Rather than relying on the mystical meanings of the runes or using them to connect to some abstract notion of the past, the runes in this case replace the normal modern Latin alphabet according to their corresponding phonetic sound. Thus, Taake is then $\uparrow\text{ff}\text{M}$ and *Noregs Vaapen* becomes $\text{†}\text{ØRM}\text{X}\text{h}\text{ P}\text{f}\text{f}\text{C}\text{M}\text{†}$. In using runes this way, Taake is not so much drawing on the esoteric or mystical qualities associated with how runes are used in Asatrú, as it is making a claim of authenticity. Taake's lyrics, while reflective of a Western Norwegian dialect, are still a modern form of Norwegian and not Old Norse or Icelandic. Thus, the usage of runes as the letters for modern Norwegian is an explicit attempt to temporally bridge the past and the present through an 'authentic' use of Norwegian history.

Enslaved's 1994 release *Frost* uses runes in a similar way to Taake but differs in that the release title is written with runic-like Latin letters making it easily readable and more accessible.³⁹⁷ As such, these runic-like letters are used to create a sense of authenticity and bolster the predominant Viking and Norse mythology theme of the record. Yet on later albums,

³⁹⁶ Taake, *Noregs Vaapen*, Svartekunst Produksjoner HOEST007/KAR064, 2011, compact disc. While mentioning Norway in the last line of the lyrics, the track in question was at the center of controversy over the lines "Til Helvete med Muhammed og Muhammedanerne" which were deemed as anti-Islamic and raised a number of questions regarding Taake's nomination for a *Spellemann* award.

³⁹⁷ Enslaved, *Frost*, Osmose Productions OPCD 025, 1994, compact disc.

Enslaved uses runes in a way that is more consistent with their tarot-like qualities when used for divination. This is first evidenced on the cover of the band's 2000 full-length record *Mardraum: Beyond the Within*.³⁹⁸ Displayed prominently in light gray on an otherwise darker gray backdrop, the cover art of this release shows a large bindrune consisting of three runes. This bindrune is made up of the runes *odal*, *isa*, and *jera*. Once again, the *odal* rune shows a conscious effort by the band to create a direct link to the ancient past and their pagan ancestors. Of course, as part of a bindrune, this meaning is accentuated by *isa*, which means ice as well as stillness and inward reflection, and *jera* which stands for harvest in addition to the cyclical progression of time. By combining *odal* with *isa* and *jera*, Enslaved is insinuating not only a need to connect with the Viking period, but also expressing an actual desire to cease temporal progression and return to this time in the past. Following *Mardraum: Beyond the Within*, Enslaved has demonstrated a continued interest in runes and their esoteric meanings on all of their subsequent releases to the present. In some cases, as illustrated on *Monumentation* from 2001, runes, and indeed a Viking theme, are more abstract and buried in layers of Dali-esque surrealism.³⁹⁹ However, in other cases, such as *Isa* from 2004, *Ruun* from 2006, and *Vertebrae* from 2008, Enslaved has made a more explicit use of runes.⁴⁰⁰ As on *Mardraum: Beyond the Within*, these full-length records incorporate runes and their esoteric qualities into their thematic content. In each of these cases, runes are visually displayed on the cover art, referenced in the title of the release, or used in both ways to strengthen the conveyed symbolism. As such, it connects the band not just to more recent varieties of Asatru-style mysticism, but also, more obliquely to its *völkisch* and neo-Germanic pagan predecessors.

Combined with Enslaved's use of runes is the band's inclusion of Mjolnir in their logo. Over the course of their career Enslaved has used three different logos. Though the first and latest variations do not include Mjolnir, for a period between the releases of *Eld* in 1997 and *Monumentation* in 2001, a Thor's hammer appears hanging below the Norse-knot work stylized lettering of the band's name. This version of Enslaved's logo appears on the front cover art of *Eld*, *Blodhemn*, and *Mardraum: Beyond the Within* and on the back cover of *Monumentation*. The presence of Mjolnir in the logo suggests the importance that Vikings and Norse mythology had for Enslaved at this time. While often worn by followers of Asatru and right-wing extremists, these Thor's hammer pendants can also be seen

³⁹⁸ Enslaved. *Mardraum: Beyond the Within*. Osmose Productions OPCD 100, 2000, compact disc.

³⁹⁹ Enslaved. *Monumentation*. Osmose Productions OPCD 119, 2001, compact disc.

⁴⁰⁰ Enslaved. *Isa*. Tabu Recordings TABU 007, 2004, compact disc; Enslaved. *Ruun*. Tabu Recordings TABU 022, 2006, compact disc; Enslaved. *Vertebrae*. Indie Recordings INDIE023CDL, 2008, compact disc.

hanging from the necks of many Norwegian black metal artists. Though it is doubtful that all who wear or use the symbol of Mjolnir are devotees of Asatrú, it does serve as an overt rejection of Christianity and a tacit rejection of the foreign in favor of the authentic. Therefore, it is another symbol through which the neo-Germanic pagan and *völkisch* influences of the early nineteenth century are visible in Norwegian black metal. Furthermore, as the weapon with which Thor battles giants in Norse mythology, there is an implication of violence through the use of force to combat one's enemies. This is not to say that Enslaved, or indeed any other band using Thor's hammer, openly promotes violence. Yet, it does imply that violence and the masculine ideal of strength over weakness are engrained within this theme and seldom questioned.

Along with Enslaved, the Bergen based band Helheim has also made extensive use of runes during their career and demonstrated an implicit rejection of the foreign through a dismissal of Christianity.⁴⁰¹ Nowhere is this more apparent than on their 2011 full-length record *Heiðindómr ok mótgangr*.⁴⁰² Displayed prominently in the center of the cover art is a large *odal* rune with a pair of ravens emerging from behind it. The rune and the ravens are important symbols of the Viking era and Norse mythology and are allusions to Odin. Combining with the visual symbols on the cover art is the title of the release. Meaning roughly 'heathenness and resistance,' *Heiðindómr ok mótgangr* can be understood as a message of non-Christian resistance.

While the heathen aspect of the title can be seen in the cover art and is a clear allusion to the ancient Norse belief system, the resistance part of the title is made clear through the song titles. The best example is the title of the track "Dualitet og ulver," a song that features Ørjan 'Hoest' Stedjeberg from Taake contributing guest vocals and appearing in the accompanying music video. Even though Helheim uses the Viking era and Norse mythology as their principal themes, this track illustrates that they also draw upon the wolf as a metaphor of resistance to Christianity. In this way, the wolf also represents fierce individualism and an elitist stance towards those deemed as sheep, or in this case Christians. Wolves and wolf-related themes have been present in Norwegian black metal since the early stages of the scene and have also been prominent symbols in the cosmology of radical Asatrú.⁴⁰³ The band Ulver, meaning wolves in

⁴⁰¹ This Helheim should not be confused with another Norwegian black metal band of the same name from Sarpsborg. While the Sarpsborg based Helheim does share some thematic qualities to their Bergen namesake, they have a more pronounced electronic industrial sound and NSBM theme.

⁴⁰² Helheim. *Heiðindómr ok mótgangr*. Dark Essence Records KAR062, 2011, compact disc.

⁴⁰³ Radical and militant Asatrú groups such as Wolves of Vinland and Operation Werewolf, both based in Lynchburg, Virginia in the United States, are illustrative of how

Norwegian, and Varg Vikernes, whose first name is derived from an older Norwegian word for wolf, are but two examples of how wolves are used in this genre.⁴⁰⁴ Helheim's use of wolves indicates that this theme has persisted since the early 1990s and illustrates how it is used in the context of Norse mythology.

While wolves serve as a symbol in radical Asatru cosmology, they tend only to be used in Norwegian black metal as a symbol through which anti-Christianity is expressed. Like runes and the portrayal of Vikings as the combative masculine ideal, the inclusion of wolves demonstrates how Norwegian black metal bands have negotiated the Viking era differently from nineteenth-century romantics and from early twentieth-century Norwegian nationalists. Christianity is eschewed in favor of an ethic that promotes individualism and independence. At the same time, these notions are embedded into egalitarian individualism which itself is a product of the Enlightenment ideals that were made manifest in the Norwegian constitution. Lutheranism, through the scope of religious revivalism and pietism, was important in this process. Throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Norway was fertile ground for rigorous doctrines and movements that set forth a process of de-hierarchization that promoted the individual's relationship with the divine.⁴⁰⁵ While religious revivalist movements aimed to break down structures in the Church, they also disassembled social hierarchies. This inadvertently removed the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, promoted a greater sense of sameness between peasants and the bourgeois, and laid the ground for secularization.⁴⁰⁶ These processes were significant in framing the context for Norway's constitution and explicitly link this form of Christianity with the Norwegian notion of individualism, independence, and equality. As such, the individualism and independence expressed through wolves in Norwegian black metal has a preexisting background in Norway and exposes a layer of contradiction when framed with the context of cultural memory.

wolves are used as a symbol for living out the hyper-masculine ideal of combat and self-sufficiency that is equal parts biker group, fight club, and cult devoted to mysticism-laden Odinism. Imbedded in these quasi-nihilistic ideologies are distinct overtones of bigotry and racism along with an aesthetic that borrows from Neo-Nazism. In addition, it is difficult to overlook the masculinist overtones of these groups as a direct response to a perceived loss of masculinity and the challenge from feminism.

⁴⁰⁴ Other examples of the wolf theme appearing in Norwegian black metal include the bands Ulvhedin, Ulvhedner, and Ulvaskar and the releases: Disiplin. *Wolf-Age*. Moonfog Productions FOG033, 2003, compact disc; Nidingr. *Wolf-Father*, Jester Records TRICK 045, 2010, compact disc; Eikind. *Vargtime*. Vicious Recordings VICIOUS 003, 2004, compact disc; Frosthardr. *Varg*. Momentum Scandinavia MSD09, 2007, compact disc; Vetter *Ulvanoi*. Ulvanosi US 002, 2007, compact disc.

⁴⁰⁵ Sorensen and Str  th 1997, 11.

⁴⁰⁶ Witozsek 1997, 77.

5.3 Summary

The Norwegian black metal bands that use Vikings and Norse mythology, do so in ways that are both similar to and different from their nineteenth-century predecessors. This is most apparent when considering the role of Christianity in Norwegian cultural memory. The historical writings of Peter Andreas Munch and Rudolf Keyser greatly contributed to the conception of Norway as an equal to the other contemporary European Christian kingdoms. In this legitimizing narrative, emphasis was given to the kings Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf II Haraldsson whose profiles as the great Christian rulers of Medieval Norway were further bolstered by the insinuation that they were democratically chosen to rule. This perspective is largely absent in Norwegian black metal. Instead, Christianity is regarded as foreign while those who converted are considered to have betrayed their authentic Norwegian identity. While this sentiment is made explicit on Enslaved's "793 (Slaget om Lindesfarne)" and Sturmgeist's "Army of Odin (Hafsråfjord)," it is expressed by all the other bands in subtler ways. As such, bands using this theme appear to be less concerned with comparing the greatness of Medieval Norway with other Medieval European kingdoms through Christianity and more concerned with creating an idea of authenticity predicated on paganism.

At the same time, similarities exist between the history writing of the national romantic period and how Viking and Norse mythology are used in Norwegian black metal. This commonality becomes apparent when considering that both fetishize Norwegian independence. For Munch, Keyser, and other likeminded Norwegian historians of the nineteenth century, the call for independence and self-rule was legitimated by the fact that an independent Norwegian kingdom had previously existed during the Medieval period. Having a historical basis for independence, these similar minded Norwegians created an immemorial link with the past as outlined in Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities.' In doing so, they formed an important part of Norwegian collective memory—one that became institutionalized and shaped individual remembrance. On the other hand, notions of independence in Norwegian black metal are tied to the perceived enslavement of Norwegians through their conversion to Christianity with the only free Norwegians being those who remained faithful to the ways of the Norse gods. While independence is expressed in different ways, it remains clear that it is a theme that persists when expressing Norwegian identity and is an integral part of cultural memory regardless of the means through which it is negotiated. A similar process is at work when considering how Norwegian identity was constructed. When nineteenth-century historians were legitimizing the idea of an independent Norway, they also equated nineteenth-century Norway and Norwegians with the Medieval Kingdom of Norway and its people,

thereby creating an imagined sense of continuity and communion that extended into the distant past. Coupled with this was an overt sense of Norwegian exceptionalism that distanced Norway from its regional neighbors. Norwegians, regardless of their historical era, were regarded as holders of a unique past and culture that only needed to be unearthed to reach its full potential. Norwegian black metal bands using Vikings and Norse mythology operate in a similar manner and only differ in terms of what part of this period they use. In either case, the foreign is rejected in favor of what is deemed to be authentically Norwegian.

Yet, the differences in how this period is imagined are not insignificant. While it is true that Norwegian black metal bands repeat the exceptionalism promoted by Munch and Keyser, the associated focus on cosmology reveals how Vikings and Norse mythology have been negotiated to meet demands for the expression of an authentic Norwegian identity that is uncorrupted by Christianity's perceived foreign roots. Moreover, using history in this way illustrates a lack of reflexivity given how tenuous and politically charged some of these symbols are and the explicit connections they have to extreme right-wing politics. This is made even more apparent given black metal's open-meaning setting, as contended by Karl Spracklen, and its preexisting tendency toward right-wing extremism. It is also true that Vikings and Norse mythology were key conceptual themes for the nationalist composers and their music before the outbreak of World War II. Current strains of right-wing extremism and pre-World War II nationalism certainly have substantial overlap. However, in the case of Norwegian nationalist composers, Christianity is again a key point of departure. These composers had, at the very least, a nominal degree of sympathy with the nationalist sentiment and inspiration that came with the nine hundredth anniversaries of Norway's patron saint and conversion to Christianity. At this point, disaggregating Christianity from Medieval Norway, Vikings, and Norse mythology in the conceptualization of Norwegian identity would have been difficult.

Still, this chapter has also shown the lasting influence Munch and Keyser had in setting the imaginative frame for conceptualizing this period in Norwegian history, a conception that was aided by the publication of the Eddas and non-Eddic sagas. These publications included illustrations from the likes of Arbo, Werenskiold, and Munthe whose pictorial representation aided in the visualization of these works and gave the artists a significant role in the visual representation of this time in history. This influence is evident both in the pre-war nationalist writers and composers and in Norwegian Black Metal's visual and thematic aesthetic. Yet, the Christian aspect in the commemoration of Vikings and Norse mythology has been disregarded as inauthentic and foreign in Norwegian black metal. At the same time, the Viking as the masculinist ideal who meets his enemies with violence, is also afforded a considerably enhanced role.

Vikings are shown and described in martial attire and either ready for battle or already engaged in the act, but not in a manner that might suggest their potential for sexual violence. The opponent is continually presented as Christian and, despite the military success of numerous Christian Norwegian kings, Christians are almost always described as weak, treacherous, and lacking determination. These forms of descriptions, and positionings of Vikings as their opposite, pairs with the way wolves are represented not just in Norwegian black metal, but also in the radical cults associated with Asatrú. Though the bands using Vikings and Norse mythology might not have overt affiliations with such groups, their opposition towards the 'inauthentic' and the foreign suggests they are discursively connected. Taken together with the other notions of cultural memory found in the conceptualization of Norwegian egalitarian individualism, it is clear that Norwegian black metal bands using Vikings and Norse mythology have reimagined these themes differently in new ways. For them, independence, individualism, and ethnic continuity remain key conceptual points across great temporal distances. At the same time, that they appear at all in Norwegian black reflects how they have become part of Norwegian cultural memory through these individual and collective processes of remembering.

Nature and the Landscape

Of all the themes that related to cultural memory and the use of history, none are more prevalent in Norwegian black metal than nature. Over half of the bands that use history and express cultural memory do so through representations of nature either through cover art or in the text-related content of their releases. Of course, nature even in the specific context of Norway is still a broad term and is constituted through a variety of discursive symbols. In precise terms, nature needs to be understood not just as flora, fauna, and geographic formations such as mountains and fjords, but also in terms of the weather. At the same time, region and regional identities such as dialect and agriculture, are also framed in relation to a given landscape and type of nature. Just as with the other categories of cultural memory and history, the use of nature in Norwegian black metal closely follows the foundational template laid by the national romantics of the nineteenth century. However, the bands using nature do renegotiate the themes used by the nineteenth-century national romantics. The following chapter establishes the process by which nature became an integral piece to Norwegian cultural memory and the meanings it has in relation to the notions of Norwegian egalitarian individualism and *likehet*. From this contextual background, several artistic mediums are presented to illustrate the various ways nature is framed in cultural forms and how these representations have contributed to the reinforcement of nature's importance in Norwegian cultural memory. After presenting this historical and contextual overview, specific examples of how these themes are used in Norwegian black metal are presented to highlight the ways cultural memory is reflected and negotiated.

6.1 Conceiving Nature in Norwegian Identity and Memory

Norway contains a plurality of landscapes that include fjords and coastal waterways, mountains and valleys, forests, and farming areas. These landscapes were given a high level of significance during the nineteenth century and have become an important piece of cultural imagining in Norway. Yet, over the many decades since the earliest musings of the national romantic movement, Norwegian nature has been continually negotiated. At the same time, the classic conception of Norwegian nature conjures images of Southern Norway's iconic Western fjords, lush valleys, and mountains. However, in recent years this has seen the increased acknowledgment of Northern Norwegian landscapes as valuable and unique. Therefore, to fully appreciate the extent to which nature permeates the expression of cultural memory in Norwegian black metal, one requires not just an exploration of the historical roots of this concept, but an understanding of some of its newer negotiations in the present.

In recent times, the concept of Norwegian nature has shifted to include parts of the country that were not typically represented during the national romantic movement.⁴⁰⁷ Geographers and Norwegian landscape experts suggest that Norwegian nature can be separated into two main areas consisting of Northern and Southern Norway. While regarded as a single entity, Northern Norway itself can be divided between landscapes associated with Sámi reindeer herding and characterized by common property access and those connected to coastal fishing.⁴⁰⁸ However, an additional type of landscape with significant historical resonance is connected to the *seter* agricultural tradition as practiced by young women in the summer months. The *seter* tradition looms significantly in cultural memory and has featured in several national romantic works including the music of Edvard Grieg.

Discussions concerning landscape heritage have generally shown southern bias when deciding what sites are most culturally important. Besides having a larger share of the country's population, the emphasis given to Southern Norway can also be attributed to the fact the much of the landscape of Southern Norway has been imbued with a high degree of national romantic imagining and importance. While a certain amount of this has been connected to agricultural landscapes and the romanticized ideal of peasant pastoral life, a significant amount of literature, music, and visual art sought to capture the alluring grandeur of Norway's Western

⁴⁰⁷ An exception can be made for the nineteenth-century painter Peder Balke. Balke's most well-known works feature scenes from areas in present-day Nordland and Finnmark. These include *Nordkapp* (1840), *Stetind i take* (1864), and *Vardohus Fortress* (1870).

⁴⁰⁸ Olsen and Thuen 2013, 274.

fjords and mountains. For example, it is nearly impossible to imagine the work of Johan Christian Dahl, Hans Gude, and Adolph Tidemand without the striking image of the dramatic landscapes of the Western fjords.⁴⁰⁹ Of course mountains and fjords are not the only parts of nature depicted during this time. Norway's Southern forests were also the subject of numerous artistic endeavors. While not as grand as works portraying fjords and mountains, those works depicting forests were often more somber and contemplative. August Cappelen, who also painted mountain landscapes and was a contemporary of Gude and Tidemand, is arguably better known for his dark and brooding paintings of the forests of Telemark.⁴¹⁰ From Gude, Tidemand, Cappelen, and other nineteenth-century Norwegian artists, had a powerful influence on later imaginings of the Norwegian landscape.

6.1.1 Discovering Norwegian Nature: Mountains, Forests, and *Seters*

There is no doubting the importance of nature in the formation of Norwegian identity. Along with the stereotypical tropes concerning Vikings and peasant traditions, nature is a part of Norwegian identity that is unavoidable. The argument could be made that in comparison to the other categories of history use and cultural memory expression in Norwegian black metal, nature is the most important of all. The belief that Norway's people were heavily marked by their landscape has a long history. This idea was first propagate in print by Gerhard Schøning who claimed in the 1870s and 1880s that the geography of Norway made Norwegians distinct.⁴¹¹ While the natural landscape of Norway has shaped agriculture, forestry and logging practices, and fishing and sea-based mercantile exchange, these practices are not necessarily unique to Norwegians, but rather representative of any group that lives in similar

⁴⁰⁹ While Dahl spent some of his training in Dresden, Gude and Tidemand were a part of the Dusseldorf school and were connected to a broader movement of artists that used a similar style.

⁴¹⁰ Compared to his contemporaries, Cappelen's production was limited. This can be directly attributed to his health struggles and death at the young age of twenty-five years old. Despite his untimely demise, Cappelen's work has lived on for its unrivaled heavy tone and somber reflection of Norway's Southern landscapes. Several Cappelen's of works are displayed at the National Museum in Oslo.

⁴¹¹ Larsen 2001, 62. See: Schøning, Gerhard. *Norges Riiges Historie 1: Første Deel, indeholdende Riigets ældste Historie fra dets Begyndelse til Harald Haarfagers Tüder*. Copenhagen: Mumme, Heineck, and Faber, 1771; Schøning, Gerhard. *Norges Riiges Historie 2: Anden Deel, indeholdende Riigets Historie, under Kong Harald Haarfagers, og hans tvende Sonners, Erichs og Hagens Regiering, fra Aar 863 til 963*. Copenhagen: Mumme, Heineck, and Faber, 1773; Schøning, Gerhard. *Norges Riiges Historie 3: Tredie Deel, indeholdende Riigets Historie fra Kong Hagen Adelstein-Fostres Død til Kong Olaf Trygvesons Ankomst til Regieringen*. Copenhagen: Mumme, Heineck, and Faber, 1781.

geographic conditions. Yet, the idea that Norwegians were fundamentally different from their immediate neighbors gained significant traction in the decades following Schøning's writings and found a receptive audience from other like-minded individuals looking to expand upon the notion of an independent Norway.

As with folk narratives and Vikings and Norse mythology, Norwegian nature came to have a significant role in the national romantic project of the nineteenth century. With a foundation for Norwegian exceptionalism through nature having been laid earlier by Schøning, interest in Norway's nature surged in the early nineteenth century. However, this initial thrust of curiosity came not only from within Norway but also from abroad. Enraptured with a romantic fervor, a great number of tourists, many of whom came from England, traveled to witness for themselves the great unspoiled, primeval landscape Norway offered. Their interest in Norway stemmed from a reevaluation of nature that occurred throughout the nineteenth century and was connected to the Romantic Movement that was well underway in the rest of Europe.⁴¹² Mountains, in particular, were revitalized at this time. Rather than being seen as barren and uninhabitable, they were imbued with majestic qualities and given near divine status.⁴¹³ The Norwegian mountains were also important sources of inspiration for non-Norwegian artists and musicians. Throughout the early nineteenth century, numerous composers and painters traveled through the Norwegian countryside to experience the landscape in person. Though not necessarily limited to Norway's immediate neighbors, many of the artists and musicians who did tour through the countryside were either Danish or Swedish. Notably, the Swedish composer Franz Berwald was one of the first to introduce sounds inspired by the Norwegian mountains to a European audience. The piece in question was first performed in March 1842 to a receptive audience in Vienna and titled 'Erinnerung an die Norwegischen Alpen' (*Reminiscence of the Norwegian mountains*).⁴¹⁴

Through this process of rediscovery, the mountains of Norway were primed to receive a significant amount of attention. As well as being a sort of 'Northern Playground' for tourists, the domestic perception of mountains shifted to the positive as well.⁴¹⁵ By the 1840s, mountains and fjords were incorporated into the perceived cultural fabric of Norway and central to what made Norway fundamentally different from its neighbors.⁴¹⁶ Moreover, these landscapes were closely linked to healthy

⁴¹² Macfarlane 2003, 18. Lindskog 2013, 44.

⁴¹³ Lindskog 2013, 44.

⁴¹⁴ Lindskog 2013, 45-46.

⁴¹⁵ The term 'Northern Playground' appears in the title of a book written by the English historian W. C. Slingsby from 1941 called *Norway, the Northern Playground*.

⁴¹⁶ Lindskog 2013, 44. Ellen Rees 2014, 24.

living and benefiting the body. Being active in the mountains, and to some extent nature in general, was believed to cleanse the body and soul.⁴¹⁷ This notion was intimately tied to an idea that cities and urban areas were detrimental to an individual's physical and mental health. Thus, even at this stage in the national romantic project it was clear that a sense of anti-urbanity prevailed among those leading the movement in Norway and, through their collective efforts, this aspect of nature would become institutionalized and interwoven into cultural memory.

Mountains and fjords are also inseparable from Grieg's music. Grieg actively took inspiration from the sounds associated with the pastoral life in the mountains. This aspect of Grieg's music was significantly connected to Norway's agrarian landscapes and activities, namely those connected to *seter* pastoral traditions and the young women who participated in them. This influence is well demonstrated in a number of his later works following a trip taken into Jotunheimen with his close friends Frantz Beyer and Julius Röntgen. While Beyer was an attorney and amateur pianist, Röntgen, like Grieg, was an accomplished composer. Both men were long-time friends of Grieg and at times contributed to Grieg's compositions. This trip taken with Beyer and Röntgen into Jotunheimen in 1891 proved to be one of Grieg's most formative experiences. In fact, it was during this trip that Grieg and his companions met Gjendine Slaaien, a nineteen-year-old *seterjente*, whose singing and songs left a profound impact on the three men and inspired a resurgence of musical activity in Grieg.⁴¹⁸

The mountains also influenced the work of Henrik Ibsen to a significant degree. This inspiration is perhaps best illustrated in the poem *Paa Vidderene* from 1859 and printed for the first time in his only book of poetry in 1871. Translating to English as 'On the Mountains', it is difficult to grasp the full meaning of the word *vidder* as no translation of the word entirely captures its romantic connotations. While it is possible to understand *vidder* as simply meaning 'mountains', 'plateau', or 'fell', it is perhaps better suited as a term that describes vast, elevated spaces. The idea of space is an important concept in the romantic understanding of the term. Similarly, the idea of space is also significant in the understanding of *fell*. Again, this word proves difficult to define accurately in English and is probably best understood to mean 'mountain' as well. Such a definition may seem suitable if the Norwegian meaning of *vidder*, in both Bokmål and Nynorsk, did not confuse the meaning in translation. Regardless, what is most important concerning *vidder* and *fell* is their connection to a sense of vast, elevated space.⁴¹⁹ Implied in this understanding is a notion of isolation and solidarity. In this way, both *vidder* and *fell* are terms

⁴¹⁷ Lindskog 2013, 52-53.

⁴¹⁸ Lindskog 2013, 53.

⁴¹⁹ Lindskog 2013, 43-44.

interwoven with connotations of distance, separation, and connected to an anti-urban sentiment. It is precisely this sentiment that Ibsen conveys in *Paa Vidderne*. Written in the first person, the poem tells the story of a young man who decides to leave behind the concerns of the valley to live in the mountains.⁴²⁰ Throughout the nine sections of the poem Ibsen continually works in notions of freedom, self-reliance, and closeness with God by being in the mountains. Thus, Ibsen echoes the theme of distance and open space connected with Norwegian mountains through the freedom and independence the young man has once he leaves the toils and doldrums of town life.

Of course, the appreciation shown for mountains and fjords was a part of a broader cultural shift that found inspiration in Norwegian nature as a whole. Mountains and fjords were not not the only geographical features used to perpetuate an idea of an independent Norway. Norway's vast forests were also used to express the uniqueness of the country and its people. Yet, what must be understood is that even though forests could be perceived as wild, mysterious, and potentially dangerous, it was through their taming and clearing for arable land that they became apart of the rural countryside.⁴²¹ As such, it is possible to see the importance rural, agrarian life and farming had in the construction of Norwegian identity. Imbedded within this imagining are the buildings associated with rural life. Primary among these structures were the *seters*, or summer cottages, that continue to be used in pastoral farming to this day. During the mid-nineteenth century, *seters* were referenced in a number of works including Knud Bergslien's painting *En Aften ved Sateren* (1858), Ibsen's poem *Højfjeldsliv*, and Bjørnsterne Bjørnson's short story *Et farligt Frieri* that was included in the commentary of the picture book *Norske Folkelivsbilleder* from 1858.⁴²² While Bergslien's painting portrays an idyllic scene with a group of *seterjenter* tending to livestock in the setting of a *seter*, these buildings were also cast as a place of male refuge, where men could leave the civilized pressures of the city, demonstrate their masculine physicality, and test themselves against the rigors of rural life.⁴²³

However, this should not discount the importance forests and trees had at this time, particularly those species native to Norway. Spruce and birch are included in several national romantic era works. These include those of Gude, Tidemand, Kittelsen, as well as those by Cappelen and Johan Christian Dahl. Whereas Cappelen captured the gloom of spruce and pine forests in works such as *Trestudie* (1850), *Skogstudie* (1851), and *Foss i nedre Telemark* (1852), Dahl depicted the drama and emotion connected to a

⁴²⁰ Lindskog 2013, 44.

⁴²¹ Syse 2013, 224.

⁴²² Rees 2014, 19.

⁴²³ Rees 2014, 20.

windswept birch in *Bjerk i storm* (1836). The renowned national romantic writer Henrik Wergeland contributed several poems dedicated to this part of Norwegian nature as well. So enraptured was Wergeland with the forests and nature of Norway, that his rival and brother-in-law Johan Sebastian Welhaven criticized him for his worship of ‘forest cathedrals.’ Wergeland’s preoccupation with forests was indicative of how other likeminded national romantics conceived this part of nature and helped set the frame from which nature would become integrated into cultural memory.

6.1.2 Politics, Nature, and Nationalism

Compared to Wergeland, Welhaven was more reserved in his zeal for Norwegian nature. This is not to say that Welhaven was uninvolved in the national romantic project or disinclined to Norwegian exceptionalism. Rather, he was more temperate in his appreciation for Norway and his assessment of the nationalist project. In addition, Welhaven was not as dismissive of European influences in Norwegian culture as other more reverent national romantics were during the 1840s and 1850s. Due to his interest in classical Greek themes, which was expressed through his poetry in the 1830s, Welhaven turned his attention to themes involving Norwegian folk narratives and peasant customs for inspiration in the following decades.⁴²⁴ In many respects, Welhaven’s position was indicative of the fact that, despite its popularity, the extremist side of Norwegian national exceptionalism was contested and not necessarily embraced by all. Indeed, Welhaven was the focal point and leader of the opposition to Wergeland, and his group, the *Patriotene* who were the populist and supported Norwegian chauvinism.⁴²⁵ Welhaven headed a group of students called the *Intelligenspartiet* whose aims were to build a Norwegian identity and nation with a strong emphasis on the culture inherited from Denmark.⁴²⁶ The *Intelligenspartiet* was open to a continued cultural connection with Denmark and it was also positively disposed toward European culture in general. Welhaven, in particular, believed that Norwegian culture should follow the standards set by the classical European cultural tradition.

This stance on Norwegian culture was linked to *Intelligenspartiet*’s belief that the populist line taken by Wergeland, the *Patriotene*, and others with similar goals was potentially dangerous as it would politically empower peasants.⁴²⁷ The *Intelligenspartiet* was not completely opposed to the

⁴²⁴ Danielsen et al. 1995, 225.

⁴²⁵ Barton 2003, 93-94.

⁴²⁶ Barton, 93.

⁴²⁷ Barton 2003, 93

peasantry taking a larger role in Norwegian culture and politics, but felt that the changes were occurring before Norway, as a nation, was ready to embrace them.⁴²⁸ What this reveals then is an anxiety by the more affluent groups in Norway, some of whom who sought to maintain strong cultural ties with Denmark. This ran parallel to the demands of Wergeland and the *Patriotene*, but also reflected a type of class discourse that that would later shape the groups responsible for leading Norway away from its union with the Swedish crown.

6.1.3 Scandinavianism and the Emergence of Liberal Politics

The tension between Wergeland, Welhaven, and their respective groups represents an early challenge to the notion of the Norwegian nation. However, the debates between the two sides never questioned the need to see Norway as an entity separate from its neighbors. Rather, it was the degree to which Norway would be independent that proved a point of contention. Those taking the more populist line tended to agree that Norway would eventually need to become politically and culturally independent from Sweden. Conversely, the conservative, cosmopolitan side of the debate sought to maintain the union and forge a common cultural and national identity with Sweden while retaining cultural ties to Denmark. This more ‘Scandinavianist’ approach peaked in the 1840s and had significant support among factions within Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.⁴²⁹ The goal of Scandinavianism was not unlike the ambitions of Italian and German efforts for unification that were eventually realized in 1871. Ideally supporters of Scandinavianism saw Sweden, Denmark, and Norway united in a union under one crown, namely the Swedish king Oscar I. However, ambitions toward a united Scandinavia were thwarted by the failure of Swedish military support to materialize during Denmark’s conflict with Prussia during the First Schleswig War between 1848 and 1852 and again during the Second Schleswig War in 1864.⁴³⁰ Swedish and Norwegian volunteers did join Danish forces to fight against the Prussians and their German allies, but their support was insufficient to prevent Denmark’s eventual defeat in 1864.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Barton 2003, 94.

⁴²⁹ Support for a Scandinavian union was particularly vocal in Sweden among students at Uppsala University and among those Swedes who wanted to restore Sweden’s military greatness as a defense against Russia.

⁴³⁰ Barton 2003, 59. Barton 2005, 152. The only actual intervention Swedish forces made in either of the wars was to serve as a buffer to discourage any Prussian attempt to push across the Little Belt to the island of Fyn.

⁴³¹ Barton 2003, 59.

Ultimately, the Schleswig Wars ended any ambition toward a unified Scandinavian state. Moreover, Oscar I died leaving an heir, Karl XV, who was unable to further unite the two kingdoms' crowns.⁴³² Following Karl XV's death in 1872, his younger brother Oscar II took the throne thus ending any further attempts at a union between the three Scandinavian crowns.⁴³³ Though defeated politically and in the field, support for a unified Scandinavian state in Sweden and Norway shifted toward maintaining their existing union. In Norway, the ensuing debate about the future of the union generally fell along more or less predictable lines. Those in support of the union tended to be more conservative, wished to increase Norway's cultural profile abroad, and promoted a more cosmopolitan disposition that favored a broader continental influence. Conversely, those pushing for more separation in the union were more liberal in their political leanings and generally encouraged Norwegian cultural development while attempting to minimize foreign cultural influences.

A key tenet of the more liberally inclined portion of the population was skepticism toward cities. While some of this view stemmed from the idea that mountains and rural exposure was healthy, more of it likely came from a long-standing peasant suspicion of cities and cosmopolitanism. However, the wariness shown toward urban life did not prevent migration from the countryside to the cities. Norway, like many other parts of the Western world, was modernizing which meant a process of industrialization was taking place. The peasant pursuit of work in factories was not altogether dissimilar to what drove this migration elsewhere in Europe at this time. Subsistence agriculture did not meet the demands of population pressures. Though some of the Norwegian population moved to the cities in search of work, many also migrated to the United States and Canada. As discussed in the previous chapter, this migration movement was sometimes thought of as part of a larger Norwegian 'empire,' one that could be likened to the movement of peoples during the Viking era. Yet, for those who remained in Norway, there was a significant call for economic and social betterment that sought to provide better educational access and give representation to labor.

In time these demands were brought under the banner of social democracy, but the path was not straightforward and needed the support of the countryside. During the last half of the nineteenth century, Norway witnessed the rise of two political parties that would shape the future of the country and lead it toward the dissolution of the union with the Swedish crown. The first of these parties was the *Venstre* (Left) party. *Venstre* was founded in opposition to the *Høyre* (Right) party in 1884 and

⁴³² Barton 2003, 61.

⁴³³ Barton 2003, 62.

was formed by those politicians in the *Storting* who were supportive of parliamentary reforms.⁴³⁴ By the 1890s, the *Venstre* had split into different factions, yet the core remained strong throughout this period and into the early twentieth century.

6.1.4 Social Democrats and Regionalism

Though opposed by the *Høyre* and other conservative parties, the *Venstre* would have another competitor coming from the left who would eventually challenge and surpass their dominance. The party in question was the *Arbeiderpartiet* (The Labor Party) formed three years after the *Venstre* in 1887.⁴³⁵ Political success for *Arbeiderpartiet* was not immediate. It was not until 1904 that the party entered the *Storting* and it took more than twenty years before they became the biggest political party. It may seem paradoxical that a party focused on workers' rights would be able to become one of Norway's most important political parties. After all, political parties orientated toward labor rights and tended to focus more on urban affairs. Given that a significant portion of the Norwegian population lived, and continues, to live in rural areas, the success of *Arbeiderpartiet* stands out. The ability of *Arbeiderpartiet* to resonate with Norwegian voters can be attributed to the fact that the party was able to combine its concerns with workers with a message that included Norway's rural population and landscape. This process of bridging urban and rural concerns was by no means inevitable or without challenges.

For one, the *Venstre* party itself was founded not just on the desire for parliamentarism, but also with support from the peasantry. Deeply connected and indebted to its peasant support, the *Venstre* party paired its liberalism with a definitive and assertive strain of nationalism.⁴³⁶ In addition to taking a prominent role in the push for Norwegian independence, the *Venstre* party took nationalist lines when it came to culture and the economy. With a strong support base in Western Norway, the party backed the adaptation of Nynorsk as an official language. This, of course, was in direct opposition to the more normative Bokmål that was spoken in the eastern portions of the country. As a derivative of Danish, Bokmål was a potential problem to the parts of the country that wished to rid itself of foreign cultural influences. The creation of a Norwegian language was an issue that had been ongoing since the 1840s with writers such as Wergeland integrating Norwegian idioms into what

⁴³⁴ Nilsson 1997, 210.

⁴³⁵ *Arbeiderpartiet's* first steps towards the *Storting* started with the newspaper *Vort Arbeide*. As the party's profile rose over the decades, the party created a network of newspapers which helped enable it to solidify its base among both urban and industrial workers.

⁴³⁶ Nilsson 1997, 213.

was otherwise contemporary Danish. In the 1850s, Ivar Aasen endeavored to bring the collective dialects of Western Norway together as one formalized and authentic Norwegian language.⁴³⁷ In doing so Aasen laid the foundation for Nynorsk, a form of Norwegian that is at present widely spoken in Western Norway and an official language of the country. The *Venstre* party was instrumental in pushing the language debate forward to reduce Norway's Danish cultural inheritance, but it was not the only area where the *Venstre* was active in promoting Norway over foreign interests.

6.1.5 Economic Nationalism and Labor Co-opting Nature

For centuries, Norway's economy had been largely dependent on timber and fishing. In addition, Bergen and Trondheim had long-standing trade connections with German states and the British Isles. Norway was more or less self-ruling in terms of domestic affairs and, as a result, had the ability to manage its own economy. Being relatively poor with minimal industrial and exportable agricultural production, there was a need to invest in the economy. The conservative elements of Norway pushed for foreign investment, yet this was opposed by the *Venstre*. Rather than relying on foreign investors, the *Venstre* sought to strengthen the Norwegian economy from within and gave preference to domestic efforts. Both the fishing and timber sectors were active contributors to the Norwegian economy throughout the nineteenth century, but they each took some decades to recover after the turmoil following the wars of the first quarter of the century. By the second half of the century fishing and timber had stabilized. However, their contributions to the economy were overshadowed by the accelerated growth of Norway's merchant fleet. By offering lower rates for shipping, low-cost labor, and having close proximity to Britain, Norwegian shipping companies were able to capitalize on the demand for freight shipping.⁴³⁸ The increased growth of the shipping industry witnessed a rise in the demand for shipbuilding as well. Stretching from Bergen to Christiania, the Norwegian shipping industry was able to succeed by relying on older sail technology in the face of competition from steamships. Yet, a measure of success was also attributable to the financing structure of the companies themselves. Norwegian, not foreign, investment was the primary source of capital. With the success of the shipping industry the Norwegian economy prospered and further encouraged the growth of Norway's merchant

⁴³⁷ Nilsson 1997, 213.

⁴³⁸ Danielsen et al. 1995, 240.

fleet.⁴³⁹ This meant that although the risk was kept in Norway, the profits were as well.

Though the growth of the Norwegian merchant fleet was not necessarily indicative of the entirety of the Norwegian economy during the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is nonetheless an example of how nationalist policy was applied to the economy. The limitation placed on foreign investment in the economy mirrors much of the Norwegian-centric focus that was present culturally and shows how the *Venstre* were able to influence policy. Despite the success *Venstre* enjoyed, their dominant tenure in the *Storting* was eventually surpassed by *Arbeiderpartiet*. Part of *Arbeiderpartiet*'s success can be attributed to it pursuing political policies consistent with labor and social democratic parties elsewhere in Europe. Yet, its success can also be attributed to the party's ability to bring together the urban and rural in the same discursive mediums. Bringing together these two themes was particularly apparent in their political posters from the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁴⁰ This was an important period for *Arbeiderpartiet* as it was at this time that they were able to overtake *Venstre* to become Norway's leading political party.⁴⁴¹ The party's posters of this period were clearly influenced by Russian constructivism and include all the familiar visual references that one would expect with this style. Along with bold colors and sharp, defined lines, the posters included rural and urban symbols paired together to send a message that the two spaces should be conceived as a single place. While constructivism and the Russian influence diminished over time, the combination of rural and urban in the posters continued to be a theme of *Arbeiderpartiet*'s political posters well into the 1960s.

6.1.6 Nature in the Twentieth Century

Outside of politics, the presence of rural and agrarian symbols in Norway persisted in other forms as well in the twentieth century. Intimately coupled with traditional Norwegian folk music, rural and agrarian traditions have been infused into the semiotic practices of music and musicians. Since the early twentieth century, there have been numerous folk music revivals in Norway which have reintroduced traditional

⁴³⁹ Danielsen et al. 1995. 248.

⁴⁴⁰ Vigsø 1995, 118.

⁴⁴¹ The rise of social democratic politics was not isolated to Norway. Sweden and Denmark were undergoing similar processes around the same time. Just as in Norway, the social democratic parties of Sweden and Denmark had also challenged the liberal and centrist parties and rose to prominence. In both cases, the social democratic parties were able to achieve success through co-opting notable centrist and liberal positions and symbolism to appeal to a broader base of support and integrate rural concerns into a labor platform.

Norwegian folk music. These revivals occurred approximately with each generation since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁴² The generational revivals often differed from the previous variants. The differences were minor, yet over time these slight variations led to significant changes not just in the music played, but also in the overall accessibility of Norwegian folk music. One of the most significant changes occurred with the arrival of *progg* on the Norwegian popular music scene.⁴⁴³ Along with Folque, a number of other bands and artists took components of traditional Norwegian folk music and blended them into a contemporary rock-oriented style. The success and recognition that *progg* bands and artists had through the late 1960s and 1970s brought folk music sounds to a broader audience that might otherwise have been exposed to it.

Aside from Folque, one of the more successful Norwegian acts of this period was Vømmøl Spellmannslag, who achieved a high level of success as late as 1984 with the record *Vømmelåret*. With the band's first album coming out over a decade before *Vømmelåret*, Vømmøl Spellmannslag was one of the more influential Norwegian *progg* bands. As such, this group presents something of a special case in Norwegian popular music and differs somewhat from other styles of popular music that can be found in Norway through the 1960s and 1970s. Though other *progg* bands were active during this period, they maintained a modest profile and were often financially constrained. Vømmøl Spellmannslag, however, was one of the few commercially successful bands. Indeed, the popularity of *progg* music in Norway, and the survival of the main record label Maj throughout this period, was directly attributable to the band's success and ability to sell records.

Vømmøl Spellmannslag was also a politically active band and very much connected to the political leanings of *progg* in the rest of Scandinavia. According to the Norwegian musicologist Tellef Kvifte, *progg* was a Scandinavian phenomenon that bridged the mysticism of national romanticism with leftist concerns about community and the working class.⁴⁴⁴ Vømmøl Spelemannslag embodied these aspects in full and, with their success, helped spread leftist class politics and Norwegian folk music to the rest of the country. A notable example of the group's political

⁴⁴² The numerous folk music contest and revivals are outlined in detail in Chapter 2 (Reviving *Folkemusik*) and Chapter 3 (Fiddlers and Fiddle Clubs in the Late Twentieth Century) of Chris Goetzen's book *Fiddling for Norway: Revival and Identity*. See: Goetzen, Chris. *Fiddling for Norway: Revival and Identity*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

⁴⁴³ *Progg* is short for *den progressive musikkbevegelsen* or 'the progressive musical movement.' The *progg* bands of Sweden, both in terms of music and in political activism, influenced the style in Norway.

⁴⁴⁴ Kvifte 2001.

activity occurred in 1975 during a strike by Norwegian telecommunications workers. As a means to raise money, the strikers sought out Vømmøl Spellmannslag to record and release a single called *250 Mann*.⁴⁴⁵ This act showed solidarity with the worker demands for an increase in pay to match the rising costs of living and was indicative of the leftist political leanings of Vømmøl Spellmannslag's founder Hans Rotmo, also known at the time by the pseudonym Kristian Schravlevold.⁴⁴⁶

6.1.7 Regionalism and Music

While Vømmøl Spellmannslag had strong political ambitions, what made their music unique in Norway were their folk influences, not derived from international inspirations, but taken from Norway's own folk traditions. This included frequent use of accordions, mandolins, and fiddles mixed with more conventional rock n'roll musical aesthetics. Yet, the folk inspirations were not limited to the instrumentation alone. The band employed the use of dialect, particularly Trøndersk from central Norway, to great effect over the course of their career. The significance of dialectic singing should not be understated in a country like Norway. Overall, there are four primary dialects with numerous local variations that can vary from village to village.⁴⁴⁷ According to linguist Karl F. Swineheart, the mainly written version, Bokmål, is "based on Danish and is more associated with urbanity, cosmopolitanism, and bourgeois cultural norms"; it is also reflective of where the power centers were under Danish rule.⁴⁴⁸ The other dialects of Norwegian developed largely in rural areas that were disconnected from urban centers. This disconnection was not only integral to the development and preservation of regional dialects, but is indicative of the degree to which regionalism still pervades Norway. As might be suggested by the name, regionalism is concerned with the degree of regional identity that exists within a broader national or similarly large-scale identity. A broad spectrum of factors can play into the formation and intensity of a given expression of regionalism, but a center versus periphery dichotomy is undoubtedly at the core of how this phenomenon is articulated in the context of Vømmøl Spellmannslag.

About a decade following the onset of the Norwegian *progg* movement, traditional folk music experienced another significant revival in Norway. Unlike before, when festivals and competitions generally took the form of live performances, NRK hosted a radio program called the *Radiokappleik*

⁴⁴⁵ Swineheart 2008, 290. Telefonsentralmontørene/Vømmøl Spellmannslag/Folk Flest. *Slå Tilbake Voldgiften*. Plateselskapet Mai MAI:52, 1975, 45 rpm.

⁴⁴⁶ Swineheart 2008, 290.

⁴⁴⁷ Swineheart 2008, 291.

⁴⁴⁸ Swineheart 2008, 291.

that pitted two teams of folk music experts and musicians against each other. The show was held in 1985, 1987, 1988, and 1999 and featured competitors well-known in Norwegian folk music who were not homogeneous in age or gender.⁴⁴⁹ However, despite the differences in gender and age almost all had rural backgrounds and held deep connections to their home region's playing style. Yet, their rural connections were not limited to how they played the fiddle and identified with folk music. Though not all of the contestants actively engaged in the practice, a number participated in farming collectives. The farming that was done in these collectives was more performative than substantive, but the importance of this practice is still significant as it highlights the rural roots of the music they played.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, what this shows is that regardless of where the musician might be living, they still felt the need to connect with their rural roots in a performative way.

Merely appreciating this lifestyle and landscape from afar was not enough for these musicians who wanted to directly connect with their rural heritage. By connecting to the agrarian tradition in this way, these folk musicians actively demonstrate the importance nature and the rural landscape has in the conceptualization and maintenance of Norwegian folk music. The distinct regional form of this expression is no doubt present in this case as well, but a general idealization of nature and rural life is a common factor. This commonality is significant not just because it binds the different folk musical traditions under one unified category, but also because it directly connects the musicians, the music, and the performative agricultural traditions to a broader conceptualization of nature as expressed in Norwegian cultural memory. *Progg* bands like Folque and Vømmøl Spelemannslag display similar tendencies, albeit actualized somewhat differently in each case. For Folque, their connection to nature and the landscape is achieved through the use of traditional instruments and the use of folk music idioms in their music. As such, the connection to these aspects of cultural memory is implied rather than explicit. Vømmøl Spelemannslag, however, has a more explicit connection to nature and rural landscape through their use of the Trøndersk dialect with the sense of regionalism it reinforces. Added to this is Vømmøl Spelemannslag's support of the telecommunications workers during their strike. Not only does this provide an example of how social democratic ideals were supported by the *progg* movement, it illustrates how the aims of the labor party to tie rural and urban concerns were negotiated and actualized over time and in different contexts in Norway.

⁴⁴⁹ Goetzen 1996, 249.

⁴⁵⁰ Goetzen 1996, 252.

6.2 Nature in Norwegian Black Metal

What these twentieth-century uses of history and expressions of cultural memory indicate is that nature and the rural landscape as conceived during the nineteenth century has remained important. Moreover, they demonstrate that, while consistent at times, there has been variation in how the different themes pertaining to nature and rural landscape have been articulated. Yet, for all the differences that exist, key notions relating to independence, individualism, and equality endure. Whether these ideals were embodied through mountains, fjords, forests, or landscapes, they have persisted over time in Norwegian cultural memory and have been expressed in different ways.

6.2.1 Landscapes and Regionalism

As with *progg* and folk music, there are several Norwegian black metal bands who connect to a specific region and landscape. Formed in Bergen, Taake has incorporated numerous references to the city and its surrounding landscape. The most explicit and consistent way Taake does this is through the number of tracks that appear on all Taake's full-length albums.⁴⁵¹ Each of these releases contain exactly seven songs. On the surface this could be assumed to be a coincidence, yet Ørjan 'Hoest' Stedjeberg, sole permanent member and songwriter of Taake, reveals that the use of seven tracks is a reference to the seven mountains that surround Bergen.⁴⁵² Though it is debatable which mountains are included in the seven, they have nonetheless played an important role in how Bergen is conceived in its surrounding landscape.⁴⁵³

The number of tracks on each album is not the only ways Taake connects to Bergen and its surrounding landscape. Once again, references can be found scattered across Taake's various releases. The references are most explicit on the band's second and third full-length releases,

⁴⁵¹ These releases include: Taake. *Nattestid ser porten vid*. Wounded Love Records WLR015, 1999, compact disc; Taake. *Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik*. Wounded Love Records WLR024, 2002, compact disc; Taake. *Hordaland doedskevad*. Dark Essence Records KAR006, 2005, compact disc; Taake. *Taake*. Svartekunst Produksjoner. HOEST001/KAR043, 2008, compact disc; Taake. *Noregs vaapen*. Svartekunst Produksjoner HOEST007/KAR064, 2011, compact disc. Though released after the methodological boundary of the study, the following full-length records hold the same pattern: Taake. *Stidens Hus*. Dark Essence HOEST010/KAR086, 2014, compact disc; Taake. *Kong Vinter*. Dark Essence HOEST012/KAR134CDD, 2017, compact disc.

⁴⁵² Hartvedt 1999, 137-138.

⁴⁵³ Four of the seven mountains always include Ulriken, Fløyen, Damsgårdsfjellet, and Damsgårdsfjellet. In addition, Lyderhorn, Sandviksfjellet, Blåmanen, Ruyndemanen, and Askøyfjellet can be added to the original four to make a total of seven.

respectively titled *Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik* and *Hordalands doedskvad*.⁴⁵⁴ On each of these releases the record titles specifically refer to place, aspects that are reinforced by the absence of distinct song titles beyond a numeric modifier.⁴⁵⁵ In the case of *Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik*, the title mentions the city of Bergen itself as well as referencing the city's frequent rain.⁴⁵⁶ For *Hordalands doedskvad*, the use of place is emphasized through the reference to Hordaland, the county in which Bergen is situated.⁴⁵⁷ As it does not mention Bergen directly it is possible to see the influence the greater region as a whole has on Taake's thematic content. This not only indicates a predilection for Bergen and Hordaland, but also shows a certain amount of regionalism. Combined with these is the fact that Taake's lyrics are composed in *Nynorsk*, which implies a certain oppositional stance toward part of the rest of Norway, not unlike what Vømmøl Spelemannslag achieved by using the *Trøndersk* dialect. Instead of solely using a specific dialect like Vømmøl Spelemannslag to indicate a specific region or place, Taake relies on their album, song titles, and lyrics to reveal their regional connection.

In addition to referencing place through their records and song titles, Taake also does this visually through several of the band's pictorial accompaniments. This is primarily done through one of Taake's main emblems. The emblem in question is modeled after Hordaland's coat of arms but is altered to reflect a black metal aesthetic. Rather than two crossed golden axes centered below a golden crown on a field of red, Taake's version is devoid of color. Lacking the vibrant combination of gold and red, Taake's coat of arms is black and a less than pristine shade of white. Like that of Hordaland, the Taake version has two crossed axes with a crown sitting above. The biggest difference comes from the lack of color and the addition of 'Taake' written in runes above the emblem.⁴⁵⁸ Due to the absence of color, Taake's version uses white pinstripes on a background of black. The crown and the axes are both black but are outlined in white and interrupt the vertical lines thus allowing the objects

⁴⁵⁴ The titles of both releases have been shortened retrospectively on more recent re-releases. *Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik* is now referred to as ... *Bjoergvin*... and *Hordalands doedskvad* has been shorten to ...*Doedskvad*.

⁴⁵⁵ For example, the opening track of *Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik* is "Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik part I" while *Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik* is "Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik part 1". Later re-releases of both records feature the songs as only "Part 1," "Part 2," and so forth.

⁴⁵⁶ Taake. *Over Bjoergvin graater himmerik*. WLR024 Wounded Love Records, 2002, compact disc. Given the title of the record, it probably comes as no coincidence that Bergen is also known as Europe's 'rainiest city'.

⁴⁵⁷ Taake. *Hordalands doedskvad*. Dark Essence Records KAROO6, 2005, compact disc.

⁴⁵⁸ This logo features across a number of Taake's various releases in the liner notes and can be found on a variety of the band's merchandise including hoodies, t-shirts, and patches.

to be clearly visible. In addition, at least one version of Taake's logo includes a half skull that shares some resemblance to the mask used in *The Phantom of the Opera*. The inclusion of the half-skull mask, band name, and color scheme are all ways this version of the emblem stands out as different when compared to Hordaland's version. Yet, the way the axes and crown are arranged plus the shape of the emblem is too similar to Hordaland's coat of arms to be missed. Indeed, given the ways Taake textually references Bergen and Hordaland through release and song titles, it is impossible not to see the connection between the two emblems. As such, it is evident Taake alludes to place and the regional through both text and visual modes of representation. Furthermore, from these allusions, there is a tacit reference to the countryside. Even when Bergen is mentioned this is still implicit as the city is in part conceived through its closeness to nature and landscape defining features.

For all Taake's references to Bergen and Hordaland, it is impossible to ignore the ways which the band refers to Norway as a whole. For one, the 2011 release *Noregs Vaaopen* references Norway in its title and in the lyrics on the track "Orkan."⁴⁵⁹ During live performances supporting the album, it was not uncommon for Stedjeberg to wear a large belt buckle of the Norwegian flag. In addition, he would unveil a Norwegian flag and wear it around his shoulders after having removed whatever shirt or jacket he may have started the set with. In doing so, he would closely resemble the cover image of *Noregs Vaaopen*.⁴⁶⁰ The image which graces the cover of *Noregs Vaaopen*, like all of Taake's visual components, features an absence of color. The only object in the otherwise solid black image is the face of Stedjeberg, replete with his signature corpse paint and long black hair. Save the focal point that centers on Stedjeberg's face, the rest of the image is out of focus making it difficult to see what he is wearing around his shoulders. At first glance, this appears to be some sort of robe, but given Stedjeberg's use of the flag during live shows and a hint of white in the lower quarter of the image, it is likely that this 'robe' is actually the Norwegian flag.

Yet, even on *Noregs Vaaopen* regions and specific references are apparent. The clearest way this is done is in the title of the release. Granted, Norway is referenced but it is done so with Nynorsk rather than Bokmål. Here again, the question of a given Norwegian dialect comes into play. While not as region specific as Trøndersk, as Nynorsk is an official form of Norwegian, it still illustrates the regional and historical patterns of differentiation in the relationship between the center and periphery. This use of Nynorsk and its reference to place is bolstered again through the

⁴⁵⁹ "Orkan," Taake. *Noregs Vaaopen*. Svartekunst Produksjoner HOEST007/KAR064, 2011, compact disc.

⁴⁶⁰ Taake. *Noregs Vaaopen*. Svartekunst Produksjoner HOEST007/KAR064, 2011, compact disc.

song “Du ville ville Vestland.”⁴⁶¹ This track refers to Vestland, the region which constitutes much of traditional Western Norway and contains the counties Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane, and Møre og Romsdal. This region is home to some of Norway’s most picturesque and dramatic nature and rural landscapes and factored heavily in nineteenth-century national romantic paintings, particularly those done by Gude and Tidemand. As such, Vestland has figured significantly in the national romantic imagining of the country thus making the region inseparable from the conceptualization of Norway and the development of cultural memory as a whole. Taake’s use of the region-specific modes of identification should be viewed in a similar vein. Over the course of their career, Taake has had numerous references to Bergen, Hordaland, and Vestland. Yet, at the same time these references to the region are still a part of a greater reference to Norway due to the inclusion of Norway as a release title, in lyrics, and the active use of the Norwegian flag on cover art and as a stage prop.

Taake is not alone as a Norwegian black metal band in expressing a distinct regional identity within a larger Norwegian framework. Windir, like Taake, was also a band discussed in connection with the use of Vikings and Norse mythology. Yet, they too make overt use of the Sogn og Fjordane region within the context of Norway. While this is evident from the examples provided in the previous chapter, Windir’s expression of cultural memory also extends to depictions of nature and rural landscape. In addition to referencing the medieval history of the region on *1184*, the band directly uses national romantic era works for cover art on the 2003 full-length record *Likferd* as well as *1184*. In the case of *1184*, the painting used is Johan Christian Dahl’s *Vinter ved Sognefjorden* (1827). The painting depicts a winter scene along the Sognefjord in western Norway. Accompanying the monument in the foreground is a gentle, snowy slope with barren shrubbery, shoots of brown grass, and three birds, most likely crows or magpies. Moving from the background to the foreground, the fjord is prominent in shades of icy blue with the subtlest of reflections coming from the bare stone of the rock face on the opposite bank. Situated on top of these otherwise large, harsh rock formations is a mat of green that, upon closer inspection, is a thick coniferous forest. Finally, in the far distance, a snowcapped mountain is embraced with the faintest glimpse of light as it reaches into a vast sky.

Other than the monument stone in the foreground, the scene is typical of other Norwegian national romantic paintings from the period. Nature, in its awe-inspiring splendor, represented a deep connection with the natural environment. In addition, the uniqueness of Norway’s nature enhanced a sense of independence and self-reliance at a time when

⁴⁶¹ The title of this track translates to “You wild wild Vestland.”

Norwegians were making their first steps towards a unique identity. Combined with the landscape are the meanings imbedded in the location and the monument, a memorial to the Battle of Fimreite. Moreover, the cover art is a direct copy of Dahl's *Vinter ved Sognefjorden*. Despite slight differences in color, the images are essentially the same other than the inclusion of the band logo and album title on the cover art version. Windir's use of *Vinter ved Sognefjorden* is far from coincidental as the band hailed from Sognefjord and is well versed in the local history and what the painting portrays. One may assume this painting would be recognizable to Norwegians as it is the product of one of Norway's celebrated national romantic artists and is displayed at *Nasjonalmuseet* in Oslo.

As well as using *Vinter ved Sognefjorden* for the cover art of *1184*, Windir employs another national romantic era work for the cover of *Likferd*.⁴⁶² In this case, the painting used is *Likferd på Sognefjorden* (1853) by Hans Gude and Adolph Tidemand. Like other paintings done by the collaborating pair, *Likferd på Sognefjorden* portrays a scene of peasant activities. Unlike their earlier work *Brudeferden i Hardanger* (1848), which portrays a peasant wedding celebration gliding along the placid waters of the fjord, *Likferd på Sognefjorden* depicts a peasant funeral ceremony. In contrast to the earlier work, *Likferd på Sognefjorden* is a somber painting. Only specks of blue sky peer out from an ominously grey sky that hovers above the peasant figures preparing to push off a small boat bearing a covered coffin. The scene is set along the rocky banks of what can be assumed to be Sognefjord. Standing tall in the background and adding to the dramatic tone, rounded mountains set the backdrop for the activities in the foreground. Both the mountains and the light breaking through the clouds convey a sense of the sublime. Given the tone and setting along Sognefjorden, it is not surprising that Windir used the painting for the cover art of a release. As a band whose music relied on a similar Romantic sentiment, there was an attempt to associate the black metal aesthetic with subliminal grandeur. Added to the visual representations of Sogne og Fjordane, Windir's lyrics are composed in a local dialect called *Sognamål* which is spoken in the immediate area around Sogn in Vestland.

Given that Windir actively used themes pertaining to Sogn og Fjordane on all their full-length records, it is possible to see these expressions as consistent with the region-specific those made by Vømmøl Spelemannslag and Taake. Yet, for all the references made to Sogn og Fjordane, these expressions are still made within the of Norwegian cultural memory. These broader Norwegian references are subtle, but they are nonetheless apparent with close inspection. First, there are the visual and textual references to the Battle of Fimreite. While the band itself notes the regional significance of this battle, the event is inseparable from how the

⁴⁶² Windir. *Likferd*. Head Not Found HNF 058, 2003, compact disc.

battle was conceived during the nineteenth century and the role it had in the imagining of a unified, independent Norway. Added to this is the subtle inclusion of a Norwegian flag on the cover of *Likferd* as the object draped over the coffin. Though this is the only time that a Norwegian flag is used on cover art by Windir, it still stands to remind the viewer that the band and the image used are Norwegian. Moreover, by using a piece of Norwegian artwork that hangs in *Nasjonalmuseet*, Windir actively perpetuate and reflect a piece of cultural memory that is fundamentally tied to a time when Norwegians sought to establish a unique, independent identity. Thus, while the band promotes a sense of regional identity, it is still expressed through the lens of Norwegian cultural memory and the distinctive role nature has within it.

Specific references to place and the use of nature in the larger context of Norwegian cultural memory are not limited to bands from Western Norway. While both Taake and Windir demonstrate precise ways this has been done, other expressions are more oblique and less exact as to location. An example of this can be seen through Dimmu Borgir's first EP *Inn i evighetens mørke* from 1994 and first full-length release in 1995 called *For all tid*. The cover art of the EP is a color photograph of a landscape illuminated by a radiant celestial object.⁴⁶³ It is difficult to determine whether the object is the sun or moon as it lacks distinctive features and exudes a red and orange glow from its yellow body. One could assume that it is a sun, but the darkness that encompasses the remainder of the image gives the impression that the image is set at night time. Beyond this confusing light source, the silhouette of a pine forest rises from the darkness of the bottom. The nature theme of the cover art is reflected in one of the three song titles on the EP. Side A of the EP is divided into two tracks that share the release title which is then divided into a part one and a part two of the song. Side B of the EP contains one track entitled 'Raabjørn speiler draugheimens skodde.'⁴⁶⁴ Though the spelling is slightly different, Raabjørn refers to the lake Råbjørn that lies some kilometers to the north of Oslo. The area around the lake is remote and is a destination for outdoor activities such as fishing, and cross-country skiing. The same track appears as the eighth track on *For all tid*, thus linking the releases within the same thematic framework.⁴⁶⁵ Outside of this track, the only other reference to nature is found on the instrumental third track, "Glittertind," which is named after Norway's second highest mountain.⁴⁶⁶ In each of these three cases, Dimmu Borgir indicates that nature and the

⁴⁶³ Dimmu Borgir. *Inn i evighetens mørke*. Necromantic Gallery Productions NGP 004, 1994, 33⅓ rpm.

⁴⁶⁴ The title of the song translates to 'Raabjørn reflects fog from the Draug's lair.'

⁴⁶⁵ Dimmu Borgir. *For all tid*. No Colours Records NC 003, 1995, 33⅓ rpm.

⁴⁶⁶ Glittertind is a glacier-topped mountain found in Jotunheimen national park.

rural landscape have had a role in how the band conceived their thematic concept at the time.

As one of the most commercially successful Norwegian black metal bands and the second black metal band to win a *Spellemannpris*, Dimmu Borgir has had an important role in the outward perception of the genre. Later releases by the band have markedly shifted away from any use of history or expression of cultural memory. Rather, all of the releases following *For all tid* have emphasized more stereotypical black metal themes such as Satanism and the occult. However, the references that appear on *Inn i evighetens mørke* and *For all tid* are indicative of the band's preoccupations in the mid 1990s. They also show that Norwegian nature and landscape themes are used alongside some of the typical black metal themes rather than in place of them. While it is evident that Dimmu Borgir references specific parts of the Norwegian landscape on "Raabjørn speiler draugheimens skodde" and "Glittertind" and visually reference the Norwegian forest on the cover of *Inn i evighetens mørke*, these connections to cultural memory are diffuse and less precise than Taake or Windir.

6.2.2 To the Mountains

As discussed, mountains were 'discovered' in the early nineteenth century and made important to the formation of an independent Norwegian national identity. Over the course of the nineteenth century, mountains continued to have significance as a symbol of the uniqueness of Norwegian nature and came to embody notions of healthy living and disconnectedness from the ills of urban life. As a result, artists, musicians, and playwrights continually celebrated mountains and the traditions associated with them. The cultural products made by these individuals were woven into the fabric of Norwegian cultural memory over time and, as such, have significantly influenced the way nature and landscapes have been represented ever since. While mountains have appeared in other contexts since that time, such as when paired with factories in political posters, the original meanings derived from the national romantic period remain. It is from this original meaning that more generalized depictions of mountains and *ffjeller* appear in Norwegian black metal.

The 2013 demo *Blant høye fjell dypet kaller* by Graatindr is a useful starting place when discussing how mountains are depicted in Norwegian black metal. As the band's first release, Graatindr was not a part of the first generation of Norwegian black metal bands. However, the band employs a visual and thematic aesthetic that is consistent with those of the first generation. The demo contains a mix of references to Norwegian cultural memory. Starting with the song titles, the third track, "Ragnarok er naer!", refers directly to the end times of Norse mythology and acts as a textual

reference to this aspect of commemorative practice.⁴⁶⁷ Though no other references to this aspect of cultural memory are found in the songs, the cover art and the demo's title connect to nature and landscape. An achromatic photograph depicting a *fjell* landscape is used for the cover art. Visible in the lower left of the foreground are three cottages that are in a style that is common in the Norwegian countryside. Behind these *hytte*, or cottages, a mountain landscape climbs sharply from the left side of the image to the right. The mountains are tall, with treeless peaks, and share an aesthetic quality that can be seen in many of Norway's most recognized mountain landscapes. Matching the scene, the title of the demo textually refers to the type of landscape portrayed on the cover. As such, the title and the image act to reaffirm and strengthen the reading of each component.

The image connects to a broader aspect of Norwegian cultural memory in two ways. First, the mountain is symbolic of isolation and a distancing that reflects the retreat to place that is alluded to in Ibsen's *På Viddene*. As suggested in Ibsen's poem, mountains are places from which one can distance oneself from the rigors and stress of the everyday. This notion is compounded by a discourse of retreat that is also visible in the presence of the three *hytter*. These structures, which can be found dotted across the Norwegian countryside, are the second way *Blant høye fjell dypet kaller* connects to cultural memory. They serve as vacation dwellings for those looking to escape the day-to-day life of more urbanized locations and are not completely unlike the *seters* used by nineteenth-century bourgeois men. Like the reaffirming relationship between the demo's title and cover art, these aspects of cultural memory work to reinforce one another and thereby strengthen connection to the past. A similar representation of mountains is present on the cover art of Formloff's 2004 demo *Velte Budeia*. As an experimental band that carries the label of *avant garde*, Formloff takes a different approach to their music than most other Norwegian black metal bands. Most of the cover art that is used on their releases reflects this aspect of their music. However, their second demo, *Velte Budeia*, is different from their other releases in that it uses a photograph of a country landscape. The photograph itself is also unlike from what is typically used by other Norwegian black metal bands and looks like a picture that could have been taken out of a tourist guide or personal collection from a countryside holiday.⁴⁶⁸

This image breaks noticeably with the more typical achromatic aesthetic of black metal. The colors are vibrant, varied, and allow for a recognition of the smallest of details. Yet, the smallest of details are not needed to read

⁴⁶⁷ This demo was initially released as: Graatindr. *Blant høye fjell dypet kaller*. Self-released, 2013, compact disc. It was released again a year later by a small, independent label as: Graatindr. *Blant høye fjell dypet kaller*. Hammerbund, 2014, cassette.

⁴⁶⁸ Formloff. *Velte Budeia*. Self-released, 2004.

how the image connects to Norwegian cultural memory. In the foreground of the image sits the top half of a red *hytte*, just like the three on the cover of Graatindr's *Blant høye fjell dypet kaller*. Behind and to the right of the red cottage sits a low stone storage structure and beyond it sits another cottage of a deep mahogany coloring. In the background, a thick blanket of green grass marred by erosion streaks denotes the ridgeline as it rises to reveal snow-covered mountains at the top edge of the image. Though seemingly closed off by the ridgeline, this scene with the high mountains at the top of the image implies an imagining of place that is open, wide, and vast, it is clearly supposed to represent the Norwegian *fjeller*. This landscape and the cottages suggest a place of escape from the heterogeneity and cosmopolitanism of urban life. It is a haven, constant and seemingly unchanging against an immemorial mountain backdrop.

The depiction of mountains and the *fjell* landscape on the covers of *Blant høye fjell dypet kaller* and *Velte Budeia* share visual qualities with several other Norwegian black metal releases. Among them is Gjenferdsel from Lom located in Oppland. Gjenferdsel draws heavily on the visual and thematic aesthetics of the bands that came before them in Norwegian black metal and there are especially strong similarities with Enslaved's record *Frost* from 1994. Gjenferdsel's 2006 full-length record *I* is one of two releases that shares these thematic concepts. The cover art of *I* reflects an aesthetic that is consistent with works from the nineteenth-century national romantic period. The photograph used is of a higher quality and sharper resolution than most other photographs used on Norwegian black metal covers.⁴⁶⁹ Due to this, a high degree of detail is made visible that would otherwise be obscured by a lower quality image or applied visual effects. The landscape presented in this high-quality image is one that is idyllic and fits nearly every stereotype of what Norwegian nature is supposed to include. In this case, the image is of a vast expanse of land that includes moss-covered stones, a placid lake, and a range of snow-capped mountains in the distance. The light comes from a low angle in the sky; illuminating only a portion of the mountains in the background while the remainder of the image is shadowed. Yet, the shadow does not obscure the details, but a brings calmness to the image that is further enhanced by the stillness of the lake. The only aspect that breaks with the serenity of this image is the sky. The clouds are varied, with some white, some grey, and patches of blue sky dispersed between. The image, with its clear and exact presentation of a mountain landscape, is visually consistent with some of the paintings of Gude, Tidemand, and Peder Balke. Even though the cover art in question is a photograph, the semiotic qualities are consistent, particularly regarding the light source, scale, and dramatic grandeur of the image.

⁴⁶⁹ Gjenferdsel. *I*. Ketzer Records KCD 050, 2006, compact disc.

A similar representation of a mountain landscape is used for the cover art of Enslaved's *Frost*. As we have seen, in terms of theme, *Frost* and indeed most of Enslaved's material, revolves around Vikings and Norse mythology. However, the cover art of *Frost* is an exception in this regard. Instead of containing any references to Vikings or Norse mythology, the cover art of *Frost* is a photograph of a narrow lake. At first glance, it is forgivable to assume that this lake is a fjord. However, in an interview with Kjellson and Bjørnson from 2010, this body of water is confirmed to be a lake.⁴⁷⁰ While no exact location is given, it is nonetheless clear from the surrounding scenery that this lake sits amidst a mountain landscape. Just as with *I*, this photograph is out of character from many other Norwegian black metal releases, especially considering that *Frost* was released in 1994. It turns out, the image was taken directly from a travel book called *Discover Norway* that the band found in Bergen.⁴⁷¹ In using this image, Enslaved not only connect Vikings and Norse mythology to a specific type of landscape, they reproduce an image that is designed to link Norway with mountains and vastness.

The cover art of *I* and *Frost* have direct connections to an imagining of mountains that was established during the nineteenth century and represents the longevity of national imaging in cultural memory and in black metal. While Gjenferdsel and Enslaved demonstrate one way that Norwegian black metal bands directly borrow from national romanticism, Gjenferdsel's follow-up release from 2010, titled *Varde*, also portrays a mountain landscape on its cover art.⁴⁷² However, unlike on *I*, the image used on *Varde* is achromatic and mostly divided between the light grey of the densely clouded sky and the dark grey of the earth below. Despite the relative absence of detail compared to *I*, there are a number of indicative elements within the image that point to a consistency with Norwegian identity and memory formation. One of these elements can be seen with the break in the clouds in the left portion of the image. Through the cloud gap it is possible to see a glimpse of the surrounding mountain landscape that sits below the perspective from which the photograph was taken. This suggests the high likelihood that this image was taken in the *fjellene*. With this in mind, it is clear that the image is set within a greater mountain landscape and carries a sense of an isolated, open space.

Adding to this reading of the image are two unnaturally piled stacks of stones in the foreground and in the distance. For those unaccustomed to hiking or being in the mountains, these stone piles may seem strange and vaguely alien. However, these *varder*, or cairns, are way-points marking trail paths. Though placed there by people, the presence of these cairns

⁴⁷⁰ Dick 2010, 38.

⁴⁷¹ Dick 2010, 38.

⁴⁷² Gjenferdsel. *Varde*. Ketzer Records KCD 062, 2010, compact disc.

accentuates the feeling of isolation that mountains embody. Mountains are a place to retreat from stress and constant flux of the cities. Moreover, they embody the eternal and unchanging perception of nature within the discursive representation of nations, memories, and identities. As a result, the cover art of *Varde*, though different, operates in much the same way as *I* in that it alludes to the primacy of the unchanged and primordial place.

Other bands have been more metaphorical in their connection to mountains. Two bands exemplify how this is done. Ulver, the first of the two bands, factors significantly in the formation of the Norwegian black metal scene, despite having a somewhat limited output as a black metal band compared to later in their catalog. In 1995, Ulver released the first of three full-length records that have become known as the 'Black Metal Trilogy'.⁴⁷³ Each of the releases included in the trilogy have different themes that are echoed in the cover art and text of each release. However, in each case the cover art contains a representation of a mountain landscape that is painted rather than taken from a photograph. While the use of mountains as a visual theme in Norwegian black metal is, as we have seen, not uncommon, the cover art of each of these three releases casts this type of landscape in an ethereal, otherworldly glow. As such, the cover art of these records match the fanciful, folkloric themes present in the songs. Though these themes are unrealistic in their depiction, the mountains and surrounding landscape represented on each cover of the trilogy are still consistent with other portrayals of nature in Norwegian cultural memory. Ulver demonstrates how individual interpretation in cultural memory interacts with collective and historical forms of commemoration that perpetuates notions of isolation, primordialism, and open space through different styles of representation.

Darkthrone also portrayed mountain landscapes in a metaphorical manner. However, rather than using a folk-oriented theme like Ulver, when Darkthrone has portrayed mountains it has typically been more in keeping with the black metal aesthetic.⁴⁷⁴ Darkthrone's first visual use of

⁴⁷³ The records included in the 'Black Metal Trilogy' include: Ulver. *Bergtatt - Et Eventyr i 5 Capitler*. Head Not Found HNF 005, 1995, compact disc; Ulver. *Kveldssanger*. Head Not Found HNF 014, 1996, compact disc; Ulver. *Nattens Madrigal - Aatte Hymne til Ulven i Manden*. Century Media Records 77158-2, 1997, compact disc. As well as being released individually, these records were released as a part of a boxed set titled *The Trilogy: Three Journeys Through the Norwegian Netherworld* in 1997. This boxed set was the last time Ulver released black metal material until another boxed set containing the 'Black Metal Trilogy' was released in 2014 called *Trolsk sortmetall 1993-1997*. Though Ulver shifted musical styles the band and its longest serving member, Kristoffer Rygg, have remained important within the Norwegian black metal scene.

⁴⁷⁴ Only on a few occasions has Darkthrone used a clear, unaltered photograph as cover art. This occurred on the four track EP *NWOBHM (New Wave of Black Heavy Metal)* from 2009. The cover art appears to be a vacation photograph taken from a hiking trip through the Norwegian countryside. In addition, Darkthrone's most recent releases *The Underground Resistance* from 2013 and *Arctic Thunder* from 2016 also have color on their cover art.

mountains came on the 1996 full-length record *Total Death*. This record had different cover art depending on the format. The CD version's cover art depicts a rocky lunar-like landscape that looks as if it was set on the surface of some sort of extraterrestrial object in space.⁴⁷⁵ The source of light in the image comes from a distant sun that casts a white light on the surface which reflects a blue hue on an otherwise dark image. In contrast to the otherworldly location on the CD version, the cover art of the vinyl version is a borderless black and white photo of a snowy mountainside.⁴⁷⁶ The achromatic scheme of the image enhances the angles of the jagged, rock face and the impression of a harsh, cold, and foreboding place. Only the addition of the band logo, in the upper left, and the release title, camouflaged at the center bottom, disrupts the totality of stone and rock in the image. These factors give an impression that is similar to how mountains were long conceived before the ascent of Romanticism. While the mountain in the image fits this conception, at the same time it is possible to read the image as national romantic as it conveys the immemorial sense of the remote and awe-inspiring.

Darkthrone uses mountains, and their accompanying landscape, again on the 1999 full-length release *Ravishing Grimness*. This record proved to be something of a shift for Darkthrone. The theme of this album is less overtly anti-Christian and Satanic than those that came before, something that is recognizable in the visual aesthetics on the release. The original release of this full length has cover art of a forest photograph in black and white.⁴⁷⁷ A thick band of black at the top and white on the bottom borders the image. While this is consistent with Darkthrone's previous visual aesthetics, below the band logo and, centered in the middle, is a superimposed image of an older man's face. On the 2011 re-release of *Ravishing Grimness*, similar visual components are used but instead of a photograph the image is an artistic rendering in the same style that would be used on later records.⁴⁷⁸ The forest is again depicted on this version, yet this time it is shown with the head of a figure lying horizontally across the image which bears a striking resemblance to the high, rounded mountains found in Norway. In addition, the spruce trees within the figure's head do not rise out of soil or dirt, but instead emanate from round, boulder like objects that add to the already existing mountain semiotics of the image. Standing above this figure are several dark, hooded figures who fade into the murky background. The tone of the image is

Otherwise, all of Darkthrone's release cover art has been predominantly dominated by achromatic shades of black and white.

⁴⁷⁵ Darkthrone. *Total Death*. Moonfog Productions FOG 011, 1996, compact disc.

⁴⁷⁶ Darkthrone. *Total Death*. Peaceville Records VILELP329LP, 2011, 33⅓ rpm.

⁴⁷⁷ Darkthrone. *Ravishing Grimness*. Moonfog Productions FOG 023, 1999, compact disc.

⁴⁷⁸ Darkthrone. *Ravishing Grimness*. Peaceville Records VILELP350, 2011, 33⅓ rpm.

cryptic and ominous, yet regardless whether the figure is sleeping or dead, it is possible to assume that the line between humanity and nature is blurred. Reading the image this way suggests that nature, and the people connected to it, are unchanged by time.

Whether used literally or metaphorically, mountains occupy a significant space in the conceptualization and expression of nature in Norwegian black metal. Gjenferdsel, Graatindr, Formloff, and Enslaved are indicative of the ways Norwegian black metal has approached mountains throughout the genre's existence. In each case, mountains and their associated scenery are depicted through photographs that communicate a national romantic conceptualization of nature. As such, the grandeur and sublime that Gude and Tidemand express in their work can be found in the images used by these bands. At the same time, these expressions are also imbued with a feeling of isolation that highlights how mountains are places of retreat and separation where one as an individual can commune with the spirituality of nature. These notions then become aligned with egalitarian individualism as they express not only a sense of communing with the divine, but also stress a degree of imagined sameness as all are equal when compared to the vastness of the surrounding landscape.

Likewise, Ulver and Darkthrone actualize a similar sentiment when they present mountains in their releases. Even though Ulver's cover art is permeated with folkloric fantasy, mountains retain their feeling of isolation and retreat. In the case of Darkthrone, the different versions of *Total Death* and *Ravishing Grimness* demonstrate differing ways that notions of separation and distance can be communicated to the viewer. While the cover of the vinyl version of *Total Death* stresses the barren, inhospitable terrain of a mountain, the 2011 re-release of *Ravishing Grimness* visualizes nature as bound within the mind of the individual, albeit one who seems to be also absorbed physically into the landscape. In either case, Darkthrone and Ulver transmit notions of egalitarian individualism and an unchanging notion of Norwegian identity in ways that are consistent with those presenting this type of nature in a more literal way. Mountains and their associated landscapes are shown as places of escape, separation, and inward focus while, at the same time, are conveyed as primordial spaces that the individual can retreat into that contrasts with urban life.

6.2.3 Feeble Screams from Forests Unknown

Along with mountains and *fjeller*, forests have an important place in the conceptualization of the landscape. Just like mountains, forests were a part of nature that was 'discovered' during the nineteenth century and given meaning as a part of Norway's national inheritance and cultural heritage. Throughout the century, national romantic artists and writers such as

Cappelen, Dahl, and Wergeland used forest motifs. While some these depictions and descriptions were set within the frame of a more ‘tamed’ and ‘cultivated’ idea of forests at the time, other works still captured the majestic, wild, and dramatic qualities of this part of the landscape. In doing so, they were able to build an imagining of forests that made them indispensable to the formation of Norwegian identity. These national romantic contributors set the frame from which forests would become integrated and carried into cultural memory. However, the use of forests within the scope of Norwegian black metal often rejects the idea that they were ‘tamed’ within the bounds of agriculture. Rather, when used in Norwegian black metal forests appear more as dark, mystical, and wild places. Despite some differences, bands using the theme still connect to a romantic sentiment expressed by writers and artists of the nineteenth century. When used visually, forests are nearly always shown as dark, mysterious, wild, and dramatic. In this way, the bands using forests demonstrate a negotiation of cultural memory that meets the demands of the black metal aesthetic.

In the case of Darkthrone, references to forests are found as early as 1992 from the full-length record *Under a Funeral Moon* on the track “Inn i de dype skogers favn.”⁴⁷⁹ While an oak tree is mentioned in the lyrics of the title track of the record, the reference to forest is less direct than what is found on “Inn i de dype skogers favn.” Rather than simply mentioning an oak tree, the reference to forests in “Inn i de dype skogers favn” is set in a lyrical narrative that is not only written in Norwegian, but also conjures an image of Norwegian nature with references to *ffellet* and hiking deep in *dunkle skogsriket*.⁴⁸⁰ Compounding this Norwegian setting is the mentioning of Norway itself, which definitively sets the locational frame of the lyrics.⁴⁸¹ Beyond the lyrics of this track, a reference to forests can be seen visually on the cover art and serves as an early example of how black metal’s visual aesthetics were combined with Norwegian forests.

Released a year after *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, *Under a Funeral Moon* adopts much of the same visual aesthetics of its predecessor.⁴⁸² However, there is a key difference between the two covers, namely the setting of the photograph. The clarity and quality of the image is low and, even though

⁴⁷⁹ “Inn i de dype skogers favn,” Darkthrone. *Under a Funeral Moon*. Peaceville Records Vile 35CD, 1993, compact disc.

⁴⁸⁰ Darkthrone. *Under a Funeral Moon*. Peaceville Records Vile 35CD, 1993, compact disc.

⁴⁸¹ This track was the first Norwegian black metal track to use Norwegian lyrics in any capacity. In doing so, Darkthrone stood out as unique and different not just in terms of black metal, but of metal music as a whole. Few bands, outside those in the Anglophone world made use of their native language at this point. Instead, most bands used English text and lyrics.

⁴⁸² Prior to *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, Darkthrone was for all intents and purposes a death metal band.

much of the picture is hidden in black, it is still clear that the photograph was taken in a wooded setting. Standing next to a corpse-painted and cloaked Ted 'Nocturno Culto' Skjellum, is a well-lit tree that is illuminated either by a camera flash or another light source that comes from behind the photographer. While Darkthrone's vocalist and guitarist is almost entirely shrouded in black, his corpse-painted face is exposed, with the white of the paint and well-lit foreground tree serving as stark contrasts to the heavy, black forest that takes up the rest of the image. The tone of the image is undoubtedly dark, haunting, and filled with foreboding and fits with the overall intent of the early days of Norwegian black metal. At the same time, it is still important to note the setting of the image. The band chose a forest as opposed to a decaying urban building or graveyard, two locales that might convey similar feelings, indicates an early appreciation and connection to the rural settings and serves to reflect the centrality of nature within Norwegian identity.

A similar presentation of nature is on Darkthrone's 1995 full-length record *Panzerfaust*. Named after the famed German anti-armor weapon of World War II, the cover art of *Panzerfaust* continues the achromatic scheme of Darkthrone's previous releases.⁴⁸³ The image is grainy and dark, effects that were likely added to filter out the light emanating from the sun in the center of the photograph. In the background of the image, black trees extend into an open sky while a strip of snow-covered ground is visible in the foreground. There is a figure in the center of the image who only appears as an outline and whose body is difficult to differentiate from the surrounding trees. As on previous Darkthrone records, the forest is not only an integral component of the cover art, but mentioned in the final song title of the release. The track "Snø og granskog" is musically a strange track featuring droning horn-styled synthesizers and Gylve 'Fenriz' Nagell reciting the Norwegian poet Tarjei Vesaas's poem "Snø og granskog." The poem is not made available in the liner notes, yet the track is clearly spoken and altered only with the slight addition of reverb, thus giving the lines an echoed clarity. Due to this, it is possible to hear Vesaas's poem, its heralding of forests, and the eternal centrality they hold as Norway's *innlandshjarte*.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, this sentiment combined with the cover art gives *Panzerfaust* a distinct connection to the sylvan landscapes of Norway.

As one of the first bands in the scene and first to release music with an international record label, Darkthrone had a significant influence on how Norwegian black metal developed at the time and into the future. Yet, this is not to say that forests are used the same way by all of Norwegian black metal. While some uses of this theme have been consistent with what Darkthrone has done, others have used forests differently. As such, the

⁴⁸³ Darkthrone. *Under a Funeral Moon*. Peaceville Vile35CD, 1993, compact disc.

⁴⁸⁴ Chapman 1969, 118-119.

use of forests within the expression of cultural memory is done in three ways. These include the use of forest through text, achromatic cover art, and colored cover art. Like Darkthrone, numerous other bands have used forests in their thematic content. This is perhaps most evident when bands have used references to forests or other types of wooded landscapes in their band name. Arguably the most prominent case of this is with Carpathian Forest, but others, such as In the Woods... and Forgotten Woods, are also examples. However, forests appear more often within song titles, lyrics, and on cover art, such as “Svartskogs Gilde” from Borknagar’s 1996 self-titled full-length release, Carpathian Forest’s song “The Frostbitten Woodlands of Norway” off of the 2006 record *Fuck You All!!!! Caput tuum in ano est*, or the cover art of Djevel’s 2013 full-length effort *Besatt av maane og natt*.⁴⁸⁵

While it is not uncommon for bands to express this theme in the ways done by Borknagar, Carpathian Forest, and Djevel, there are also some bands that makes forests even more central. Kampfar is a prime example of a band that has done this. Formed in 1994, Kampfar has a long list of releases. While the band has also used themes relating to Norse mythology, it has also made consistent visual and textual use of forests over their entire career. Though later releases by the band have seen a broadening of thematic focus, several of Kampfar’s early releases are replete with forest related themes. The first instance of this came on the 1996 eponymous EP. While the EP’s three tracks do not follow this theme, the cover art is of a colorful photograph a gathering of trees along a water bank. In the background, a forest dressed in vivid, autumnal coloring rises up the side of a large hill. The coloring and texture of the image give the cover art a painted quality that would not be out of place in a painting by Gude and Tidemand.

The reference to forests appears again on Kampfar’s 1997 full-length record *Mellom skogkledde aaser*. Though the lyrics and cover art relate to other themes in Norwegian cultural memory, forests are referenced in the release’s title.⁴⁸⁶ While this is the only place forest landscapes are mentioned on this release, it appears visually on the cover art of *Fra Underverdenen* in 1999, in the lyrics of the songs “Lyktemenn” and “Gaman og drømmer” from *Kvass* in 2006, and again on the cover art of *Heimgang* from 2008.⁴⁸⁷ In each of these cases forests are used in the same way as

⁴⁸⁵ “Svartskogs Gilde,” Borknagar, *Borknagar*, Malicious Records MR 012, 1996, compact disc; “The Frostbitten Woodlands of Norway,” Carpathian Forest. *Fuck You All!!!! Caput tuum in ano est*. Season of Mist SOM 114, 2006, compact disc; Djevel. *Besatt av maane og natt*. Aftermath Music Chapter 71, 2013, compact disc.

⁴⁸⁶ Kampfar. *Mellom skogkledde aaser*. Malicious Records MR 011, 1997, compact disc.

⁴⁸⁷ Kampfar. *Fra Underverdenen*. Hammerheart Records HHR 034, 1999, compact disc; “Lyktemenn,” Kampfar. *Kvass*. Napalm Record NPR 187, 2006, compact disc; “Gaman og drømmer,” Kampfar. *Kvass*. Napalm Record NPR 187, 2006, compact disc.

on Kampfar's eponymous EP. The cover arts used on *Fra Underverdenen* and *Heimgang* are darker in tone and dominated by shades of green, both covers nonetheless still connect to a romanticized notion of Norwegian nature stemming from the nineteenth century. The same can also be said of the lyrical references to forests in Kampfar's songs as well as those by Borknagar and Carpathian Forest. In each case the forest is represented as mysterious and dark, thus illustrating how these bands individually negotiate this aspect of cultural memory in relation to the aesthetics of black metal. This is also evident when Djevel and Darkthrone use forests. Though their visual representation of forests is done according to the achromatic standards so often seen across all of black metal, the forest depicted always includes a number of components that allow the viewer to recognize the image as Norwegian. This is most commonly done with the inclusion of trees and vegetation native to Norway. However, other aspects such as the use of Norwegian lyrics and song titles and the specific reference to Norway also establish this context. Thus, when forests are used in Norwegian black metal it is set within the frame of Norwegian cultural memory as it always either implicitly or explicitly references Norway as the setting.

6.2.4 At the Heart of Winter

While mountains and forests are two types of nature used in Norwegian black metal, a third type is also consistently used by several bands. Though not necessarily tied to a specific rural landscape per say, winter, and its associated characteristics, is a frequent theme. Winter was not heavily used by the early national romantics of the nineteenth century. Snow and other winter elements do indeed appear in the works of Gude and Tidemand, but they are not typically the focus of a given piece.⁴⁸⁸ Yet, it is still possible to see winter portrayed as a part of an ideal conceptualization of Norway. This is particularly evident in the latter part of the century with several Norwegian artists having integrated winter into their work. Though the theme was used by Krohg, Munthe, Kittelsen, and Werenskiold, Munch also had several paintings centered on winter related themes. Some of these works appear at an early stage in his career and include *Utsikt fra Fossveien* (1881) and *Øvre Foss gård om vinteren* (1881-82). However, the theme reappeared throughout different periods of Munch's life and is visible in paintings such as *Vinternatt* (1900-01), *Ender og kalkuner i vinterlandskap* (1913), and *Snølandskap om natten* (1923-26). Munch is best known for his expressionist style, vibrant use of color, and the paintings *Skrik* (1893) and

⁴⁸⁸ While their most renowned works do not deal with winter, the two artists did have some pieces that included the theme

Madonna (1894).⁴⁸⁹ However, winter was an important theme for Munch and his inclusion of this theme over the course of his career demonstrates that he too took inspiration from Norwegian nature.

Of course, Munch was not alone in using winter as a theme in his work. Throughout the years Munch was active, other works such as Frits Thaulow's *Gate in Kragør* (1882), Gustav Wentzel's *Vinterkveld* (1893), Jacob Gløersen's *Vinter* (1894), and Harald Sohlberg's *Vinternatt i Rondene* (1914) are indicative of how the theme was consistently used during this time. Despite differences in artistic style, winter and its associated aesthetics of snow and barren trees are present in each of these works. Moreover, except for *Vinternatt i Rondene*, these showcase the phenomenon of Nordic light that became a focus for artists across Scandinavia. However, even in the case of *Vinternatt i Rondene*, the light emanating from the moon illuminates the landscape and vividly reflects off the snow-covered landscape. As such, light can be seen to have a significant role in how winter is depicted by these artists during this period.

When used by Norwegian black metal, winter is presented with some of the same characteristics as during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Since the start of the scene in the early 1980s there have been references to phenomena associated with winter. An early example is provided by Mayhem on the track "Freezing Moon." This appeared first on the 1992 live album *Live in Leipzig*, then again on the full-length record as a studio recording on *De Mysteriis dom Sathanas* from 1994, and another time on the single *Freezing Moon* from 1996.⁴⁹⁰ Other bands from this early phase in the genre also consistently used winter and winter-related motifs. Examples include the songs "Where Cold Winds Blow" and "The Pagan Winter" by Darkthrone from *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* in 1992, Enslaved's aforementioned record *Frost*, and the song "Min hyllest til vinterland" by Satyricon on *Dark Medieval Times*.⁴⁹¹

Winter and its related themes have been continually used to the present. Take, for example, Khold's band name and song "Der kulden rår" from the album *Hundre år gammel* in 2008, Vreid's 2007 track "Under isen" from the record *I Krig*, and the songs "Sorgvinter" and "Et kaldt rike" from the

⁴⁸⁹ The painting has three other versions that were made between 1893 and 1910 and vary in material used.

⁴⁹⁰ Mayhem. *Live in Leipzig*. Obscure Plasma 92 007, 1993, 33⅓ rpm; Mayhem. *De Mysteriis dom Sathanas*. Deathlike Silence Productions Anti-Mosh 006, 1994, compact disc; Mayhem. *Freezing Moon*. Black Metal Records BMR 002, 1996, 45 rpm.

⁴⁹¹ "Where a Cold Wind Blows," Darkthrone. *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*. Peaceville Records VILE 28CD, 1992, compact disc; "The Pagan Winter," Darkthrone. *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*. Peaceville Records VILE 28CD, 1992, compact; "Min hyllest til vinterland," Satyricon. *Dark Medieval Times*. Moonfog Productions FOG 001, 1994, compact disc.

1997 album *Blot* by Mactätus.⁴⁹² Winter is presented in several ways in these works. For Khold, winter is expressed through a conceptual template that has no other uses of history or expressions of cultural memory. Rather, Khold relies on a more traditional black metal visual aesthetic and lyrical themes of death and darkness. Khold contrasts with Vreid and Mactätus in this way. Both Vreid and Mactätus use Norwegian history but do so in different ways. While Vried's *I Krig* revolves around a theme of Norwegian resistance during World War II, *Blot*'s cover art uses an aesthetic associated with Norse mythology and the Viking period. Despite their disparate themes, Khold, Vreid, and Mactätus all use winter and its related themes to contribute to their main thematic concept. In doing so, they connect to a theme that has been present in the imagining of Norwegian culture since at least the late nineteenth century.

When these bands, and those of the early 1990s, use this theme they tend to do so in a way that interprets winter within the aesthetic constraints of black metal. At the same time, this theme is almost always presented in a way that directly connects it to Norway. Even with a band, like Khold, that has more traditional black metal themes, Norwegian lyrics are used which set a distinct Norwegian frame to the conceptual content. This gives both Khold and their use of winter themes authenticity, as Norway stereotypically has long, cold, and dark winters. Likewise, both Vreid and Mactätus reference winter themes in the broader scope of Norwegian commemoration. For Vried on "Under isen," Norwegian resistance is conceptualized as simmering under the icy surface of the German occupation waiting to rise and take back their mountains, lakes, and countryside. Over the course of the track, Norwegian resistance is a metaphor for the coming spring and the winter that must be endured. While Vried is the only Norwegian black metal band to address the German occupation in any significant way, they have done so repeatedly. Indeed, the full-length record *Milorg* from 2009, the single *Noen å hate* from 2010, and the live DVD *Vreid Goddamnit* also contain the theme of German resistance.⁴⁹³ Yet, "Under isen" is the only track to use the theme through the medium of winter. The implication is that Norwegians are hardy and tough people who can withstand the rigors of the Winter. Thus, "Under isen" winter represents winter as a part of life pridefully borne by all Norwegians which makes them adept at outlasting foreign occupation.

⁴⁹² "Der kulden rår," Khold. *Hundre år gammal*. Tabu Recordings TABU 029, 2008, compact disc; "Under isen," Vreid. *I krig*. Indie Recordings, INDIE005CD, 2007, compact disc; "Sorgvinter," Mactätus. *Blot*. Embassy Productions TE 04, 1997, compact disc; "Et kaldt rike," Mactätus. *Blot*. Embassy Productions TE 04, compact disc.

⁴⁹³ Vried. *Milorg*. Indie Recordings INDIE019CD, 2009, compact disc; Vried. *Noen å hate*. Indie Recordings, 2010, mp3; Vried. *Vried Goddamnit*. Indie Recordings INDIEDVD, 2010, digital video disc.

The rigors of winter are also conveyed by Mactätus on *Blot* with the tracks “Sorgvinter,” “Et kaldt rike,” and “Hat og kulde.” Each of the tracks references either winter as something paired with sorrow and hate or as a seemingly unpleasant adjective describing a kingdom. Yet, the first track of the record, “Black Poetry,” demonstrates the degree to which Mactätus incorporates winter into the record’s concept. The opening lyrics of the track, which repeat a second time later in the seven-minute song, contain the lines, “From the frozen woods of Norway. The spirit from the old trees. The charisma of thousand frozen lakes. And the mountains are so dark and cold.”⁴⁹⁴ Not only are the characteristics of winter referenced in connection to different types of landscapes, the setting of Norway is immediately given in the first lines of the song. In doing so, Mactätus not only establishes this song as Norwegian but frames the entire record that follows. As such, Mactätus, like Vried and Khold, use themes of winter that are firmly set within the greater context of Norway.

While these bands demonstrate the way winter and its related themes are used in text, other Norwegian black metal bands use this theme more comprehensively. One band, Immortal, stands out in this regard. Immortal uses winter as a significant part of their conceptual frame but do so in ways that demonstrate the ways winter is negotiated within the bounds of cultural memory. As one of the first, most well known, and most caricatured bands in Norwegian black metal, Immortal has had a significant part in the development and conceptualization of the genre. Formed in Bergen in 1990, Immortal gained notoriety not just for their music, but also for their visual aesthetic and thematic concept. In what has come to be a time capsule of the youthful exuberance of Norwegian black metal’s early days, Immortal’s music video for “Call of the Wintermoon” from 1992 sees the band dressed in full-stage costume running through a forest and amongst the ruins of Lyse Abbey, an old Cistercian monastery near Lysefjord outside of Bergen.⁴⁹⁵ Like their Western Norway counterpart, Enslaved, Immortal followed a thematic path that was different from what was done in Oslo. As opposed to Satanism, and indeed the overt use of Vikings and Norse mythology, Immortal embedded themselves deep in a fantasy world of their own creation called Blashyrkh, a “realm of eternal winter, ice and black ravens circling on storm swept skies.”⁴⁹⁶ While their untitled demo from 1991 is ambiguous regarding this theme, Immortal’s eponymous EP released the same year shows the beginnings of their exploration of the Blashyrkh concept.⁴⁹⁷ Founding members Olve ‘Abbath’ Eikemo and Harald ‘Demonaz’

⁴⁹⁴ “Black Poetry,” Mactätus. *Blot*. Embassy Productions TE 04, 1997, compact disc.

⁴⁹⁵ Sauermann 2014, 52.

⁴⁹⁶ Sauermann 2014, 55.

⁴⁹⁷ Immortal. *Immortal*. Listenable Records POSH 0003, 1991, 45 rpm.

Nævdal created Blashyrkh both as a means to set themselves apart from the rest of the Norwegian black metal scene and to express their feelings of isolation during the Bergen winter.⁴⁹⁸ Though characterized by everlasting winter, persistent warfare, and inhabited by winterdemons, it is important to understand that, despite the trappings of masculine fantasy and escapism, Blashyrkh is based on a more tangible reality.

A basic reading of Blashyrkh sees it as a simple reflection of the often-harsh winter weather that typifies the Norwegian climate. Granted, winter in Norway is more diverse than what is represented in Blashyrkh. Yet, Blashyrkh still conveys an overall impression of Norwegian nature. In Norwegian black metal, Immortal was not necessarily the first to use winter in this way as cold, snow, frost and other descriptors of winter were common among other early Norwegian black metal bands, such as Darkthrone, Arcturus, and Satyricon. Yet, Immortal is unique in making winter their main theme. This can be seen across nearly every release Immortal has produced. An illustrative example is the release title, song titles, and cover art of the full-length record *At the Heart of Winter* from 1999.⁴⁹⁹ Only Immortal's eponymous demo and 2000 full-length release *Damned in Black* fail to include explicit references to winter.⁵⁰⁰ However, at least in the case of *Damned in Black*, the argument can still be made for its implicit inclusion through the Blashyrkh concept which itself is at the very least strongly connected to themes of winter.

On the surface, it is clear that place, specifically Norway, plays a role in how Immortal conceptualizes their thematic content. This is made evident through Abbath's and Demonaz's conception of Blashyrkh being born of direct experience with Bergen winters. Yet, there is no discounting the escapism that this fantasy world provides. This is not just due to the simple fact that Blashyrkh is fictional, but also because this fictional realm picks up themes of a retreat from multiplicity and a desire to isolate oneself in an inaccessible world. While these are helpful aspects to understanding Immortal's use of place, the representation and utilization of winter as an operative theme not only shows an appreciation of Norwegian nature, but is indicative of a larger discursive trend that Immortal had an important role in establishing. What the use of winter then shows is the attempt at renegotiating what parts of nature 'belong' within Norwegian cultural memory. Thus, winter, and all its descriptive attributes, is repurposed to meet the aesthetic demands of black metal. At the same time, the way winter is used is still reflective of the framework of cultural memory in Norway since the late nineteenth century. Thus, Immortal exemplifies

⁴⁹⁸ Sauermann 2014, 54.

⁴⁹⁹ Immortal. *At the Heart of Winter*. Osmose Productions OPCD 079, 1999, compact disc.

⁵⁰⁰ Immortal. *Damned in Black*. Osmose Productions OPCD 095, 2000, compact disc.

how winter is individually actualized in at the collective level of cultural memory. Hence, whether the location is fictional or not, Norway remains the backdrop from which place is imagined and is central to how Immortal's fantasy world is framed.

6.3 Summary

As a key component to the imagining of a unique and independent Norway, nature and the landscape have long been themes through which commemorative practice has been created and negotiated. Not only were they a central thematic focus for Norwegian artists and writers during the nineteenth century, but nature and the landscape were also a central focus in politics and the economy. In these instances, nature and landscapes were integrated into the collective imagining of Norway as a nation in order to build a sense of sameness and bridge political divides. Artists and writers like Gude, Tidemand, and Wergeland were instrumental in building Romantic attachment to the land. Their work was reflective of the bourgeois project that sought to construct a more liberal conceptualization of a unique Norwegian identity that could include all Norwegians. While this process faced opposition by other groups who had their own vision for a more limited notion of Norwegian identity, it would ultimately be the more liberal conceptualization that took hold, became a part of the broader push for autonomy from the Swedish crown, and set the course for a greater sense of nationalism that was institutionalized through policy and culture.

Set within the scope of this broader conceptualization of Norwegian exceptionalism was also an increased recognition of regional identifiers. The creation of *Nynorsk* and its eventual acknowledgement as an official form of Norwegian was indicative of domestic cultural disputes that stressed the promotion of cultural forms that were authentically Norwegian and not overtly connected to Denmark or Sweden. Regional landscapes and the specific cultural traditions associated with them, such as agricultural practices and folk music, were tied to these struggles. The degree to which regional identity has persisted is evidenced through Vømmøl Spellemanslag, folk music revivals and competitions, and the performative farming practiced by the contestants of NRK's *Radiokappleik*. Taake, Windir, and Dimmu Borgir exemplify some of the ways this project has been taken up in Norwegian black metal. For Taake, specific geography, dialect, and symbols from Hordaland are used while Windir used dialect, national romantic works, and historical events from Sogn og Fordane to express regional identity. While both Taake and Windir are from Western Norway, an area characterized by a strong sense of regional identity, Dimmu Borgir is from Oslo. As the capital of Norway

and the place where Bokmål is spoken, Dimmu Borgir does not use dialect or symbols to express the region. Instead, the band focuses on an idyllic lake and its surrounding landscape found outside of Norway's biggest city. As such, Dimmu Borgir illustrates how even those from urban areas and not connected to an area typically associated with regionalism can still express an association with a given landscape.

At the same time, the emphasis given to region in Norwegian black metal is inseparable from the frame of Norwegian commemorative practice. This is the case with all three bands discussed, but it is particularly apparent with Taake and Windir. As their thematic concepts include a significant amount of regionalism, the presence of national symbols highlights the degree to which regional identifiers are still dependent on broader notions of Norway. The national symbols allow for these bands to connect and conceptualize themselves as being a part of the national imagined community while retaining their individual local identities. Thus, an imagined sense of sameness is present despite regional notions of identity that emphasize difference.

When it comes to the other uses of nature and the landscape in Norwegian black metal, a similar process can be seen. Rather than nature and the landscape being connected to a specific expression of regional identity, these themes are expressed in more generalized ways that are consistent with how they were portrayed during the nineteenth century. Of course, there are differences in how nature and the landscape are expressed in Norwegian black metal. Yet, this indicates a process of negotiation rather than a complete break with the way these themes were portrayed in the past. The main differences are found in the overall darkening of nature and the landscape. Bands using mountains and forests accentuate the foreboding aspect of nature. When mountains are used, there is an emphasis on isolation, open spaces, and distance. These traits appear whether mountains are portrayed in connection to *hytter*, cairns, or presented in the context of a landscape photograph or painting. When portrayed in this way, mountains and their associated landscapes become enshrined as locations unchanged by time. The construction of mountains can thus be seen as instrumental in Norway and Norwegians as a land and a people unique and unchanging as the *fjellene* themselves.

Likewise, forests are given similar attributes and take on some of the same traits conveyed by mountains in cultural memory. During the nineteenth century, forests were seen as a characteristic feature of Norway. Forests have been long-associated with agrarian practices that sought to tame them. Despite this, nineteenth-century national romantics, such as Cappelen and Wergeland, portrayed them as dark and contemplative. Forests were places that were styled as remote, gloomy, and portrayed or described in terms that made them seem timeless and reflective of the Norwegian people. Forests also signified Norwegian exceptionality and

have become an important part of how nature has been represented in cultural memory. When Norwegian black metal bands have used forests in their thematic content, these same qualities are conveyed. However, Norwegian black metal bands have taken what the national romantics did and portrayed forests as even more brooding and mysterious. In doing so, band's using forests as a part of their theme build on what was done in the nineteenth century and accentuate what had been done before. Yet, in portraying forests in this way, Norwegian black metal bands do not dissociate from the Norwegian exceptionalism. Rather, by enhancing the gloom and mystery of forests, they amplify their primordial quality and, by association, connect to the nationalist project that claimed Norwegian exceptionalism through the same theme. More importantly, however, when forests are used in Norwegian black metal they are almost always represented in Norwegian terms. This has been done either by explicitly citing Norway in the lyrics or titles of a release or by visually portraying Norwegian tree species. In short, forests have remained a central theme through which Norway's landscape was conceived in the nineteenth century and a theme that continues to be used in Norwegian black metal. This use of nature explicitly ties Norwegian black metal to this aspect of Norwegian nature. It allows the bands using this theme to instill a notion of Norwegian identity that is consistent with national romanticism. Thus, using forests explicitly ties Norwegian black metal to primordial notions of Norwegian identity that were developed in the nineteenth century and demonstrates that such notions have continued to the present.

A similar process is at work when considering how themes of winter are used. Again, Norwegian black metal bands tend to use these themes in dark, heavier tones that match the aesthetics of black metal. Yet, when winter is used it is still expressed in the frame of Norway and Norwegian commemorative practice. Despite their varying themes, Khold, Vreid, and Mactätus all tie attributes of winter to the context of Norway. While Khold does this by using Norwegian lyrics, Vreid and Mactätus both use winter against the backdrop of Norwegian history. This is consistent with the way other aspects of nature are used in Norwegian black metal. At the same time, they demonstrate how winter persists as an associative symbol for perseverance in the face of adversity, a notion particularly evident in the lyrics of Vreid's "Under isen." Though Khold, Vreid, and Mactätus all reference winter in connection to Norway, Immortal demonstrates that a distinctively Norwegian view of nature can still be glimpsed even in the context of a violent, hyper-masculine imaginary world.

When all the references to nature and the landscape are taken into consideration, it is evident that they are prevalent in Norwegian black metal. This notion is represented whether through forests, mountains, or winter. Whenever these parts of nature were used in the nineteenth century or by black metal, they are consistently placed in Norway. A

similar notion is present when considering regionalism. These identities, which in large part include landscapes specific to a given region, were established to promote regional distinction. However, rather than suggesting that a regional identity was somehow separate from the national context, broader national romantic sentiments of Norway permeate these regional expressions of identity. Thus, by using the landscape, these regional identities work to enhance the notion that Norwegian identity is unchanged by time. Here again, regional uniqueness works not just in the same manner as Norwegian identity, but complements a primordial notion of the Norwegian nation and its people. This imagined identity, which stretches into time immemorial, has since become integrated into cultural memory through institutionalization. Though generally given a darker tone in Norwegian black metal, there remains a strong connection with the ways nature and the landscape were portrayed during the nineteenth century. Bands who actualize nature and landscape in this way then also use history as well as express cultural memory. In doing so, nature and the landscape convey the same meanings associated with egalitarian individualism and *likhet*. Thus, Norwegian black metal connects to a conception of primordial 'Norwegian-ness' that stems from the nineteenth century and has continued to the present day while, at the same time, authenticate themselves as a Norwegian phenomenon.

Conclusion

Over the course of the dissertation it has been demonstrated that Norwegian history and cultural memory have had a significant impact on the thematic and aesthetic output of many black metal bands. These were not, of course, the only things that helped create Norwegian black metal: the musical and thematic template established by the likes of Venom, Mercyful Fate, Celtic Frost, and Bathory and older proto-metal bands like Led Zeppelin were of tremendous importance. At the same time, the thematic foundations of Norwegian black metal owes a great deal to fantasy literature and RPGs, particularly those associated with Tolkien's Middle-Earth. As attested to by Emperor, Isengard, and Burzum, such themes provided a vital frame from which a later interest in certain parts of Norwegian history and identity were derived. Yet, what can be said of the three primary analytical categories?—folk narratives, Vikings and Norse mythology, and nature and the landscape.

As noted in the introduction, Norwegian black metal's position in Norway has changed over time. During the early 1990s it was demonized for violent and criminal behavior that included murder and the arson of one of the country's oldest cultural heritage sites. These transgressions were met with a media storm that represented by Norwegian black metal scene members as Satan-worshipping threats to society, a feeling that was heightened with the arrest and trial of Vikernes. Fast-forwarding to the present, the situation has almost completely reversed with Norwegian black metal artists being promoted across the globe by official extensions of the Norwegian government. Moreover, there has been an increasing recognition of the music's value from Norwegian cultural institutions over the past two and a half decades. Whether winning national music awards, receiving grants for the pursuit of artistic endeavors, or being promoted by government institutions, there has been a significant change in how Norwegian black metal has been appreciated. On the surface, it is easy to assume that the constant in the relationship between Norway and Norwegian black metal would be the country itself. However, such an

assumption is wrong in this case. As shown over the course of this dissertation, Norwegian black metal has been remarkably consistent over time. Changes have occurred, but the template has remained largely the same in this regard over the twenty-five-year period observed. Granted, the prevalence of corpse-painted band members striking menacing poses on release covers has diminished since the early 1990s. However, with the initial introduction of history use and cultural memory expression by the likes of Enslaved, Burzum, Darkthrone, and Immortal, these themes have over time, come to be even more associated with Norwegian black metal than Satanism or the Occult. After all, what makes these bands Norwegian is not the fact that they are transgressive, but that they reproduce something Norwegian.

7.1 Recapping Theory and Method

In assessing what exactly makes Norwegian black metal Norwegian, this dissertation explored as many bands as possible. Rather than relying on only a few bands to make assumptions about this style of music, a total of 560 bands were analyzed covering a twenty-five-year period from 1988 to 2013. This means that all bands that could be considered black metal and from Norway were included. With a source base of this size, it was possible to see consistencies both in what was used and what was not in terms of Norwegian black metal's themes and aesthetics. To answer the main questions—what is 'Norwegian' about Norwegian black metal and what are its influences?—instances of Norwegian history use were noted across all releases from a given band by analyzing the cover art, lyrics, liner notes, song titles, release title, and band name. From this point, categories were established which included several sub-categories in each to account for the variances observed in the main categories. These subcategories include: the Black Death, trolls, and general characters and creatures of Norwegian folk narratives in the folk narrative category; the Eddas and the Medieval Kingdom of Norway, the idealized Vikings, and mythological cosmology and mysticism in the category of Vikings and Norse mythology; forests, mountains, winter, and the idealized landscape in the main category of nature and the landscape. By including subcategories, it was possible to account for all the potential ways Norwegian black metal connects to cultural memory. This meant that the dissertation could address not just the most common tropes, including those that have been previously studied, but also include those uses of history and expressions of cultural memory that would be missed in narrower studies.

In approaching the sources, Ruth Wodak's 'abductive approach' was used to build the context. By moving between the context and the sources,

a fuller historical context was constructed which illuminated the different ways folk narratives, Vikings and Norse mythology, and nature and the landscape were used before their use in Norwegian black metal. The recognition of meaning and relevance in the main categories, and their corresponding subcategories, would have been impossible without being able to identify how they were consistent with previous iterations in Norway. Furthermore, to understand how Norwegian black metal used history and expressed cultural memory, a critical discourse analysis-inspired approach by reading *along* and *against* the text was employed. This approach was used to find not just consistencies in history use and cultural memory expression between different bands and releases, but to locate potential silences in the sources as well.

The theoretical framework of the dissertation was created based on the notion of cultural memory as theorized Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann, and Astrid Erll. While Jan and Aleida Assmann recognize individual and collective memory, Erll's cultural memory complex accounts for the possibility that institutions shape an individual's idea about the past while institutions, and other forms of collective memory, are actualized at the individual level. Simply put, the individual and collective levels of cultural memory influence and enable one another. Vital to both levels are the ways through which history is used and expressed. At the collective level, history is made official, expressed through professional historiography, and helps to maintain a broader sense of an imagined identity, particularly when nationalism is concerned. This aspect of collective imagining is directly connected to the creation of 'imagined communities' as contended by Benedict Anderson. Thus, with the collective level of cultural memory, identities are given essentialized characteristics and made to seem timeless and resistant to change. At the individual level, memory and identity is reified through the repetition of mundane nationalism and its unreflexive recognition through a process of metonymy. This individual level of cultural memory, thus, corresponds with Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism and the routine repetition of everyday reminders of national identity.

While Erll's concept of cultural memory accounts for this relationship, it does not necessarily clarify the means through which cultural memory itself could change. To account for change and the recognition that component parts of cultural memory can be discarded and reused at various points, the notion of negotiation, as posited by Stephan Greenblatt and Helge Jordheim, was used. Norman Fairclough's notion of the movement of meaning were vital to understanding of how discourses are not just bound to cyclical processes repetition but made anew through the movement of meaning. In other words, the process of negotiation allows for certain symbols and discursive patterns to be changed and remade to fit the demands and needs of given expression or use.

When this perspective was used to analyze the sources, patterns emerged that showed not just how Norwegian black metal bands used history, but how they were able to remain consistent while at the same time show differences with previous regimes of cultural memory. The consistency shown with respect to cultural memory elucidated an aspect of Norwegian identity that Norwegian anthropologists Tomas Hylland Eriksen and Marianne Gullestad found through their own research. Both Eriksen and Gullestad contend that Norwegian identity is in large part based on a notion of egalitarian individualism centered on the concepts of equality, individualism, and independence. Yet, Gullestad maintains that these notions are beset with contradiction, the primary of which is reflected in the Norwegian word of *likhet* or ‘imagined sameness.’ This term, which stresses likeness and shuns difference, is one that Gullestad identifies as being a core feature that places boundaries on Norwegian identity. With these concepts providing some insight into notion of Norwegian identity and its historical development, it was then possible to turn to the sources and identify how the main categories and corresponding subcategories related to cultural memory, its development, and its maintenance throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

7.2. Analysis in Review

In each of the main analytical categories—folk narratives, Vikings and Norse mythology, and nature and the landscape—nation and the identity building process during the nineteenth century centered around the converging concepts of romanticism and nationalism. These notions were the foundational concepts upon which Norwegian exceptionalism would be promoted. Moreover, they would provide the intellectual basis from which Norwegian cultural memory would form and become passed from one generation to the next. Imbedded in this exceptionalism were notions of equality, individualism, and independence, all of which provided the platform from where the modern sense of egalitarian individualism developed and, consequently, the foundations from which *likhet* and other notions associated with a broader imagined communion gained significance.

7.2.1 Folk Narratives

While present in the earlier part of the century, the 1840s witnessed a sharp increase in national romantic sentiment that was represented through a myriad of artistic endeavors by numerous artists and writers including Hans Gude, Adolph Tidemand, Henrik Ibsen, and Henrik Wergeland. An instrumental aspect to the ‘discovery’ of Norwegian culture and national

identity during the 1840s was the collecting and publication of folk narratives. Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe were significant contributors to the construction of this part of Norwegian identity. Their collections provided inspiration to artists and writers over the course of the century. By the last quarter of the 1800s, Asbjørnsen and Moe's collections had been printed and reprinted in various constellations and were often accompanied by illustrations from notable Norwegian artists of the time.

Primary among the illustrators contributing to these collections was Theodor Kittelsen. Among those illustrations dedicated to depicting trolls, *nøkken*, and other folkloric creatures were different series centered on themes pertaining to Norwegian history. Kittelsen's watercolor series from 1900 containing representations of the folk narratives Tirilil-Tove and Pillar-Guri are exemplary in this regard. In both instances, a theme of resistance is palpable especially when viewed in the broader context of how independence and freedom have been construed in cultural memory. This was not only the case during the nineteenth century when folk narratives were collected, continually published, and cemented into commemorative practice but also during World War II when Norway was occupied by the Germans. Besides when used by Vreid, while themes of resistance during World War II have not often featured in Norwegian black metal, when they do notions of independence and freedom are paramount. Independence and freedom are exemplified through Burzum's use of Kittelsen's *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* as the cover art on Filosofem. Burzum's use of this work is far from coincidental as it features a young woman who could be construed as either of the legendary heroines Tirilil-Tove or Pillar-Guri. Just as the central character in both folk narratives issues a call to resist outsiders, Burzum's musical efforts are Vikernes's call to the Norwegian people to resist the non-Norwegian and embrace their 'true' identities. Vikernes's political sympathies should be considered in this equation. Yet, it is undeniable that the use of *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* as cover art on Filosofem connects to a broader notion found in Norwegian cultural memory since the nineteenth century that prides itself on resisting invaders and foreign influence.

Kittelsen's influence on cultural memory and Norwegian black metal is not limited to *Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur* and his illustrations dedicated to the creatures and characters described in the folk narrative collections of Asbjørnsen and Moe. In terms of Norwegian black metal, Kittelsen's biggest impact has come from *Svartedauen*. Unlike his other works that were lighter in theme and used color, *Svartedauen* was a morbid series devoted to an anthropomorphized representation of the Black Death illustrated in an achromatic scale. This series also differed from the rest of Kittelsen's work in the sense that it was devoted to a part of history that affected all Norwegians regardless of class and social standing. In doing

so, Kittelsen was able to set himself apart from his contemporaries who focused on more heroic periods of Norway's history. This resulted in Kittelsen not only being able to contribute to Norwegian cultural memory in a unique way that corresponded with his own sharp social critique, but also allowed him to establish a bleak and haunting visual imagery that matched folk narratives from arguably one of the most devastating events in Norwegian history.

The illustrations found in *Svartedauen* have been highly influential to the visual aesthetic of Norwegian black metal. In the early days of the scene, the dark and melancholic images in the series paired well with the black metal template that inspired bands. Again, Burzum was the first to use this side of Kittelsen's work on the cover of *Hvis lyset tar oss*. It would not take long until other illustrations from *Svartedauen*, and indeed some of Kittelsen's darker works outside of the series, were used as visual accompaniments in Norwegian black metal. What this shows then is that it was the theme of the Black Death and the brooding atmosphere of Kittelsen's darker works that resonated with Norwegian black metal bands. However, Norwegian black metal bands' use of *Svartedauen* does not mean they necessarily shared Kittelsen's social critiques and desire for a truly national history. The Black Death has persisted as a theme in Norwegian black metal and can be seen not only in bands in the early 1990s, but also as a motif that has persisted to the present. Yet, it is important to recognize that when Norwegian black metal bands use the Black Death as a theme they do so through the lens of Norway. This is typically done by referencing 1349 as the year the disease arrived in Norway, folk narratives retelling the devastation of the event, or through Kittelsen's illustrations from *Svartedauen*. Thus, whether bands are using folk narratives associated with the collections of Asbjørnsen and Moe, related to themes of resisting foreign invasion, or connected to the trauma of the Black Death, they all link to a broader discourse of Norwegian exceptionalism in cultural memory. In each instance, there are firm borders established between what is Norwegian and what is not. In fixing these boundaries, there is a reaffirmation of Norway as a unique and independent entity whether it is through the shared trauma of a devastating disease, the thwarting of foreign invasion, or from the sense of imagined sameness across time and primordial authenticity found in peasant folk narratives.

7.2.2 Vikings and Norse Mythology

A discourse of Norwegian exceptionalism also persists throughout the themes of Vikings and Norse mythology when used in Norwegian black metal. Norwegian black metal's use of Vikings and Norse mythology also has important continuities with the nineteenth century. At the same time,

it is important to recognize that the band are not necessarily repeating the same justifications for exceptionalism that nineteenth-century Norwegian academics made. The biggest difference can be seen in the ways Christianity is presented. Nineteenth-century historians contended that Christianity was a positive force in the Medieval Kingdom of Norway. It was a symbol of Norway's status among the other great European Medieval kingdoms and also connected to the kings Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf II Haraldsson. Interwoven in this conception of the Medieval Kingdom of Norway was at least tacit support for Norwegian political and cultural independence from Sweden and Denmark.

Unlike the nineteenth-century historians, and indeed the composers of the nationalist music movement in the 1920s and 1930s, Norwegian black metal generally views Christianity with contempt. While some of the animosity is attributable to a legacy of transgressive non-conformity found throughout heavy metal's numerous sub-genres, another reason for hostility is the claim that Christianity is foreign to Scandinavia. This argument is not original to Norwegian black metal as the same argument was used by Tomas Forsberg when the Swedish band Bathory shifted its thematic focus from Satanism and the occult to Vikings, Norse mythology, and Asatrú. Though nineteenth-century pan-German *Völkisch* movements had initially made attempts to reconcile Christianity by trying to remove its Semitic roots, some were influenced by Germanic paganism and the Eddas. Over time, this strand became entangled with ultra-conservatism, and its overt anti-Semitism was paired with the occult worship of Odin and runic divination. Though World War II seriously diminished the credibility of *völkisch* movements they resurfaced in the 1960s under different names and remained dedicated to pan-Germanic paganism. Key among the groups that resurfaced after the war were those calling themselves Asatrú, or Asa-faithful, who devoted themselves to the Norse pantheon and reconstructed rituals and ceremonies based on their interpretations from surviving records. While some were not discriminatory, a palpable strain of racism and Germanic racial superiority coursed through these groups. This is particularly true within the cosmology of the more extreme versions of Asatrú dedicated to Odin and those who use the wolf to symbolize their individuality, martial spirit, and resistance to Christianity.

While Asatrú and the first use of the Vikings and Norse mythology as a theme in extreme metal occurred outside of Norway, some bands of the nascent Norwegian black metal scene were quick to adopt them as their primary inspiration. As a result, these themes have become one of the main motifs of the genre. Thor's hammers, runes, and, representations of the strong, conquering male Viking are just some of the ways Viking and Norse mythology themes contribute to an anti-Christian discourse. Moreover, Christianity is consistently positioned as a source of weakness

and treachery. Those who resisted conversion are hailed as heroes while those who converted were deemed to have succumbed to foreign influence. Added to this is the fact that Christianity and Christians are always positioned as being attacked and the victims of violence, a feature that works to enhance the religion's perceived lack of authenticity. In the case of Enslaved, violence towards the monks at Lindisfarne is legitimated by the claim that the attackers were exacting revenge because some Norsemen had converted to Christianity. While a precise narrative regarding the chronology of Christian conversion in Norway is conspicuously lacking, the emotive connection to this part of history and the hostility towards Christianity maintained by the band withstands any demand for any historical accuracy. Norwegian black metal clearly conceives of this period in Norwegian history differently from their nineteenth-century predecessors.

At the same time, there are also significant continuities. Along with presenting Vikings as intrepid explorers as was done in the early twentieth century, some Norwegian black metal bands reaffirm the Norwegian claim to *norron* literature. This is primarily done by alluding to or actually using parts of the Eddas in their lyrics. Burzum, Nidingr, and Solefald each exemplify this, and though they use the Eddas in different ways, in each case they are used to celebrate and co-opt a particular romantic understanding of the past. Moreover, in the cases where Old Norse lyrics are used there is an attempt to bridge the past and the present. The same argument can be made when bands use Icelandic. The fact that Icelandic is still spoken and the official language of a country that has a legitimate claim to *norron* literature is of little consequence. What is more important is the attempt to directly connect to this part of the past by using modern language that most closely resembles Old Norse, the language spoken by the bands' claimed ancestors. Thus, the connection with the past is predicated on the assumption that those who lived on Iceland at the time were not so much Icelandic, but rather truly Norwegian. Such a claim both reifies the use of *norron* literature as distinctly Norwegian and helps to legitimate the timeless connection they feel with their ancient ancestors. The fact that over one thousand years have passed does not dilute the emotional connection the bands have to this era in history.

When all the ways Norwegian black metal uses Vikings and Norse mythology are considered throughout the existence of the genre, it is clear that an insistence on authenticity forms the basis from which notions of independence, individualism, and equality are derived. This insistence on authenticity generates a discourse of Norwegian exceptionalism. Whether it is the view that *norron* literature is solely Norwegian or the idea that Vikings were active explorers, Norwegian black metal maintains continuity with cultural memory regarding the way the past 'should' be conceived. Yet, Norwegian black metal's positioning of Christianity as foreign and

inauthentic firmly breaks with the historical narrative of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. By locating Christianity this way, Norwegian black metal bands using Vikings and Norse mythology are then able to claim authenticity for themselves. Likewise, there is an explicit claim to independence that echoes the quest for political and cultural independence and autonomy promoted by nineteenth-century historians. Yet, the route to independence is different and demonstrates how this notion has meaning, but is constantly negotiated.

The rejection of Christianity in favor of a theme of Vikings and Norse mythology via Asatrú contains a strong strain of individualism. Yet, when viewed in the context of Norwegian cultural memory, the notion of individualism contains at the very least a tacit link to revivalist and pietist movements of the late eighteenth century. The followers of this variety of Lutheranism were instrumental in promoting a notion of individualism predicated on individual communion with the divine. On the surface this insistence on the individual can be understood as a mechanism for decentralization and deemphasizing the broader collective community. However, individualism in the appropriate context reveals that rather than deconstructing community, it is strengthened by eliminating hierarchies. In doing so, it helped to promote a sense of sameness among Norwegians regardless of their social standing that has persisted to the present in the notion of *likebet*. As a result, an apparent contradiction between individualism and *likebet* is exposed. On the surface these notions seem opposed, yet individualism is acceptable as long as the boundaries of sameness are not transgressed too far beyond what is collectively established.

7.2.3 Nature and the Landscape

The use of Vikings and Norse mythology in Norwegian black metal reveals a potential layer of contradiction in the negotiation and maintenance of cultural memory, and something similar is exposed when we consider the ways nature and regional identity have been used. This becomes evident when considering the variety of different regional identities that exist in Norway. When expressed in Norwegian black metal, these regional identities reflect a preexisting core and periphery relationship that creates difference with in an otherwise monolithic national identity. However, in no case is the predominant national Norwegian frame ever questioned. Rather, regional identity is contained firmly within a consistent Norwegian historical narrative. Whether it is Taake's conceit of having exactly seven tracks on each of their full-length records as an allusion to Bergen or Windir's use of the dialect and history of the Sogn og Fjordane region, it is possible to see how a specific region and its associated landscape are integrated into the bands' thematic

concepts without defeating a larger conception of Norwegian national identity. When using regional identity in this way, Taae and Windir repeat a form of regional expression that has been present in traditional Norwegian folk music from the nineteenth century and each revival movement since, including NRK's *Radiokappleik*.

At the same time, regional identity is still cast in the frame of a national conception of identity. In the case of Taae, references to a broader notion of Norway can be seen through the frequent use of the Norwegian flag during live performances and on the title of the full-length record *Noregs Vaapen*. For Windir, the cover art of *1184* and *Likferd* are both national romantic paintings strongly associated with Norwegian national romanticism and central to the visual conceptualization of this period in Norwegian cultural memory. Moreover, Windir's use of regional history includes pivotal events that, while important to the local history of Sogn og Fjordane, are important to how the Medieval Kingdom of Norway was conceived in nineteenth-century historiography. In addition, while representations of nature and landscape can be regionally specific, they can also articulate a generalized idea of Norway. Often this takes quite stereotyped forms. The Oslo-based band, Dimmu Borgir, switched thematic focus early in its career. Yet, the band's initial use of nature through references of forests on the cover art of *Inn i evighetens mørke* and the songs "Raabjørn spiller draugheimens skodde" and "Glittertind" demonstrates how even a band known for helping to introduce a *Matrix*-influenced, cybergoth aesthetic to black metal still had its roots in the romanticization of nature. Furthermore, it demonstrates how a band from Oslo, an area not necessarily known for its natural splendor compared to Western Norway, references nature from different parts of the country. As such, Dimmu Borgir shows how a generalized conception of nature is used in a broader national context that is not tied to a particular region.

In Norwegian black metal, nature is typically referenced through forests, mountains, and the winter climate. In each of these uses, however, instances of Norwegian cultural memory and the process of identity construction are reaffirmed in the context of the black metal aesthetic. Typically, when these aspects of nature are used by Norwegian black metal bands, the overall tone is dark and somber there is no denying the sense of romantic longing for the mystic isolation offered by the seclusion of one being alone in a mountain landscape or the forest. This is especially clear when nature is used visually on the cover art of a given release. However, what is important to remember when considering representations of nature in Norwegian black metal is not so much what the band is trying to communicate. Rather, it is the continuity that Norwegian black metal bands share with previous uses of nature in cultural memory. It is these that lift a band's use of nature beyond the mundane aesthetics of black metal and allow it to form a temporal bridge

with the nineteenth-century national romantics. In this way, the use of nature becomes a use of history and a distinct expression of cultural memory that corresponds to the nation-building process. Both forests and mountains were used as symbols for the uniqueness of Norway during the nineteenth century. Interwoven into nature's symbolism was the implication that both Norway and Norwegians were timeless entities that were not just unchanging over time, but resistant to change. In other words, nature was used to prove the innate qualities that made Norwegians particularly Norwegian and unique.

Norwegian black metal's use of winter follows a similar discursive pattern. Just as with mountains and forests, representations of winter in Norwegian black metal typically have a dark, sorrowful tone that matches the aesthetic foundations that exist across black metal. In using winter this way, Norwegian black metal bands tend to portray the theme different than nineteenth-century national romantic artists. Yet, when Norwegian bands use the theme, it is framed firmly in a Norwegian context. For Khold this is done by using Norwegian lyrics, while both Vreid and Mactätus pair winter with Norwegian history. Moreover, an overarching Norwegian context is present even in those bands that place their winter theme in a fantasy world, as done by Immortal.

When considering the different ways nature and the landscape are used in Norwegian black metal, it is impossible to ignore how these uses are consistently connected to a Norwegian context. Often, this is done by promoting an emotional connection to a given landscape type, region, or winter motif closely associated with nineteenth-century national romantic artists and writers. However, it is important to consider that Norwegian black metal still uses nature and the landscape in ways that link to the broader aesthetic sensibilities of the black metal genre. In some sense, these bands do produce and reproduce an idea of Norway that has been present since at least the mid-nineteenth century. In repeating, but also subtly altering, this narrative, Norwegian black metal bands using demonstrate not only the persistence of cultural memory but the ways it has been negotiated with each generation.

7.3 Making Norwegian Black Metal Norwegian

The emphasis given to independence, equality, and individualism is paramount in the national romantic conception of Norway. Moreover, it has entered cultural memory and been made to seem natural and self-evident from one generation to the next. The fact that those notions appear banal and unquestioned demonstrates the degree to which they have been incorporated into national identity. That these notions appear in Norwegian black metal is a testament to the significance of egalitarian

individualism in cultural memory and the pervasiveness of *likhet* as a conforming force.

What this suggests then is that the symbols and discourse conveying these notions are not necessarily seen as problematic or especially contentious. Yet, this is not to say that independence, equality, and individualism and their expressions in Norwegian black metal do not have problematic connotations or that they are not contested. After all, cultural memory and commemorative practice is often conceived as a zero-sum game. Competing narratives are frequently given less discursive space or ignored by the institutional structures that guard the boundaries of what is and what is not deemed legitimate. When trying to grasp banal repetitions that contribute to cultural memory, it is as important to recognize not that what is left out but the reasons why certain narratives are given primacy at a given time over others. Gullestad's notion of *likhet* is vital to understanding how this process has occurred in Norway over the last twenty-five years. As demonstrated in the analysis chapters, this style of music is made Norwegian not simply because it reflects a geographical space enclosed within borders but because nearly two thirds of all Norwegian black metal bands over the span of twenty-five years have consistently used Norway's history and been in sympathetic dialog with its cultural memory. In negotiating cultural memory, Norwegian black metal bands do not just confirm that they are from Norway but actively reinforce the boundaries of what is and what is not Norwegian.

7.3.1 An Accurate Reflection of Norway?

Through their use of history and expression of cultural memory Norwegian black metal bands actively demonstrate Norwegianness. Whether it is the use of a Kittelsen illustration as cover art, the reaffirmation of Norwegian independence via the Medieval Kingdom of Norway, or the creation of a fantasy world that reflects the cold frozen landscape of a Norwegian winter, it is clear that Norwegian black metal bands use historical aspects of identity construction that have passed down from the nineteenth century. By doing so, they actively participate in constructing an 'imagined community' through the banal referencing of symbols and discourses found in the thematic use of folk narratives, Vikings and Norse mythology, and nature and the landscape. It has been shown that Norwegian black metal has captured a sense of egalitarian individualism embodied through notions of equality, individualism, and independence. These notions are reflected both when bands use historical sources directly and when they interpret the past through the prism of cultural memory. Yet, in both instance a process of negotiation is present. After all, these bands still play an extreme style of metal music and demonstrate a corresponding aesthetic.

At the same time, what makes Norwegian black metal remarkable in this regard is the adaptation and utilization of Norwegian history and cultural memory that has been present in the genre with some of the very first bands. Adding to this aspect of Norwegian black metal is the way these themes have persisted over time. In part this reflects the relentless fundamentalism of black metal. Granted, some variance has occurred since the early 1990s, particularly with the influx of the symphonic style initiated by Emperor and taken to its greatest extent by Dimmu Borgir. Even with the sonic and visual excess of Dimmu Borgir the foundational aesthetic remained intact. Yet, the reaction to bands like Dimmu Borgir in Norwegian black metal highlights the essential conservatism of the scene, as many bands stripped their sound down to black metal's essentials in protest. The same can be said of the genre's resolute adherence to certain themes. While these have always included the presence of Satanism and the occult, themes relating to Norwegian history and cultural memory have remained prevalent since their first inclusion. More importantly, however, is that these themes are what make Norwegian black metal Norwegian.

It is also important to remember the fundamentally conservative side of the bands when they use history and express cultural memory. When these themes are used they tap into a notion of Norway as exclusive and exceptional, the very aspects which are key to the notion of egalitarian individualism and from which the ethnic and cultural boundaries of Norway are maintained. As such, it should come as no surprise that some in the scene might hold racist and xenophobic beliefs and positions that naturalize the meaning of Norwegian. Considering the banal forms identity takes in Norwegian black metal bands, it is understandable how the use of history and expression of cultural memory might essentialize a notion of *likhet*. Yet, problematic or not, Norwegian black metal bands are still given legitimacy as a cultural product of the country. So, why do Norwegian government agencies, cultural organizations, and award institutions promote and reward such an extreme form of music with essentialist notions of Norway? For all of its extreme metal trappings, Norwegian black metal is actually as Norwegian as *brunost*, *nisselue*, and cross-country skiing.

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