<A> Nordic Satanism and Satanism Scares: The Dark Side of the Secular Welfare State

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In popular imagery the term "Nordic countries" is often synonymous with pristine nature, the savage past of the Viking era, and successful social policies that have led the region from relative poverty in the early 19th century to the top of the global gross national income and welfare statistics. The elements of pristine, cold nature and Viking heritage are also important to the satanic subcurrent in Nordic religious culture. This "real Satanism" has a complex relationship to periodic, widespread public concern about alleged deviant satanic subcultures afflicting especially the youth in the region (Hjelm, 2008; Dyrendal & Lap, 2008). Some examples of the headlines Satanism has made from the early 1990s onwards include church burnings and homicide in Norway, allegations of ritual child abuse in Sweden, and an internationally publicized case of alleged ritual sacrifice in Finland. The strong subculture of Black Metal music has made Norway especially known internationally for its "satanic youth", and the genre has inspired equally famous and controversial manifestations in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden.

This article seeks to answer two main questions pertaining both to the actual practice of Satanism and to the social reaction to real and alleged Satanism in the Nordic countries [1]. First, what makes the Nordic phenomenon of Satanism unique, what differentiates it from other cases, such as the Satanism scares in the

USA? Second, why did Satanism become such a visible phenomenon in the Nordic countries?

<B> The Social and Religious Context

Satanism is inseparably intertwined with its social context, thus it is necessary to outline some aspects of social and religious life in the Nordic countries. At least four factors are relevant to the current discussion: First, national Lutheran churches have a central place in Nordic religion. All countries in the region have had a state church system in effect. Denmark and Sweden severed the church-state bonds (in 1849 and 2000, respectively) and prefer the notion of a "folk" church. Norway still has a state church, and in Finland the separation is less clear, but the term "folk church" is widely used in these countries as well. Even if church attendance is low and indifference toward religion quite common (see below), the churches retain an important cultural position and exert their influence beyond the religious sphere as an integral part of national identity.

Second, the churches' power over individual practice of religion has waned steadily in all of the Nordic countries. Church attendance has gone down, and the number of people unaffiliated with any religious community has risen significantly (see Zuckerman, 2008). A majority of the citizens in all of the Nordic countries are still members of the national Lutheran church, but as the popular phrase goes, this can be seen mostly in terms of "belonging without believing". In this sense it is interesting that religious—that is, evangelical Christian—discourse has been important in shaping the public image of Satanism, despite

the fact that the attachment to an explicitly Christian worldview or the church as an institution is nominal for the majority.

The third relevant factor for the study of Satanism and social reactions to Satanism is the proliferation of evangelical, Pentecostalist, and charismatic Christianity in the Nordic religious field. These movements have been quite visible in the public sphere, and although their reception in the countries of the region has varied, individual "experts" hailing from a charismatic background have been important in constructing the public image of Satanism.

Finally, all of the Nordic countries have been religiously highly homogeneous until the late 20th century. A new religious diversity gradually emerged, first in Sweden, starting in the 1960s and more slowly in the other countries. By the late 1990s, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden all had a growing number of minority religions ranging from ethnic-based (e.g. Islam) to a plethora of new religious movements. The public reaction to alternative forms of religiosity has ranged from progressive multicultural and -religious policies in Sweden to a more sluggish recognition in the other three countries. This emerging religious pluralism is relevant in the sense that in some cases the new and "strange" religions have been drawn (very much against their will) into the controversy surrounding Satanism. Movements such as Wicca have been taken as proof of satanic activity by people concerned and confused about the fast-paced change in the religious landscape of the region (e.g. Hjelm 2006).

<B> Denmark: From Secularized Christian Other to Rational Secular Self

Until the mid-1990s, Satanism was mainly understood as inverted Christianity and immorality in Danish media (Dyrendal & Lap 2008). Foreign cases of "satanic ritual abuse", church burning and murder were reported and reproduced as models of interpretation in small-scale scares over the "occult" and church desecrations in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, however, the discourse on Satanism in the media is dominated by a rationalist Satanist [2] perspective, of which the formal group *Satanisk Forum* is the largest example by far (Petersen 2008; Søderlind & Dyrendal 2009). Even a Christian newspaper such as *Kristeligt Dagblad* has engaged Satanism from a satanic angle, interviewing spokespersons from *Satanisk Forum*.

That is not to say that the public discourse on Satanism is homogeneous. Media outlets from teenage-magazines to the national television have also been uncritical and sensationalist in linking Satanism with various transgressions, such as cemetery and church vandalism, drug abuse and "ritualistic" crime. The same media are, however, usually wary of reproducing explicitly Christian representations, and prefer to frame the stories as youth deviance, psychiatric pathology and other secular explanations. This is a legacy of the 1980s, where Christian counter-cult groups, such as Johannes Aagaard's *Dialogcenteret* primarily influenced the media and public education by framing Satanism as a psychological and social problem (Dyrendal & Lap 2008: 339, 349-50, 353).

These constitute two separate discourses: the discourse of Satanism-as-lifestyle, and the discourse of Satanism-as-deviance. When the media wants to report on

Satanism as a serious lifestyle option it seeks out visible insider exponents of Satanism proper (or academics on the odd occasion). The inclusion of Satanism-as-lifestyle is a noticeable shift in the Danish discourse on Satanism. Still, when the media uncovers vandalism committed by (usually) adolescents, it frequently uses the label of Satanism uncritically as an explanation. Satanists themselves have actively engaged in combating this Satanism-as-deviance discourse by attacking its theological and psychologising underpinnings, and trying to promote an alternative understanding of deviance as adolescent ostensive action rather than Satanism.

<C> Constructing Satanism from the 1970s to the 1990s

Early exponents of rationalist Satanism in Denmark were connected loosely to Witchcraft and "occultism" and later more systematically to the thoughts and practices of Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan (CoS), as with 1970s satanic witch Gittan Jäderberg. In this sense, rationalist Satanism underwent the same fracture from the cultic milieu in Denmark as in the United States: from broad associations with witches and ceremonial magic in the 1970s to the atheistic philosophy of today. A predecessor of esoteric Satanism in Denmark is Carl William Hansen or Ben Kadosh (1872-1936), but his influence has been virtually non-existent outside closed circles such as the *Neo-Luciferianske Kirke*, formally established in the winter of 2004, but building upon loose networks of initiates dating back to the seventies (Faxneld 2006: 160ff, Gregorius 2006: 26ff). Another, more visible ideological successor is Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff, who in numerous interviews and books from the mid-1980s onwards describes

Satanism as both a rhetorical position given by Christians to all freethinkers and non-Christians, and as a "humanism" or "mystery cult" with a long tradition of opposition to Christianity (Dyrendal & Lap 2008: 336ff).

These spokespersons should be seen in relation to the main examples of rumour panic in Denmark in the same period. First of all is the "Anholt-affair" of 1973 and 1974, where various objects found on the small island sparked speculations on an alleged satanic cult. This activated the engagement of Christians, folklorists and self-declared Satanists such as Gittan Jäderberg, thus constructing an "evangelical" and a "counter-cultural" voice in the public debate (Dyrendal & Lap 2008: 331ff). In the 1980s, Satanism was mainly represented in connection to graveyard and church vandalism, adolescent interest in role-playing games, Heavy Metal and the "occult", all allegedly leading to participation in satanic groups, a full-time criminal career, or alternatively, suicide (e.g. Frederiksen 1999). This position was maintained in the early 1990s, especially in the light of Norwegian church burnings and an increasing amount of grave desecrations in Denmark, but came under attack from the media and some academics who gradually dismantled the underpinnings of the evangelicals' claims from the late 1990s onwards (Dyrendal & Lap 2008: 351f).

This shift can also be understood in relation to activities undertaken by Satanists themselves. The formation of *Prometheus Grotten* in 1997 marked the formalization of individual aspirations of a handful of visible Danish Satanists, namely Max Schmeling, Hr. Vad, and Amina Lap, among others (Lap & Wolf 2003); all were members of the Church of Satan at the time and articulated an

atheistic humanism in the tradition of LaVey. One immediate motive for creating an official organization was the wish to publish a newsletter, *Satanisk Bulletin*, which began in 1998 and continues to this day. Another motive was the mobilization of a counter-cultural resistance to and possible seizure of the hegemonic public discourse on Satanism. As indicated above, they have had some success.

<C> Satanism in Denmark today

The satanic milieu in Denmark is diffuse, fragmented and detraditionalized. If we work with an estimate of 800 self-declared Satanists in Denmark, a majority is rationalist in the LaVeyan tradition (perhaps 500-600), of which members of *Satanisk Forum* comprises roughly half. The rest are unorganized rationalist individuals and informal groups. The same fragmentation can be applied to the esoteric Satanists, who are diffused into the wider cultic milieu (solitary members of Michael Aquino's *Temple of Set*, Thelemites, Pagans, etc.), and to the reactive Satanists of the Black Metal scene and parts of the gothic subculture. [3]

Significant changes followed the death of LaVey in 1997—most notably the expulsion of Hr. Vad from the Church of Satan and *Prometheus Grotten*'s declaration of independence from CoS around 2000-2001. *Prometheus Grotten* itself split in 2001 along both ideological and organizational lines. One group, continuing as *Prometheus Grotten* around Hr. Vad, focus on the solitary nature of the Left Hand Path and associates itself with the *Satanic Reds*, an informal Internet group combining left-wing politics and esoteric speculations along

eclectic lines. The present activity of *Prometheus Grotten* seems to be virtually non-existent.

The other group, *Satanisk Forum*, formed around Amina Lap, Max Schmeling and Ole Wolf in 2001, is an example of rationalist Satanism taken almost to its logical extreme. The group organises around 200-300 members in Scandinavia (the exact figure is unclear) and hosts a message board with around 400 subscribers; it manages the publication of *Satanisk Bulletin* and has a strong presence both off-line and on-line. Their stated goals are to "build a network benefiting individuals in Satanic Forum and the satanic community" and to "create a satanic 'subculture', where the satanic identity and culture is strengthened for present and future generations". [4] It is thus an umbrella organization uniting all Satanists interested in clearing out misconceptions and prejudice.

Satanisk Forum has actively engaged both Christian, secular and insider conceptions of Satanism through many channels: by integrating the Satanic Media Watch and News Exchange archive of Amina Lap, by publishing a Danish demographical analysis of Satanists (Amina 2002), by constructing an ideological history (Lap 2002, Lap & Wolf 2003), and by advocating a specific local version of Satanism in contrast to what they have described as the Americanized values and goals of the Church of Satan (Søderlind & Dyrendal 2009). The main thrust of the organization's ideology could be described as materialistic and rationalist, since their texts refer to modern physics, logic, and materialist arguments rather than to mystical monistic conceptions. Satan is a symbol referring to the act of rebellion as well as to subjective states, and the organization is aggressively

atheistic and secular in its rhetoric (Petersen 2008). Although the cultic milieu contains varieties of subcultural, esoteric and philosophical formulations, the interpretations that are most secularized seem to fit best in the public arena.

<B> Finland: The Religionization of Deviant Youth

Satanism entered the Finnish public consciousness in the mid 1980s through Pentecostalist Christians like Finnish preacher Leo Meller. Meller's book *Rock* (1986) "exposed" the "satanic" content of rock and heavy metal music, very much in line with the contemporary discussions in the USA. Although little discussed in the mainstream media at the time, Meller set an example for later religious commentators who posed and were received as experts on Satanism.

Whereas the public attention generated by Meller and others denouncing the "satanic" popular culture of the times was initially regarded with scepticism and mild amusement in the media, Satanism acquired a more sinister image in the early 1990s with the church burnings and homicides connected to Satanists in Norway. Mainstream newspapers discussed the possibility of satanic cults in Finland and some murders were linked—no matter how tenuously—to an allegedly satanic motivation (Hjelm 2008). The reality of Satanism was finally "proven" in the public eye when some people, namely the Finnish rock singer Kauko Röyhkä, publicly professed to be practicing Satanists.

<C> Finnish Satanism in the early 1990s

Some anti-Satanist commentators have suggested that satanic ritual groups existed in Finland already in the 1970s, but this evidence hardly stands the test of critical scrutiny. There may have been magical/occult groups or individuals in Finland at that time, but there is no knowledge of explicitly satanic involvement by any of these. Religious Satanism first became visible in Finland in the early 1990s.

The most famous self-professed Finnish Satanist was the rock singer Kauko Röyhkä mentioned above. He was frequently interviewed about his satanic beliefs and became the face of Satanism for a short period in the early 1990s. Röyhkä's Satanism was mainly influenced by Anton LaVey and in his public appearances he consistently denied having anything to do with alleged satanic crime. Röyhkä tried to organize a public satanic ritual in 1993 but failed, showing that Röyhkä's Satanism was more a public expression of a private belief than an example of organized Satanism in Finland. It was also short-lived; already in the late 1990s he described Satanism as a phase that had since passed.

On the less visible grassroots level a few individual Satanists attempted to organize a satanic group in Helsinki in the early 1990s. In a time before the Internet, the word of mouth recruitment campaigns had little success, despite the fact that the main person behind these early attempts also appeared in a very popular television talk show. Apart from a few card-carrying members of the Church of Satan and some self-professed Satanists drawing from the philosophy of Anton LaVey, Satanism had few followers and did not manifest as an organized religion in the early 1990s in Finland—despite the fact that it was presented as

such in an influential book on religion in Finland, written by the late Harri Heino, director of the Research Center of the Church of Finland (Heino 1998).

<C> The Finnish Satanism Scare

Considering the lukewarm reception that actual practicing Satanists had in their early attempts to recruit members, it is perhaps surprising that by the end of the 1990s, Satanism was one of the most discussed public issues in Finland. Despite the fact that actual practicing Satanists were only a handful, the Finnish media, and through it large segments of the population became convinced that Satanists were rampant in Finland and that Satanism posed one of the most serious threats to the Finnish youth.

Unlike in the USA, where the Satanism scare focused mainly on ritual abuse, or in Norway, where Satanists were connected with church burnings and murder, the Finnish Satanism scare centred on cemetery vandalism (Hjelm 2008) [5]. Between 1997 and 2001, hundreds of gravestones were toppled in cemeteries around Finland. What made the phenomenon interesting for the wider public was that from very early on the news media attributed the cause for this widespread vandalism to Satanism. True, in some cemeteries chapels were painted with pentagrams, inverted crosses and “satanic” slogans, and burial crosses were stuck upside down on the ground. However, the conjecture that this was the work of Satanists was almost always made without any knowledge of the actual perpetrators or their motivations. Upon closer examination it becomes evident that the interpretative leap from a toppled gravestone to Satanism was

made by journalists and in many cases a specific group of experts hailing from an evangelical Christian background, influenced by American anti-Satanist discourse. The hegemony of evangelical Christian experts in the news media was in turn a result of the late awakening of the Finnish academic community to the phenomenon of Satanism (see Hjelm 2008; Hermonen 2006).

While some of the reports regarding satanic activity at cemeteries might have been received with scepticism among journalists and the wider audience, especially in the beginning of the phenomenon, the homicide case referred to as the "Hyvinkää garbage dump murder" etched the horror of Satanism indelibly into the consciousness of Finns. With its gory details of a group of Black Metal fans that—after a long day of drinking self-brewed spirits—killed and mutilated their friend, the Hyvinkää case defied rational explanation. Building on the already widely discussed public myth, Satanism seemed like a valid explanation. And this time it was the secular public prosecutor, not a sectarian with a religious agenda that brought the issue up. Although the appeal court decided that there was not enough evidence to link Satanism to the murder, in public consciousness—largely thanks to the media—the Hyvinkää case remains a satanic ritual murder.

<C> Satanism in Finland Today

The major presence of Finnish Satanists adhering to the teachings of the Church of Satan or other established organizations can be found on the Internet, but Finnish Satanists have not harnessed the Internet as a vehicle for recruitment.

The easy availability of information may have aroused interest in Satanism, but this has neither resulted in a marked growth of practicing Satanists nor to the establishment of organized satanic groups. Instead, most of the Internet pages in Finnish are of informational nature, outlining the basics of LaVeyan Satanism. In addition to the websites, there are also two small independent publishing houses (*Voimasana* and *Ixaxaar*) in Finland that have specialized in the publication of satanic and left-hand path literature.

In sum, Satanism does exist in Finland, but hardly in the conspiratorial form imagined by some of the religious experts. The most visible form of "Satanism" is and has been what can be referred to as pseudo-Satanism, where the aim is mainly to shock without any personal commitment to a satanic worldview. The number of actual practicing Satanists still remains small, but the advent of the Internet has created a "hangaround culture" of people interested in the more organized forms Satanism and possibly subscribing to some of their tenets, but refraining from organized or ritual activity. In addition, there is a group of self-styled, "reactive" Satanists whose inspiration comes mainly from secondary sources, such as extreme metal music and horror films. Despite sporadic attempts at organization, no stable and explicitly satanic groups have emerged in Finland—not to mention groups seeking public recognition under the Freedom of Religion Act. However, as long as the "dark" youth subculture of gothic rock and extreme metal continues to be popular in Finland, there will be reactions—albeit not likely as strong as in the late 1990s—from the wider society to the perceived Satanism of the youth. Even if Satanism as a religion remains marginal, the discourse on Satanism is potentially alive and well in Finland.

<B> Norway: From Evangelical Fright and Violent Deviance to Mainstream Indulgence [6]

Satanism first became a Norwegian topic of debate in the mid-1970s with two general developments: the new Charismatic wave of evangelization and prophecy literature; and the development of new religious movements and their counter- and anti-cult opposition. Both phenomena were imported from the United States. The new Charismatics' literature—parts of which were translated into Norwegian—presented Satanism as a historical development pointing towards Armageddon. Although the central frame was spiritual, Satanism was also framed as a social problem, illustrated by American atrocity tales. However, the spiritual, apocalyptic frame was of little interest to a strongly secular media, and thus stayed within the Evangelical subculture, and the crime stories were neither "hard news" nor relevant to an overwhelmingly "local" perspective in the media.

At the time organized occultism was hard to find in Norway, and there were very few active non-Christian new religious movements. Even the Christian ones were marginal and, except for the new Charismatics themselves, nearly invisible. Actual Satanism entered into the discourse by route of a few references to LaVey's Church of Satan as a foreign phenomenon, far away. The first mention of (anonymous) Norwegians claiming to be Satanists in the press was in the mid-1970s, as response to brief bouts of "scare" claims spread from Denmark. These alleged Satanists never show up again.

<C> From Silence to Black Metal Noise

From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, even Evangelical output on Satanism dropped to almost nothing. A few Norwegians joined the Church of Satan, but in accord with the general, individualizing trend in Satanism after 1975, there seems to have been no contact between them. When public interest in Satanism re-emerged, it was because of a metal scene that largely got their ideas about Satanism from horror comics, metal lyrics, and apocalyptic Christian narratives. LaVey's ideas about this-worldly success, human potential, and self-development were of no interest to most, and his elements of misanthropy, elitism and social Darwinism too soft. The Black Metal subculture in Norway preferred a recognisably evil, Christian Satan.

What made Black Metal interesting news was not their ideas, but an escalation of internal competition for transgressive, subcultural capital (Kahn-Harris 2007) that ended in two murders, multiple church arsons and episodes of assault. This, combined with a militant, anti-Christian, anti-social attitude, made Black Metal an ideal example of the Satanism that Evangelicals had warned about. The Black Metal subculture, personified by its "media spokespersons" and its most militant acts lived up to the picture. Satanic symbolism left at several arson scenes made Satanism the focus of the scare that followed, leading to enormous media interest, local vigils and collective patrols of church grounds. Both secular and religious frames in public discourse presented the growth of "threatening" popular culture as a symptom of a degraded, decadent society. In both frames the

youth were victims and the dissemination of American claims about a worldwide Satanic Ritual Abuse conspiracy made the frame of "threatened children" radical.

<C> Claims of a Satanic Ritual Abuse Conspiracy

The dissemination of satanic ritual abuse (SRA) claims started in Norwegian media around the time of the earliest Black Metal bands. SRA-claims first aroused interest in 1991 (the year before arsons started) and interest in the SRA-mythos peaked in 1992-93 when it was presented to the public by "experts" from the police, therapists, (often Evangelical) journalists, and of course "Satanic survivors", who claimed a personal history of victimization. The mythos arrived in Norway primarily through international seminars and workshops for therapists and police officers, with journalists learning from select international colleagues. As among others Jeffrey Victor (1998) and Jean La Fontaine (1998) have noted, a common language (English) and seminars and conferences spreading claims through professional and ideological networks facilitated the diffusion of the Satanism scare.

The latter also turned out to be one of the causes of the theory's downfall. With international publication of several critical research reports as well as news coverage of scandals like the McMartin case in the USA (Nathan & Snedeker 1995), there was ample ammunition for the critical perspective. When no corroborating evidence for Norwegian claims was found, critical voices won the day. This did not, however, mean that the proponents lost belief in a satanic conspiracy. Therapists continued "discovering" cases of SRA, "survivor"

communities continued to promote their theories, and charismatic Christian anti-Satanists continued to preach against Satanism. Apart from a very few instances however, such claims were kept out of the public eye thereafter.

<C> Mainstreaming Satanism

The victorious frame for the public perception of Satanism was that of "rebellious youth behaviour". As Black Metal musicians got older and the genre got "mainstreamed", the perception of satanic metal culture changed. Links with right-wing extremism for central figures like Varg Vikernes made headlines. A few new cases of sensationally transgressive behaviour, most importantly the 2003 beheading of a body scheduled for burial (the case's connection to Satanism was later dropped), also made news.

By that time, Norway had got its first semi-organised LaVeyan Satanism. The most important was the strictly LaVeyan *Det norske sataniske samfunn* (NSS). The second was *Ordo Illuminatorum* (OI), which tempered its Satanism with a more esoteric interest in the Hermetic and Thelemic tradition. As of 2008 the marginal OI activities had become focused on Crowley's *thelema*, and the group seems in 2009 to be defunct.

The NSS started out as a website trying to promote contact between people who were attracted to LaVey's ideas. The owner of the website, which has since evolved into a small online community with a discussion board and a newsletter, has been the main spokesperson ever since. Almost all "group" activity is online,

with a small part of the 400 or so subscribers as active participants. Most participants are teenagers, and the older members are rarely active. Only few of the forum participants are members of the CoS, and most adult members of the CoS seem to stay away. The general impression is of a form of Satanism with more than LaVey's prescribed "nine parts respectability": Politically, most active participants are slightly right of centre, but extremists are not welcome and members seem to come from across the spectrum of "decent" political affiliation. Controversial ideas, attitudes and practices are hard to find. Media interest in these real, self-identified Satanists has thus been small.

Presently then, Satanism has become established in Norway as a philosophical perspective on life among a few young people, as well as being entrenched as a stylistic element of Black Metal. There are "old school" Black Metal fans who idealize the transgressive acts of the early years, but they are few, and their acts rare. Although the stereotype of a Satanist is still a rebellious, black-clad, long-haired teenage male, public discourse has moved towards a slightly more nuanced understanding. It is no longer driven solely by "expert" statements interpreting Satanism as a criminal conspiracy or a symptom of demonic possession, psychiatric disturbances, or of society and culture gone bad. Academic descriptions of Satanism and the establishment of satanic spokespersons has made Satanism look more like just another philosophy legitimating modern life.

<B> Sweden: Between Fear of the "Other" and Antinomian Constructs

Although it is likely that a number of Swedes during the 1970s and 1980s took an interest in Satanism, and a few perhaps even joined foreign organisations such as the Church of Satan, it is during the first half of the 1990s that Satanism enters the Swedish religious landscape in earnest (Bogdan 2008). As is the case is with the other Nordic countries**,** organised Satanism can be divided into two main categories: (1) groups inspired by the LaVeyan brand of Satanism, and (2) groups that have evolved from the Scandinavian Black Metal scene. It should be noted, however, that organised Satanism has always been a small phenomenon in Sweden, even during its heyday in the 1990s. The majority of Swedish Satanists appear to have been individuals who did not belong to any satanic group or organisation, and who thus can be labelled "solitary Satanists". The majority of these solitaries found Satanism through either the Internet or by reading the *Satanic Bible*, which was translated into Swedish in 1995 by Carl Abrahamsson. Although Abrahamsson during the early 1990s was often considered to be a high ranking member of The Church of Satan and a personal friend Anton LaVey, there has never been an official Swedish section of the CoS.

<C> Satanism in Sweden today

Of the Swedish satanic organisations it is in particular *Svenska Satanistkyrkan* and *Misantropiska Lucifer Orden* that stand out, both in terms of the attention they have received in the media and in terms of their organisational efforts. *Svenska Satanistkyrkan* (SSK) was founded in Uddevalla in 1996 by Tommy Eriksson and had at one stage two local sections, the Muspelheim lodge in Uddevala, and Nexion lodge in Malmö. In addition to these sections it maintained

an Internet based bookstore called Belial Center for a number of years, which sold esoteric and satanic literature, specialising in books by Anton LaVey. SSK's Satanism was heavily coloured by LaVey's atheist Satanism, although they emphasised that they did not want to limit their understanding of the satanic view of life and philosophy to that of LaVey. In an interview published in the first issue the group's journal *Anti-Krist* (Nr. 1/1999), Eriksson explained how he interpreted Satan, in terms akin to those of LaVey. The Church stressed that it did not have any formal ties to other satanic organisations, such as the Church of Satan. During the first years of the 21st century the *Svenska Satanistkyrkan* gradually seems to have ceased its activities, and at the time of writing seems to have closed down.

Misantropiska Lucifer Orden (MLO) was founded during the middle of the 1990s in Gothenburg and received a lot of attention from the media in connection with a homicide on Ramberget in Gothenburg in 1997. Two leading members of the organisation shot a person to death whom they believed was homosexual. It is hard to ascertain to what extent (if any) the perpetrators' satanic ideology was a motivating factor for the murder, but it is nevertheless obvious that MLO represented a far more radical form of Satanism than mainstream LaVeyan Satanism. The original members of MLO belonged to the Black Metal scene and the movement was in its initial stage closed highly and introverted, but it gradually opened up and even launched a website. In order to become a member of MLO, at least in the early days, one had to undergo a rite of initiation that, according to an interview (Hiltonen, 2005), included animal sacrifice in the form of five cats. The satanic doctrines of MLO are set down in a collection of texts,

Chaosophy, and the content shows that that the author is well versed in a number of occultist systems. *Chaosophy* contains a large number of rituals, which might attest to the fact that MLO emphasises the performance of rituals and the practice of magic. MLO has in recent years changed its name to Temple of the Black Light, and is best described as esoteric Satanism, or as the group prefers to call it, a "new wrathful form of Gnostic Left Hand Path".

<C> The Swedish Satanism Scare

During the 1970s and early 1980s the Swedish notion of a satanic underground was to a large extent influenced by the American Christian evangelical counter-cult movement, with an especial focus on the malevolent nature of hard rock and heavy metal music. It was claimed that the music genre functioned as a cover for a sinister organised satanic underground which, through the music, aimed to seduce the Swedish youth to embrace Satanism, drug abuse and sexual promiscuity. The impact of this discourse is remarkable, and the awareness (if not the actual belief) that heavy metal records allegedly contain hidden messages—especially when played backwards—was widespread among schoolchildren in the 1970s and early 1980s.

In the 1990s the Satanism scare was to a large extent influenced by the events in Norway, and it was the Black Metal version of Satanism that was singled out as being specifically dangerous. Although cemetery vandalism was reported in the media already in the early 1980s (in the form of alleged occult/satanic ceremonies), the 1990s witnessed a widespread vandalism that often included

toppled gravestones. In addition, satanic symbols, such as pentagrams and inverted crosses, as well as sacrificed animals, such as cats, have been found at cemeteries, lending credibility to claims of satanic involvement. In a similar manner, a number of church burnings are assumed to have been perpetrated by Satanists, and in a few cases this is apparently the case (Alexandersson & Karls Fos 2004, 6). The murder committed by two leading members of MLO in 1997 was widely discussed in the media, and it was often assumed that the murder was motivated by their satanic ideology. The Satanism scare during the 1990s was thus based to a certain extent on actual events that had been committed by self-styled Satanists, but as in the other Nordic countries, allegations of satanic crimes were often founded on hearsay and wild speculations, and hard facts and evidence were absent.

The absence of evidence becomes even more conspicuous in the case of Eva Lundgren, a Professor of Sociology at Uppsala University. Lundgren claimed on a number of occasions during the 1990s and the early 2000s that Swedish organised satanic groups not only sexually abused children, but also ritually sacrificed children. The fact that these allegations came from a professor at one of Sweden's most prestigious universities, caused it to be widely discussed in the media. The controversy surrounding Lundgren's research (which was not limited to claims of satanic ritual abuse and murder) culminated in 2005 when Uppsala University evaluated charges that, among other things, her research was based on fabricated sources. Lundgren was, however, acquitted from the charges (Dyrendal, 2006).

In sum, then, the Satanism Scare and the actual forms of Satanism practiced in Sweden follow the same pattern as in the other Nordic countries. It should be noted, however, that rationalist Satanism of the LaVeyan kind has all but disappeared from the Swedish scene, while the more radical and esoteric forms—as typified by the Temple of the Black Light—continue to have a presence.

<B> Nordic Satanism—the How's and Why's

We have shown above how Satanism was constructed as a social problem in all of the Nordic countries by importing American interpretations of the phenomenon. Similarly, in some of the cases it is clear that a satanic tradition and community was constructed by importing American ideas and discourse. Therefore, Nordic Satanism, both in the sense of social problem and as lifestyle, is part of a global culture of Satanism. That said, these imports are always negotiated through the lens of local culture, supporting the understanding of globalization as a process of glocalization (e.g. Robertson, 1995). Glocalization can go a long way in explaining the specifics of the Nordic cases, understood as a "heterogenizing, adaptive response" and as resistance to "homogenizing pressures from the ideological centre" (Søderlind & Dyrendal, 2009, 153f), namely the United States.

For our analysis, the most important sociological feature of the Nordic case is the virtual monopoly of Lutheran state churches, regardless of their actual institutional ties to the state. There are two markedly different ways in which

Satanism (both as public discourse and as lifestyle) relates to the mainstream Lutheran churches. First, there is the oppositional and reactive "anti-Christianity" of church burnings, grave desecrations and moral deviance. This constitutes an inversion of Christian values and a symbolic re-enactment of narratives of Satan as the enemy of Christianity and the Church.

Thinking of Satanism solely in terms of anti-Christianity, however, misses a second and more important point. As mentioned above, in effect, the state churches have enjoyed a monopoly and are still considered integral parts of the culture of "Danishness", "Swedishness", etc. Thus Christianity is discursively connected to middle class values, moral judgment, and national identity, despite the "belonging without believing" dimension of Nordic religiousness. In this light, reactive Satanism can thus be seen equally as opposition to the churches and as opposition to the complacency and bourgeois values of the middle class, the "consensus culture" and "discourse of the good" (Søderlind & Dyrendal, 2009, 155). This also explains why participants in the public debates on Satanism have tried to cast the issue first and foremost as a *social* problem instead of a *spiritual* problem. The historical reason for this is the institutionalization of the welfare state after WWII—a Social Democratic project which transformed the working class into religiously indifferent middle class consumers (see Zuckerman, 2008). Therefore, it can be argued that Satanism—both as a social problem and as a lifestyle––is a *reaction* to Nordic "secular, social democratic Protestantism" (Søderlind & Dyrendal, 2009:155), but is also *adapting* to the same conditions.

Extravagant acts such as church-burnings combined with an evangelical framework of interpretation and a media hungry for sensationalistic news is the obvious answer to why Satanism became such a visible phenomenon in the Nordic countries. This, however, overlooks the fact that Satanism featured in national public discussions only during particular peak periods. This was early 1990s in Norway and late 1990s in Finland, for example, but nevertheless, Satanism as a social problem has been a relatively fast-lived phenomenon. Partly this has to do with dynamics of public reaction and actions considered "Satanic". Although a strictly causal link is impossible to establish, it is clear that the number of cemetery vandalism cases, for example, correlates with the amount of media exposure. Media exposure, in turn, correlates with the potential news value. When cemetery vandalism ceased to be considered inspired by Satanism, the media lost interest (Hjelm 2008). *Potentially*, however, Satanism remains a controversial issue. First, "Satanism" can provide a justification and legitimation of condemnable acts for their perpetrators even if the action is not inspired by any religious or philosophical conviction. Second, atrocities such as abuse and murder can spark the media flame even if the act itself or the perpetrators have nothing to do with Satanism. It remains to be seen whether the public discussion in the Nordic countries will pick Satanism as a trope in cases like these in the future.

When we turn to the visibility of Satanism as a lifestyle—especially the rationalist Satanists who differentiate themselves from the reactive acts done in the name of Satan—the picture is different. Real practicing Satanists are few in number and low profile. The small numbers and lack of organization are at least

partly explained by the open-ended, “pick and mix” nature of Satanism mentioned earlier. Without a central legitimating factor, either tradition or a charismatic leader, community formation is minimal and cohesion in established (and often virtual) communities low. Members drift in and out, and very little reminiscent of a proper social movement is achieved—or aspired to, for that matter. Satanism is the emblematic form of “light sociality” in which few heavy commitments are made. That said, there is a coherence in the use some of key texts around which communities—real, virtual, and imagined—are formed. Also, as mentioned above, there are proper satanic organizations, although their level of activity varies between the countries.

To take a slightly different perspective, we can examine Satanism in the broader framework of modernity. Writing in 1976, Randall Alfred (1976, p. 199) analyses the rationalist Satanism of Anton LaVey as a natural development of the Protestant ethic: ”It is a final ratification of the spirit of capitalism (...)”, as it ”(...) provides the religious legitimation for worldly hedonism in place of ‘worldly asceticism’”. In this sense, Satanism builds upon basic elements of post-Reformation Western culture: individualism, world-affirmation, utilitarianism and a hedonistic culture of consumption (Campbell, 1987), which all feature strongly in the values of the people living in the Nordic countries. In consequence, individualistic religion—whether Charismatic Christian, New Age or Satanic—is in tune with modern society, and Satanism, whether rationalist or esoteric, is a negotiation of the means and values inherent in mainstream culture. “Real Satanism” is hardly visible because those adhering to a satanic lifestyle are not the monsters of myth and popular culture. They are just like the rest of us.

Notes

[1] For the purposes of this paper, “the Nordic countries” refers to Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Although traditionally included in the term, Iceland has not experienced significant public reactions to alleged Satanism. Also, the number and public presence of practicing Satanists in Iceland is, to the best of our knowledge, very small.

[2] One recent (Petersen 2009: 6-7) categorization recognises three types: Rationalist, Esoteric, and Reactive Satanism. Rationalist Satanism is an atheistic and philosophical Satanism with roots in the work of Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan. It uses Satan as a symbol for the human condition, as a carnal, emotional and rational being, and thus as an ideal figure of adversarial practice and self-development. Esoteric Satanism is a more mystical and initiatory formulation of Satanism as self-deification. Thus Satan is associated with magical practices and mystical experiences, and seen either a as literal entity or as a symbolic being. Reactive Satanism is an appropriation of stereotypes of inverse Christianity and popular conceptions of Satan. It is thus mainly a "living out", or ostension, of a mythical frame. When this bricolage condenses into a more coherent world view with explicit practices, community and institutions, we have often moved into one of the other two categories.

[3] Note that most Goths are not Satanists – the above said is merely a description of a tentative congruence on the fringes of the respective milieus. The same can be said with the BDSM-scene and Metal enthusiasts in general; the majority in these subcultures are not Satanists, but some Satanists are both.

[4] See the bylaws on the website, article 2. Translation byXXX.

[5] The two exceptions are the so-called Hyvinkää garbage dump murder in 1998 and the short-lived claim of satanic involvement in a child abuse case in the Finnish town of Toijala in 2005.

[6] For references to this section, see Dyrendal & Lap, 2008.

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