

# 3.1 Appropriating death: the works of Theodor Kittelsen in black metal album covers

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## × ~~Abstract~~

In 1994, Black Metal band *Burzum* released their critically acclaimed third album, 'Hvis Lyset Tar Oss' (If the Light Takes Us). Engulfed in controversy due to its sole member – Varg Vikernes – extra musical activities that involved arson and murder, the album became a hallmark of the subgenre, influencing bands to this day. To illustrate its sound and themes, Varg Vikernes chose as album cover an illustration by Neo Romantic Norwegian artist Theodor Kittelsen, 'The Pauper', published in 1900 in his book *Svartedauen*. The album contained atmospheric elements that cemented Black Metal reliance on ambiance, a nostalgic look at days long past, an admiration for Nature and a fascination with Death which, thematically, puts this work in line with themes explored by nineteenth century Romantics. We propose to explore the context of this and subsequent appropriations to reflect on Black Metal as a possible inheritor of Romantic aesthetics and cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** black metal, Theodor Kittelsen, romanticism, album covers, appropriation

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## Introduction

In January 1992, a 19-year-old Varg Vikernes entered the Grieg Hall<sup>2</sup> studio in Bergen, Norway, to begin a series of sessions that lasted until March 1993 to record a plethora of songs that would give birth to four different albums, released through the following years. The third of these releases would become a Black Metal album that would become to further define the sound and visual aesthetics of the subgenre. Released in April 1994 through Misanthropy Records, a month before the conviction of its author for murder and church arsons<sup>3</sup>, the album *Hvis Lyset Tar Oss*, by *Burzum* (meaning 'If the Light Takes Us'), was received with critical (by specialized press)<sup>4</sup> and fan praise. On the website *Rate Your Music* (*Custom chart - Rate Your Music*, n.d.), which is a collaborative website where users can rate and review music, this album is, as of the writing of this paper, rated as the second best Black Metal album of all time, surpassed only by its successor, *Burzum's* 'Filosofem' from 1996. The online publication *Metal Injection*, on its list of essential Black Metal albums, considers this album and the following "part of the skeleton key to understanding an entire genre." (Ülrey, 2011), and Black Metal journalist Dayal Patterson described the record as

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2. The Grieg Hall (in Norwegian Grieghallen Lydstudio), is a concert hall that also has a recording studio that was popular within the Black Metal community, where many famous albums were recorded, most of them by the producer Pytten (Eirik Hundvin).

3. in the early nineties a series of church burnings took place in several cities in Norway (at least 50) and one in Sweden perpetrated by Black Metal musicians, most notably Varg Vikernes (legal name Louis Cachet, born Kristian Vikernes, a.k.a. Count Grishnackh), from the band *Burzum*, Samoth, from the band *Emperor* and Jørn Inge Tunsberg, from the band *Hades Almighty*. Varg, who was also a session musician for *Mayhem*, would also be convicted for the murder of *Mayhem* co-founder Euronymous (Øystein Aarseth) in 1993.

4. Positive reviews include, but are not limited to, the publications *Metal Injection*, *Metal Storm*, *Sputnik Music*, alongside an average rating of 92 (out of 100), of 31 user reviews on the website *Encyclopaedia Metallum*.

*\*boasting four lengthy numbers that resonate with a greater emotional scope than its predecessors, bearing a distinctly yearning atmosphere and an expansive, heavily synth-laden sound. Epic, bleak, and built around the huge trademark riffs, the album is again peaceful at times, while also presenting Burzum at its most discordant and abrasive; it is rightly considered a milestone in Black Metal (Patterson, 2013, p. 212)*

It was a difficult album to distribute. In April 1994, Varg was already in prison, waiting for the conclusion of his trial. The record was to be distributed by Voices of Wonder, but the label decided to distance themselves from the musician and his crimes. Earache records were previously interested in the music of *Burzum*, but their interest diminished as the crimes were serious and on interviews Varg became more inflammatory<sup>5</sup> and widespread. Candlelight records also were reluctant to distribute his music. Varg turned to a friend, Metalion (Jon Kristiansen), that published a highly respected fanzine<sup>6</sup> in Norway that covered the underground and had experience in a small label that worked with Voices of Wonder, but he felt he had neither the connections nor the money to successfully put the album in circulation) (Kristiansen, 2015). Help came from Britain, where Tiziana Stupia founded the label Misanthropy Records, with the intention of releasing *Burzum* albums because of this reluctance from other sources. The label would continue to run until 2000, releasing in that time more Black Metal albums from other bands that would become well known within the scene<sup>7</sup>.

The album contained atmospheric elements, it was hypnotic in its repetitiveness, the sound was 'raw' – meaning a minimalistic and lo-fi production – and, in a subjective analysis, the guitars ooze with pagan sentiment. It was also, according to its author, a warning against Christianity:

*\*It's a concept album about what once was before the light took us and we rode into the castle of the dream. Into emptiness. It's something like; beware the Christian light, it will take you away into degeneracy and nothingness. What others call light I call darkness. Seek the darkness and hell and you will find nothing but evolution. (Flynn, 1995, n/p)*

Varg also positioned himself as a heathen:

**I am a Heidhinn (heathen) and both a(n) adversary to the 'God' of the Jews (Satanic) and Wotanic, (or Odinic as you would say) so whether you call a Satanist or a Odinist matter no whit, I am both.**

**(Linke, 1994, n/p)**

This mentality is further explored in greater detail on our ongoing PhD project, on the chapter Magnificent Glorification of Lucifer: Mysticism, Satanism and Occultism in Black Metal, as part of our research is focused on the visual expression of Satanism and Occultism on Black Metal album covers. However, for this paper we will focus on album covers that make use of works by Theodor Kittelsen. The artistic merits of Hvis Lyset Tar Oss have been shortly included to illustrate the relevance and scope of influence of this particular album, as its cover is arguably one of the most well-known within fans of the subgenre, even by those who may not appreciate it due to its exposure, fame and recurrent appearances in genre articles, published in print and/or online, or because of its author political and racial views. The cover depicts a decaying body by a forest road,

5. During this time, Varg conceded several interviews where his racist and anti-semitic views were openly embraced.

6. Slayer Magazine fanzine, published in the late 1980's and the 1990's in Norway, it accompanied the rise of extreme metal in Scandinavia with particular focus on Norway's Black Metal.

7. These include, but not limited to, 'Heart of the Ages' by In the Woods..., 'Wolf's Lair Abyss' (EP) by Mayhem or 'A Journey's End', by Primordial.

with a group of black birds (presumably crows), flying. This is a xeroxed version of a drawing by Norwegian Neo-Romantic artist named Theodor Kittelsen.

## Theodor Kittelsen

Kittelsen was born in the coastal town of Kragerø, Norway, on the 27th of April 1857. He is popular in his native country as an illustrator of folk tales, having drawn mythical creatures and fantasy scenes, with an emphasis in trolls. He started working still as boy as an apprentice watchmaker, until he met Diderich Maria Aall, who, noticing his talent, planned to fund his education in art and drawing. In 1876 he studied in Munich, at the Royal Academy of Arts, and, in a letter, he revealed his Romantic inclination:

*\*What appeals to me are the mysterious, romantic, and magnificent aspects of our scenery, but if I cannot henceforth combine this with a wholesome study of Nature I'm afraid I'm bound to stagnate. It is becoming clearer and clearer to me what I have to do, and I have had more ideas - but I must, I must get home, otherwise it won't work. (Theodor Kittelsen, n/d, n/p)*

However, although he went home, we would not return to Norway for good until 1887, having spent many years in Paris. During this time, he further developed his style, working as a caricature, satire, and fairy tale artist. In Norway he illustrated Nils Gabriel Djurklo's 'Fairy Tales from the Swedish', and he would also complete his work for Asbjørnsen and Moe, known for their Norwegian folktales, that began in 1882, published in 1910.

He worked on what is his most famous work, Svartedauen (Black Plague), between 1894-1895, which consists in a series of 45 drawings and 15 poems about the arrival of the Black Plague in Norway, in 1349, released in 1900, whose main character is an old woman named Pesta. The cover of 'Hvis Lyset Tar Oss' is taken from this book, the original illustration being 'Fattigmannen' (The Pauper). The album by Burzum in 1994 put Kittelsen on the Black Metal visual history map and influenced the subgenre collective memory. But the album also featured two more illustrations from Kittelsen's Svartedauen. The back cover is a detail of the drawing 'Hun Farer Landet Rund' (She is Making her Way Through the Country), and, opening the gatefold LP, there is also the illustration 'Pesta i Trappen', (Pesta on the Stairs). These were the first in a series of appropriations of his work.



- ▶ Figure 3.1.1. – The cover of Hvis Lyset Tar Oss (1993) and the original artwork, Fattigmannen (1900), by Theodor Kittelsen
- ▶ Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hvis\\_lyset\\_tar\\_oss](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hvis_lyset_tar_oss) and <https://www.wikiart.org/en/theodor-severin-kittelsen/fattigmannen-1900>

# Methodology

We first began to catalogue entries for this paper that came from personal memory and intuition due to our background as fan and regular listener of Black Metal. This way, our personal experience was the starting point of our research – such was the case of the albums by Burzum.

We also used the website Discogs<sup>8</sup> to discover album covers that feature a Romantic appropriation. Discogs is particularly popular between record collectors as they possess a marketplace for users to buy and sell music. On the search bar functionality of the website, it is possible to search Romantic painters and artists to see if they are featured on the credits of an album. However, although we have found albums using this method, the list is far from complete and from being exhaustive, so other platforms needed to be used to refine our research and amplify the possibility of finding Romantic appropriations on Black Metal albums.

Another website that proved invaluable was Archives of Khazad-Dum<sup>9</sup>, an informal research blog that provides albums across all genres that feature an appropriation on its cover alongside the original image.

Another website that was consulted but wasn't used as much as the ones before was Encyclopaedia Metallum<sup>10</sup>, which is the biggest database of metal bands and albums in the world, and in some albums, it contains an 'additional notes' page which can be consulted to check if the album image is an appropriation. Most of the times, the information is incomplete, only identifying the author, or nothing at all, and in those cases further research was made to identify the original image and proper context.

Something that we took advantage of was our involvement in the Metal scene in Portugal as a fan, which permitted a connection between our personal life and our research, translating in constant visits to music festivals, such as Vagos Metal Fest, SWR – Barroselas, Laurus Nobilis, standalone concerts in different venues around the country (such as Metalpoint and Hard Club in Porto), music shops that included specialized record stores such as Bunker Store<sup>11</sup> – where we also took the opportunity to present our research in its early stages), and Piranha CD<sup>12</sup> but also generalist stores such as FNAC and Tubitek<sup>13</sup>, and also webstores, which included the Season of Mist online shop, Napalm Records, Equilibrium Music, Lusitanian Music, to name a few of the most relevant. Another online search that proved fruitful was the recurring visit to labels that focus on Black Metal releases, such as Season of Mist, Ván Records, Eisenwald, Agonia Records, Signal Rex, Altare Prod, Nordvis, Osmose, Drakkar, Sepulchral Prod, Profound Lore, and many others. Other websites proved also quite useful, mainly websites that feature reviews, previews of upcoming albums and interviews, namely No Clean Singing, Angry Metal Guy, Grizzly Butts, Invisible Oranges and Metal Injection. The occasional visit to Instagram browsing the posts under the hashtag “blackmetal” also made us aware of some albums that contained a Romantic appropriation as cover.

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## The Works of Theodor Kittelsen on Black Metal Album Covers

Burzum revisited Kittelsen in 1996, in its album, 'Filosofem' (Philosophy). As previously stated, this is also an enormously recognized album among scene members and considered a landmark in the Black Metal subgenre. The album was recorded at the same time as his previously three albums as on its release Varg was already serving his prison sentence. The album as an even 'rawer' sound than its predecessor, as Varg asked for the worst microphones in the studio (Sanchez, 1996), which added to the charm and cold-like feeling of the record. Autothrall, a highly prolific Heavy Metal reviewer<sup>14</sup> wrote about the influence of Burzum in bands that came after:

8. Available at: [www.discogs.com](http://www.discogs.com), according to their description, is “a user-built database of music. More than 529,000 people have contributed some piece of knowledge, to build up a catalog of more than 12,803,313 recordings and 7,008,034 artists.” (*About Us*, n.d.).

9. Available at: <https://archivesofkhazad-dum.blogspot.com/>

10. Available at: <https://www.metal-archives.com/>

11. Available at: <https://www.discogs.com/seller/perangustaadaugusta/profile>

12. Available at: <https://piranhacd.com/>

13. Available at: <https://cdgo.com/>

14. As of the writing of this paper, he has 4839 Metal album reviews on Encyclopaedia Metallum

<sup>34</sup>As I've been revisiting and reviewing the whole Burzum catalog, I've probably made a number of mentions of just how influential these records were and remain. Well, I think it's safe to say that as far as the sound itself, Filosofem must have been the most inspirational of the lot; I've heard more underground black metal records that I could ever think about counting in the past 15+ years, and the structure here is incredibly common among the younger bands. It's probably just as often a subconscious tribute as an open libation, but also because such primitive tones are simple to achieve.

<sup>35</sup>In particular, a lot of the depressive black metal bands you'll today take their cues from tracks like 'Burzum'<sup>35</sup>, and it's not a strain to reason why. Incredibly crude, pathological chords woven slowly along the steady, solemn drums, conjoined to the plump, minimal glitter of the synthesizers and the repressed vocals, repeated and repeated with only slight deviations to the formula arriving in clean, downtrodden vocals and tweaks to the keys and guitars. (Autothrall, 2011, n/p)

He also commented on the artwork itself:

<sup>36</sup>Up to this point, Burzum albums had more or less been represented by dire, black and white images which effectively mirrored their grisly content. But Filosofem sees not only a mild injection of color, but also creates a powerful rustic cohesion, composed of artwork by Theodor Severin Kittelsen. Now, having admittedly little knowledge of Norse painters and illustrators, I might have found this more aesthetically pleasing than those who were accustomed to the style of imagery, but either way, it was pretty impressive for a black metal album in 1996. (Autothrall, 2011, n/p)

The artwork indeed contrasted with previous releases in the subgenre as, up to this point, they were predominantly black and white and with themes that mainly expressed some sort of negative emotion, as fear or hatred, and this image is decidedly not only more colorful, but above all, apparently peaceful. This illustration is 'Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur' (Up in the Hills a Clarion Calls Rings Out) (Figure 3.1.2.), and it shows us a young woman in traditional Norwegian attire playing a birch trumpet. This is an illustration from 1900, that Kittelsen made for a series of watercolors named the 'Tiril Tove', which revolves around the abduction of a sitter girl. The series of images include Kittelsen's interests in Norwegian landscapes and mythical creatures. On a personal appreciation of the album, this is our favorite Black Metal album cover as it is one of the most influential Black Metal records of all time, it explores both Black Metal, Depressive Black Metal, Atmospheric Black Metal and Ambient (which further influenced the subgenre Dungeon Synth, alongside the musical project Mortiis), and the title Filosofem (Philosophy), with the addition of the Kittelsen drawing appear to be making a call to expand the Black Metal sound and calling for a following.



► Figure 3.1.2. – The cover of Filosofem (1996), and the original artwork Op under Fjeldet toner en Lur (1900), by Theodor Kittelsen  
► Source: <https://www.discogs.com/release/321419-Burzum-Filosofem> and [https://www.reddit.com/r/Art/comments/5e26wb/op\\_under\\_fjeldet\\_toner\\_en\\_lur\\_up\\_in\\_the\\_hills\\_a/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Art/comments/5e26wb/op_under_fjeldet_toner_en_lur_up_in_the_hills_a/)

15. The first track on the album, also known as 'Dunkelheit' as it was also released with German titles.

These albums mark the two most well-known Black Metal album covers that feature an appropriation of the work of Theodor Kittelsen. In this paper, we present further appropriations.

Also, in 1994, in December, a band from Bergen, the hometown of Vikernes, Covenant, released their first demo, an independent release with the title 'From the Storm of Shadows', that uses as cover a heavily xeroxed version of the Kittelsen drawing 'Pesta in the Stairs', that was on the inside of 'Hvis Lyset tar Oss' LP gatefold.

In 1995, Taake (meaning 'fog' in old Norwegian), who would become a highly influential<sup>16</sup> and controversial<sup>17</sup> one man band, also coming from Bergen, released their first demo (after changing the previous name of the band, Thule), 'Manndaudsvinter', released on Mosegrodd, a label run by the sole member of the band, Hoest, and it features as album cover the artwork 'Pesta Pa Fjellet' (Pesta in the Mountain).



► Figure 3.1.3. – The cover of Manndaudsvinter (1995), and the original artwork Pesta Pa Fjellet (1900), by Theodor Kittelsen  
► Source: <https://www.discogs.com/release/4667227-Taake-Manndaudsvinter> and <https://m.facebook.com/ThKittelsen/postn/pesta-over-fjellet-1901the-pest-passing-the-mountainsmixed-media-36-x-44-cmpriva/2518086198253355/>

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Also, in 1995, Norwegian band Carpathian Forest, who would also become a widely popular name in Black Metal, released their EP titled 'Through Chasm, Caves and Titan Woods', which shows a cropped and darkened image of the Kittelsen drawing 'Til den grønne ridder' (To the Green Knight).



► Figure 3.1.4. – Cover of Through Chasm, Caves and Titan Woods (1995), and the original artwork, Til den grønne ridder (year unknown), by Theodor Kittelsen  
► Source: <https://www.discogs.com/master/6205-Carpathian-Forest-Through-Chasm-Caves-And-Titan-Woods> and <https://www.wikiart.org/en/theodor-severin-kittelsen/til-den-groenne-ridder>

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**16.** The band is still active as the writing of this paper and its full-length albums have generally been received with critical and fan praise.

**17.** Hoest, the sole member of the band, has been in jail for assault and has also received news coverage for wearing a painting of a swastika in his chest on a concert in Essen, Germany.

In 2001, German band Moriturus released an independent demo, 'Demo 1/2001', that made use of the 1897 illustration 'Sjøtrollet' (The Sea Troll), in a heavily xeroxed version.

In 2003 and 2004, Wyrd, from Finland, released an album in two parts, each featuring as cover a drawing from Svartedauen. The first was 'Vargtimmen Pt. 1: The Inmost Night', that used as cover the drawing 'Pesta Kommer' (Pesta Comes), and the other was 'Vargtimmen Pt. 2: Ominous Insomnia', that made use of the drawing 'Hun farer landet rund' (She is Making Her Way Through the Country). Still in 2004, Greek band Naer Mataron released a compilation album with the title 'Aghivasiin or Lessons On How To Defeat Death', on the label Shadowface, that appropriated the illustration 'Mor Der Kommer En Kjerring' (Mother, an Old Woman is Coming). The album was initially released in CD format and re-released on vinyl in 2006 on the label Anti-Xtian Records, and with a new cover, also from Kittelsen, this time the illustration 'Pesta Drar' (Pesta Leaves). Both illustrations are from Svartedauen.

In 2008, the one-man band Karg from Austria self-released their ambitious debut album (at 1h and 18min long), with the title 'Von den Winden der Sehnsucht', that featured a black and white appropriation of Kittelsen's oil painting 'Nøkken som hvit hest' (The White Horse), that depicts a neck, a shape shifting water spirit, here portrayed as a white horse. The album was re-released that same year by Seelengreif Klangwelten (on CD) and Karge Welten Kunstverlag (on cassette) and these new versions depicted a different cover, also a Kittelsen appropriation, this time the painting "Sorgen" (Grief).

In 2009, Russian band Bråkin Bråk released their self-titled album on Lesoskog, and it featured an illustration called 'Dans i maanglans' (Dance in the Moonbeam).

The band Karg revisited Kittelsen on their sophomore album from 2010, 'Von den Winden der Sehnsucht #2', released on Karge Welten Kunstverlag, with yet another appropriation, 'Me Me Vil De Foere Langt Ud Af Lande' (Me, me, me, me they will lead far away from the country), from the Tiril Tove series.

In Germany, 2011, the band Shores of Ladon released their compilation 'Rehearsals 2011', on Sol Records, that shows a cropped and mirrored detail of the aforementioned illustration 'Mother, an Old Woman is Coming'.

The following year, also in Germany, the band Asenheim released a self-titled album on the label Bleichmond Tonschmiede that uses as cover a straightforward cropped appropriation of the illustration 'Dragon'.

In 2014, a split between four different bands – Wolf & Winter, Dark Blasphemer, Nox Illunis, Ordoxe – from three different countries – Argentina, Canada and Italy – featured an appropriation of the black and white Kittelsen sketch 'De hadde i nattens stillhet lurt ham vekk' (In the Stillness of the Night They Tricked Him and Got Away), on the cover of 'Berserkers Of The Rotten Lands', released on Ydnirgal Prods. This same year, in Greece, the band A Diadem of Dead Stars digitally self-released their demo 'Unreleased Demo 2014', featuring as cover the illustration 'Me, Me, Me, Me, They Will Lead Far Away From The Country'. This demo was re-released on CD format later this year on No Sleep Till Megiddo Records, and, although the cover was changed and no longer features an appropriation of Kittelsen, it is relevant to note that the new cover features an appropriation from a Romantic painting, in this case 'Kaaterskill Falls', from Thomas Cole, from 1826. Still on this year, the Swedish bands Hermóðr and Leben released a split record 'Hermóðr / Leben', that features as cover the artwork December (1890), and the shell enclosing the cassette release is also a drawing by Kittelsen, 'Raftsundet' (1891).

German band Bilskirnir made use of the drawing 'Husmann' (year unknown), by Kittelsen, on the cover of their EP titled 'In Solitary Silence', from 2018, through the label Darker than Black Records. A detail of this drawing was also used this same year as the cover of the 'Demo I', by United States band Draugaz, on an independent release.

In 2019, German band Cineastre released their album Der Gesang Der Waldkinder, on Wrought Records, with two different editions featuring different artworks by Kittelsen. The CD version appropriated 'New Years New Moon' (1905), while the cassette release used a chromatically altered Husmann.

Finally, in 2021, iconic Black Metal band Satyricon, from Norway, re-released their debut album Dark Medieval Times, from 1994, with an updated album cover, that features the drawing Pesta Kommer (Pesta Comes), from Svartedauen.



► Figure 3.1.5. – 2021 Re-release of Dark Medieval Times, and the original artwork Pesta Kommer (1900), by Theodor Kittelsen  
 ► Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Dark-Medieval-Times-Remastered-2021/dp/B091F3LJ6Q> and <https://www.redbubble.com/i/art-print/Pesta-Kommer-The-Plague-is-Coming-by-Theodor-Kittelsen-by-ArautoCosmico/71766332.1G4ZT#&gid=1&pid=3>

## Conclusion

In sum, this paper aimed to explore a visual understanding of Black Metal as a cultural inheritor of the Romantic movement, and how album covers potentialize the circulation of ideas, choosing, in this case, Romantic artworks from Theodor Kittelsen and appropriating them in album covers, in some cases slightly transforming them (through crops and chromatic alterations), reestablishing new context, and meaning, and also making them available for a new, broader audience. For this we needed to get to the origin of the works of Theodor Kittelsen in Black Metal through the band Burzum, whose musical quality, reception and extreme circumstances made him a household name in the subgenre's aural memory first, and, due to its continued exposure, to the subgenre's visual memory as well. With Hvis Lyset Tar Oss, Burzum paved the way for Kittelsen to be further appreciated by other bands, beginning in its native Norway, but spreading to other countries, effectively disseminating his works, replicating them, almost like a feedback loop, giving birth to a visual patrimony within Black Metal.

It is relevant to underline the difference in cultural context between the original work and appropriation because, paradoxically, it shows the similarity of Romanticism and Black Metal as reaction movements. Romanticism originated in Europe at the end of the 18th century, having its peak around mid-19th century, as a reaction in part to the industrial revolution, the rationalization of nature and the Enlightenment – it was a reaction against its modernity. Black Metal, manifesting itself in the nineties in Europe, more particularly in Norway, also represented a reaction against modern society, with bands looking to explore their cultural heritage, mystic themes and nature. It was also a reaction against the Death Metal that was being produced at the time, particularly in Sweden. These kinds of connections can help to explain a tendency that some Black Metal bands have to procure Romantic artworks as their album covers.

The choice of featuring Theodor Kittelsen works on album covers further reflect Black Metal's thematic Romantic origins: exploring the nocturnal and the frightful, the mystic and the supernatural, nostalgia and a sublime love for nature. These themes, identified by Lang (1941), Blume (1970) and Warrack (1980), continue to be extensively explored in Black Metal album covers through its inception to this day through the use of original and appropriated artwork.

This is not an isolated instance of a Romantic artist's work being prominently chosen as album cover, as in our research have identified bands that have used artworks by Gustave Doré, Casper David Friedrich, Peter Nicolai Arbo and Albert Bierstadt amongst others.

At the same time, due to amount of Black Metal albums being produced each year, it would be naïve to state that there is a single visual identity associated with all Black Metal releases. What can be stated is that there is a clear tendency by many bands<sup>18</sup> to reflect Romantic themes as its albums covers, many times in the form of appropriation of Romantic artworks, enough to warrant the conclusion that Black Metal is a cultural inheritor of the Romantic movement.

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**18.** For our PhD research we have developed a database comprising 432 Black Metal records with Romantic themes on their cover, 290 of them being appropriations, showing a clear tendency among Black Metal bands to prioritize the choice of Romantic artworks when making an appropriation.