



# A life in Black

An essay by The.Goth.Teacher

*Die Winde werden stärker  
Unruhig wird die See  
Ein Orkan zieht auf, Regen, Hagel, Schnee.  
Wir lieben uns zwischen Luv und Lee.<sup>1</sup>*

The sea lies before me, and I gaze at the constantly rippling waves. It is not the Greek sea that lies before me in absolute silence and pure blue, it is the Scottish Sea, the shores before Ulva. The water is restless, but I delve into the silence of this moment. Hardly anyone strays here at this time of day. It is just the two of us, and our silhouettes gradually dissolve into the spreading darkness.

As always, we wear black clothing. We think that is only suitable. We are ourselves (*Wir sind wir*) and we belong to the goth scene, which – although it is so varied and diverse – has one distinguishing feature that runs through almost all age groups and sub-groups: black.

Countless artists have already explored the colour black or its absence in aesthetics: Dunkelsucht with *This is Fucking Mainstream*, Nachtmahr with *Der Schwarze Mann* and Ashbury Heights with *Shades of Black*, to name but a few. All these pieces shed light on different aspects of black uniformity. In March 2025, Ostara and Elisabeth, the two musicians from the band Vampyros Lesbos, released their album *Vi Per Sanguinem*. And in addition to songs such as *Sinnlichkeit* (Sensuality) and *Heute Nacht* (Tonight), the last track on the album is entitled *Wir tragen Schwarz* (We Wear Black).

Finding oneself is one of the ideas that inspire the band duo. But to do so, each person must first obtain a mirror. And it is precisely this last track which is better than the others at holding up this sometimes extremely uncomfortable mirror. Because the chorus identifies a central problem: Whatever may come, we are who we are and we wear black. (*Was auch immer kommen mag,/Wir sind wir und wir tragen Schwarz*). The community remains stuck in its own ways; change is rarely welcome, and anyone who disregards this principle runs the risk of being judged by their appearance and excluded. The cyber goth generation stands out as a literally shining example, having danced and defiantly paved their way not only to the Amphi festival. The garishness of their colours was initially viewed with scepticism, and even today, in some circles, the modern, technologically inspired variations are met with quiet derision. I cannot understand why such narrow-mindedness still exists in a community like ours.

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<sup>1</sup> If not stated otherwise, all quotes are taken from: Vampyros Lesbos: «Wir tragen Schwarz». Aus: *Vi Per Sanguinem* (2025).

This verse can also be read as a quiet accusation that there is no engagement with current events: the sea is becoming turbulent (*unruhig wird die See*), and with it our world, but the lyrical narrator lets the ship rock in the waves (*im Spiel der Wellen*), so that the ship, and with it we, drift ever closer to a reef. The lyrical narrator and his partner love each other, even though, or perhaps because, their shared ship is about to be wrecked. In interviews and on their online platforms, the two artists declare that the album serves to prepare listeners for their role as victims. While the band (also) refers to a game of dominance and submission, the social role can also be examined. So if we just let ourselves drift, we lose control and put ourselves in danger, we kill ourselves (*wir töten uns*<sup>2</sup>). If we read or listen to the piece on a social level, it becomes clear that our inaction endangers ourselves and the world around us.

In particular, the monsters among us (*Ungeheuer unter uns*) are central to our downfall. It is not only we ourselves who steer our boat into the abyss when we remain silent, but also those who betray themselves, their ideas or even us. So the rats remain on board (*Ratten an Bord*). In today's world, however, it seems so important to remain united as a group – whether in black or neon colours or even in bright colours: The values we should uphold may be outwardly characterised by a more or less uniform appearance, but here too the differences are sometimes great, even if some basic ideas span the subculture like a fine net. For me, it is the community and its solidarity, a tolerance towards many things and also the fact that we stand up for each other when injustice occurs.

What also defines black: Being superficial is fundamentally rejected, pain is ignited in the individual in many different ways – from worldly pain to psychological or physical pain. A world that is no stranger to pain will not be one that floats like a small paper boat on the surface of the water. Therefore, it can be said: we do not cry, we do not lament (*Wir weinen nicht, wir klagen nicht*). Confronting the dark themes of our world leads those involved in the scene to consider things that others only consider later, if at all. Here, the mirror is a little closer, because a certain inner detachment can often arise when a topic is considered.

One topic that always resonates strongly is death: in the play, it says: All traces will be blown away./But you will never understand us (*Alle Spuren werden verwehen./Doch ihr werdet uns nie verstehen*). People – I dare say all living beings – are well aware of vanitas, the transience of our physical existence, and this transience of our own physical presence does not give rise to vanity. For at the same time as we know about death and the end, we are also aware that some things [...] may rise again (*manches [...] wieder aufersteh'n darf*).

There are countless perspectives on death, from Christian-Western systems in which humans and their souls are to be tested, to Dante Alighieri's depiction in his *Divina Commedia* with the three realms of the afterlife: Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso, to atheistic models that believe that after death, the existence of a living being ends in nothingness. Following the verses of the song, a picture of death and rebirth is painted here – what this might look like is not explained in detail, but the bodies themselves are doomed to decay, because our bodies will

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<sup>2</sup> The more or less explicit eroticism will be neglected in the following, but it would provide an excellent basis for interpretation, especially in the context of the other pieces on the album. In my view, the different levels of interpretation are equally valid and can be interwoven, because both levels have much in common and can be understood as representative of the other.

be eaten by fish we know nothing about anyway (*unsere Körper werden sowieso gefressen von Fischen, von denen wir nichts wissen*).

The tension of the song is expressed in this discrepancy between the sensual physicality of the erotic scene described at the beginning of the song, the dead bodies and the resurrection: the hedonism of the present is contrasted with the renewed cycle of life at the end. Although at first glance the song appears to be about outward appearances and black clothing, it delves deep into the realms of mysticism, enigmatic, strange, bizarre and unknown, phantasmagorically divergent (*rätselhaft, fremd, bizarr und unbekannt, phantasmagorisch divergent*), but this is discussed more explicitly in another piece<sup>3</sup>.

So now I am standing on the coast of the Isle of Ulva instead of on a stormy coast in Germany, and I have arrived at my own centre. I wonder whether I can really recognise myself in the mirror shards of this time. I wonder whether I want to fulfil the role of victim that has been mentioned and whether I can really just let my own life run aground. It sounds tempting to simply surrender to the pull of the tides and hope that maybe someone else will take the lead for me.<sup>4</sup> The play convinces me that the vampires seduce you into playing this game. And even if the thought of it seems a little relieving, it's not my nature to just remain silent. Especially given the fact that there are too many monsters in our society, it is up to all of us to sharpen our senses and turn the proverbial tide – and, of course, to wear black, proudly and as a sign of our resistance.

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<sup>3</sup> Same album: *Sinnlichkeit*.

<sup>4</sup> This too, is depicted in another song of the album.