

## FILM

*Troll Hunter* (2010)

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## ANALYSIS

*Troll Hunter* is a political and religious allegory in the form of a mock documentary horror movie. It appears to be amateurish but is actually sophisticated. It is a Norwegian film that transcends Norway and applies to the entire western world. The satirical tone is established by casting the popular Norwegian comedian Otto Jespersen as the troll hunter. The film premiered in the United States in 2011, the same year as the horrific mass murder of 77 Norwegian young people by a Norwegian terrorist. This film exposes the corrupt ruling class that so provoked the killer.

The film is introduced as anonymous footage by missing filmmakers, intended either as a joke or to be taken seriously. The producers claim to have investigated for over a year and found the film to be authentic. Their critical attitude used to be encouraged in colleges before ruling class “political correctness” closed the minds of the young. Three students from Volda College set out to make a documentary. The boy with the hand mike is Thomas, who wears a bright blue jacket, and the girl carrying the boom mike is Johanna, who wears a red jacket most of the time. Red and blue are two of the colors in the flag of Norway, which was influenced by the flags of France, Britain, and the United States. Traditionally red and blue have been seen as the colors of independence and liberty. These young people discover how little independence and liberty in fact exists under their Socialist government. They are filmed by the third college student, a secret Christian who gets eaten by a troll and is replaced by a Muslim.

The students film a dead bear thought by bear hunters to have been dumped because the tracks do not match the bear, but they are overruled by a government official from the Wildlife Board. The hunters accuse the troll hunter of being a bear poacher. In this regulated society, only a privileged few ever get bear-hunting licenses. The students follow the troll hunter and try to interview him. The mysterious hunter is bearded, wears a dark hat and a black jacket and frequently dark glasses. At first he tells the students to “go to Hell,” but he is so fed up with his job that he eventually relents.

They follow him into the wilderness at night, where a troll crumples their car into a wad, slimes it and bites Thomas on the shoulder in the dark. Nevertheless the politically correct students agree with the government official. They do not believe in trolls and blame a bear for the attacks, even after hearing the strange loud roars and grunts of the huge beasts in the forest. “People want natural explanations,” says the hunter. Doubting Thomas does not know that he is dying of rabies from the troll bite. The troll hunter says, “No one here believes in God or Jesus?” The politically correct Thomas replies “Nope. None of us.” At this moment Johanna is playing with a sock puppet, a metaphor of herself and the other students manipulated by the ruling class. Although a majority of Norwegians belong to the state church, they worship the State and are obviously turning their children into Atheists.

Trolls have a long history in Norwegian folklore and this film alludes to a number of old fairy tales, in particular “Soria Moria Castle,” which attributes to trolls the ability to smell a Christian’s blood. Trolls used to be ugly and frightening as projections of human fears—surrogates for Satan—but in modern times they got transformed into cute little decorative figures that reflect a loss of faith in the reality of evil characteristic of liberalism. The students are typical liberals in not believing in evil even after they have been attacked. “Fairy tales don’t match reality,” the troll hunter warns them. Johanna thinks she knows more about reality than the hunter: “I feel sorry for him if he really believes in trolls.” This condescension of liberals applies also to anyone who believes in God. Liberals routinely compare belief in God to belief in Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. They have childish minds. In this film belief in God is compared to belief in trolls that are proven to be real—as metaphors of psychological and spiritual forces.

References to trolls are repeatedly followed by references to “Christ!” and “God!” Even after they are chased by a troll—“*Get the hell out of here!*”--even after they see one with three heads, Thomas thinks it is “some genetically-engineered monster.” The trolls look like gargoyles on a medieval church and when the hunter approaches one on a bridge, he wears what looks like medieval armor. The hunter attacks the trolls with a “flash gun” blasting intense rays of light that turn them to stone, evoking Christ as the light of the world who redeems people from evil. The troll hunter is *not* a Christ-evoking figure, however, he is a secular replacement of Jesus who can only save people in a physical sense, doing the “dirty work” of a hired killer. He has moral integrity and spiritual purity in not entering troll sanctuaries and in not killing them unless they invade human sanctuaries and kill people. Until now he has conspired in keeping the truth from the people, but that is a precondition of his government employment. He is depicted as loving animals and feeling sorry about having to kill trolls. In the scene on the bridge in his suit of armor he gets slammed around by the huge troll with a force no human could possibly withstand. Yet the hunter rises from the dead and carries on his mission without seeming even to have had the breath knocked out of him. Thomas calls him a superhero several times but he seems supernatural.

When they can no longer deny the evidence of their senses, the students are elated to discover that trolls are real only because they have a journalistic scoop: “Let’s take these recordings to Oslo and sell them for a fortune.” The hunter thinks they must be secret Christians because of “the way that troll sniffed around.” Thomas insists, “I don’t believe in God. I sang in a church teen choir. My parents forced me to. I don’t believe in God. I’m serious.” This choirboy is an insistent conformist dying of disbelief. Had he believed in trolls he would not have ventured close enough to get bitten by one. One of the jokes in the film is that nobody ever sees the monstrous trolls outside stomping and roaring around the countryside destroying trees and property, let alone all the evidence of God.

The killing of two German tourists is blamed on a bear by the government official, who brings in a scapegoat bear all the way from Poland. The hunter explains to the students that this official is a bureaucrat whose job is to make people disbelieve in trolls—invisible realities such as corruption or incompetence in the government. Naturally the official intends to confiscate the students’ film. Bureaucracy is satirized when the troll hunter is shown filling out government forms such as the “Slayed Troll Form.” Meanwhile Johanna remains insulated from reality, wearing a headset, carrying her boom mike around and making faces at the camera. Thomas remains unconscious that he is dying. At a press conference the government bureaucrat claims that the tracks of the killer are from a Russian bear that came all the way through Finland and Sweden, far removed from being any responsibility of the Norwegian government. Likewise, the radio in the hunter’s Land Rover reports that the government is not responsible for anything bad whatsoever--due to “global warming.” Another delusion of liberals is satirized when Johanna protests on behalf of animal rights that killing trolls is wrong: “This is horrible! It’s cruelty to animals!”

The hunter dumps a bucket of “Christian man’s blood” on the bridge to lure a troll. Kalle the student cameraman grows increasingly nervous and terrified and blurts out a confession that he is a Christian. This reflects the persecution of Christians in Norway and throughout the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After the troll eats their friend, Thomas and Johanna blame *him* for his death: “Why didn’t he say he was a Christian?” Because he was politically incorrect. If he had revealed his faith they would have shunned him, not made him their cameraman. Even after the victim is eaten, his camera continues to film Thomas and Johanna through a cracked lens. The young Atheists are not broken up over the grisly fate of their friend. They simply replace him as soon as possible. Lacking humanity, they are trolls themselves. Johanna deplors cruelty to animals yet displays no compassion for the Christian. The Norwegians replace the Christian with a Muslim. Their first requirement is “You are not a Christian.” This refers to the current cultural transformation not only of Norway but much of Europe. As to whether “Muslim is okay,” the troll hunter says, “I honestly don’t know. We’ll see what happens.”

As the film proceeds, the action moves deeper into fiords and mountainous wilderness—deeper into the collective soul. The landscape becomes more desolate and cold—a frozen wasteland. The trolls grow larger like the hidden evils in the world. In the final scene the troll is over 200 feet tall. To lure the monster away from the students the hunter plays a Christian hymn through the loudspeakers on his vehicle—“What a friend we have in Jesus.” This is the most dramatic affirmation of Christianity in the film. But as the colossal troll stomps closer, the hunter’s vehicle lights run out of power. “Oh my God!” The hunter gives

the students directions on how to get back to civilization, indicating that he will not return. He takes his flash gun and trudges out into the snow to confront the monster. He destroys the giant troll with his light rays and then disappears into a white mist like an angel of God.

In the distance ahead, government vehicles are approaching. They will confiscate the film. The students are last seen running away, but they have no chance to escape in this vast open wasteland--then the screen goes dark. They run in the opposite direction from the hunter—to the left rather than to the right. He disappears into light, the Atheists disappear into darkness. He is a hunter, they are followers—conformists. We are informed that they vanished without a trace. No bodies were ever found. Implicitly the government murdered the students to silence them. The film ends with a clip of the Norwegian Prime Minister holding a press conference in which he makes a slip and refers to trolls, confirming their existence. The liberal press ignores this news because they cover up anything contrary to their political interests. They hide the trolls in their souls. The political and spiritual message of the film is summarized by the troll hunter: “Maybe its time for a change in troll management.”

Michael Hollister (2015)

