

Post-secular religion and the therapeutic turn

Three Norwegian examples

The focus of this article is three contemporary Norwegians, who claim that they communicate with superhuman beings and/or promote therapeutic practices based on superhuman intervention. They come from different walks of life: Margit Sandemo is a best-selling author and housewife; Joralf Gjerstad is now retired, but was a dairy assistant and a bell-ringer in the local church; Märtha Louise is a princess and trained as a physiotherapist and Rosen therapist. They can be seen as personifications of contemporary religious discourses in contemporary Norway.

What sorts of religion do they promote? How do they relate to the Church? How do they reflect the situation of post-secular religion in Norway?¹

Margit Sandemo

Margit Sandemo was born in 1924. She is one of Scandinavia's most popular authors. Sandemo started writing novels when she was about forty years old. To begin with they were run as serials in magazines, later they were both serialised and published as books. She has written 172 novels, been translated into nine languages and sold about 40 million copies of her books, mainly across Scandinavia. The novels belong to the genre of historical fantasy and pulp fiction. A journalist in the *Guardian* describes her as 'Scandinavia's answer to Barbara Cartland, just with more magic and monsters. And sex.' (*Guardian* 23.6.2008) Margit Sandemo published her autobiography, *Livsglede* (The joy of life) in 2010.

Sandemo's parents were a local Norwegian author and a Swedish countess. She grew up in both countries, lived during her married life in Valdres

1 The sources that I quote are mainly in Norwegian, and the translations into English are mine.

in Norway, but moved to Sweden after the death of her husband. Sandemo claims to have had supernatural experiences.

These experiences include clairvoyance, premonitions, sensing presences and seeing glimpses of ghosts and little people, as well as having a spiritual helper who acts as her guardian. She calls him 'this helper of mine, you can call it a guardian spirit or guardian angel, even though I don't believe in angels' (*Guardian* 23.6.2008). To begin with she describes him as 'he that is there' (Sandemo 2010: 105), later he acquired the name Virgil. According to Sandemo, 'it is easier to communicate with someone who has a name' (Sandemo 2010: 207). She also has, according to herself, introduced dowsing with y-rods to find other people's spiritual helpers and has assisted people in finding their invisible helpers (Penny 1997: 37).

Sandemo combines traditional Norwegian folk beliefs and New Age language. In one of her books she draws a line from traditional Scandinavian ideas about superhuman helpers, through fairies to guardian angels.² According to Sandemo, it is logical that everyone has someone who takes care of them, 'poor God, how could he manage to be kind to everyone?' (Sandemo 2010: 207).

She describes when she began to write books as flight from reality, but not into darkness, but into a world of novels (Sandemo 2010: 179). It is easy to see her writing as self-therapy. She describes the mission of her novels as giving people the opportunity to relax, to leave the pedestrian world and get into the spirit of fictitious people (Sandemo 2010: 199). Her writing is increasingly marked by spiritual guidance, and Sandemo has become an expert on 'the other world' (Penny 1997: 37).

To begin with Sandemo was not allowed to include supernatural experiences in her novels; the publishers always took these things out. But in 1978 when her publishers asked her to start a new series she refused to do so if she was not allowed to include the supernatural. Her publishers reluctantly gave her permission, and it was a huge success; 47 books of *Sagaen om Isfolket* (The Saga of the Ice People) were published between 1982–9 (Sandemo 2004). It is a fantasy-historical saga, starting in 1581 with a deadly plague in Norway, about a strong mountain clan whose common ancestor has made a pact with the devil and are therefore cursed. Sandemo has suggested that Lucifer made her write the books—Lucifer in her thinking is a tragic rather than evil being; in her opinion the Church has a wrong opinion of Lucifer. In an inter-

2 *Vi er ikke alene* (We are not alone, 1990) is a collection of letters from people who tell about their superhuman experiences and with comments by Margit Sandemo.

view she said that, 'all I have written about in the Icefolk is only fantasy and pure invention—except for the supernatural element' (*Norsk Ukeblad* 42/97). Sandemo has always told journalists about her experiences with her helper, the ghosts and the little people. She has received thousands and thousands of letters from people who want to say how much they like her books and people who want her help (Penny 1997: 91 ff.). Her speciality, by her account, is to remove ghosts from houses and help people who do not know what they shall do when they meet ghosts or small people. Sandemo does not believe in God and is critical of the Church. She has said as much in interviews, and has also imparted this view by means of her novels. This has led to attacks from theologians on what they take as a promotion of an occult universe.

In 1993, Arild Romarheim and Michael Holter at MF, the Norwegian School of Theology, characterised her as 'a spiritual guide for all of Scandinavia' (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 8). They see Sandemo as one who promotes an occult world-view and plays with the dark forces. According to them a special problem with Sandemo is that she blurs the distinction between fantasy and reality (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 188). They see Sandemo as the strongest influence on the beliefs of people in Norway and especially of youth, and call her world a universe of anxiety and fear (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 188–9), while the Christian universe is a universe of safety (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 194; cf. also Penny 1997: 99–103). Sandemo has accordingly experienced the same as J. K. Rowling did with her books about Harry Potter; that her novels have been used as antitypes by Christians to describe a Christian universe.

Bridget Penny discusses why the Church at the end of the nineties saw Margit Sandemo as an enemy and says that one reason is that Margit Sandemo is conceived of as a person that ought to belong to the Church (Penny 1997: 103). She also stresses the huge sales of books as a reason for the Church to engage itself and mount a critique of Sandemo.

Sandemo promotes a religious outlook which is situated partly on the fringes of the Christian universe and partly builds on traditional Scandinavian ideas about intermediary beings, as well as on New Age/spirituality. She is a spiritual guide who encourages people to get on with their lives and rely on love and compassion to make the right choices between the good and evil powers in the world. And, *nota bene*, according to Sandemo, these powers are real. There are cracks and slippages between the narratives about Sandemo's life and the universe of her novels, and the interplay between her novels and her supranormal experiences has obviously contributed to her fame.

Joralf Gjerstad

Joralf Gjerstad was born in Snåsa in 1926. He realised early on that he was clairvoyant and had the power to heal. When he lays his hands on people they feel the heat, while the hands of Gjerstad remain cold. Several have said that his laying on of hands has had an effect on their illness. In Norway he is known as ‘Snåsamannen’—‘the man from Snåsa.’ Gjerstad lives in a truly scenic part of Norway with lakes, forests and mountains, where people are few and far between. He seems to have an almost religious relationship to nature, and lived for one year in his youth on a small farm in the mountains, contemplating—according to his memoirs—the greatness of creation and God as the creator of everything. When Gjerstad was in his teens he had a vision while he was looking at the big lake at Snåsa: ‘Then I saw a strange light—a halo that created a beautiful vision and seemed to me to be pleasant and peaceful. The light, which contained all the colours of the rainbow, laid itself out on the field before me, and illuminated the birch wood.’ (Gjerstad 2010: 40.) In the memoirs this narrative represents a turning point, because that day he promised to help those who needed him. Thousands of people have come to him with their illnesses; many of them claim that they were healed or suffered less after their meeting with Gjerstad. Most of the time, Gjerstad has worked as a dairy-assistant, travelling between the local farms of Snåsa. Sometimes he hears a voice saying which house he should visit to heal people. He has also been a bell-ringer at the local church, and some of those who came to church on Sunday consulted him after mass. He used to receive people in his home, running a healing practice, or talk with them and heal them by phone. Gjerstad does not charge money for his services.

In 2006, Joralf Gjerstad was presented on national television, and in 2008 a famous biographer in Norway, Ingar Sletten Kolloen, wrote a bestselling biography about him, *Snåsamannen. Kraften som helbreder* (The man from Snåsa: the power that heals), which places much emphasis on Gjerstad’s alleged healing powers. It was a huge success and Gjerstad became nationally famous. He describes the book signing tour in this way: ‘We continued through county after county, city after city: Trondheim, Bergen, Stavanger, Drammen, Oslo, Lillehammer and Hamar. Everywhere we came people knew about me. It was unbelievable how many had called on me in Snåsa.’ (Gjerstad 2010: 131.) According to Siv Ellen Kraft, who refers to Google’s trend barometer, in 2008 Gjerstad was more popular than the Norwegian prime minister, second only to another religious personality—Jesus (Kraft 2010b: 243, note 1). According to Kolloen 50,000 people, which is about one per cent of the

Norwegian population, have visited Gjerstad in Snåsa. A former Norwegian minister of health, Bjarne Håkon Hanssen, told Norwegian newspapers in 2009 that he had consulted Snåsamannen on the phone when he was still a local mayor, because of the colic of his newborn son. According to Hanssen the boy was cured (cf. Kraft 2010a: 121–39).³

In addition to Kolloen's biography and two television programmes, several thousand articles have been written about Joralf Gjerstad in Norwegian newspapers and journals, and he has received tens of thousands of letters. Gjerstad has published three memoirs.

In his memoirs Joralf Gjerstad comes across as a pious Christian. He stresses that the Bible is the law of life (Gjerstad 2006: 26) and promotes a type of layman Norwegian Christianity related to the rural, to nature, to the nation and to family values (cf. Kraft 2010b). It is obvious that he sees his healing powers and clairvoyance as an integrated part of his Christian world-view, and his memoirs present him as a thoughtful and pious Christian. His three memoirs are called *Det godes vilje. Minner fra liv og virke* (The will to goodness: memories from life and work, 2004), *Å stå i lyset* (To stand in the light, 2006) and *Den gode kraften* (The good power, 2010). The titles are vague, but convey something positive, though at the same time ambiguous. To stand in the light, for instance, could both mean to be exposed to the gaze of people and to be in the light of God. His healing powers are described in vague terms and could probably be fitted into almost any religious or life stance system. Gjerstad does not really try to explain his powers; on the contrary, he says that the things that he does are not possible to understand and that he cannot explain them. He stresses that his healing power is an innate ability, not to be learnt on a study course (Gjerstad 2006: 29), but he regards it as evidence of the greatness of creation (Gjerstad 2010: 45).⁴ The Nobel Prize laureate in medicine, John Carew Eccles, the space and rocket technology specialist Werner von Braun, the psychiatrist Victor Frankl, the physicist Albert Einstein and the physician Albert Schweitzer are among Gjerstad's heroes. According to him, they were top scientists who combined excellent science with a religious outlook. So he summons them in his biography to make a bridge between the field of science and the field of religion.

3 In 2008 100,000 copies of Kolloen's book had been sold, and it was still on the top of Norwegian bestseller lists.

4 Bente Gullveig Alver has stressed that for the clients, the abilities and the practice of a healer and a clairvoyant are much more important than how the practice is effected and explained (Alver 2011: 150).

One might say that since Gjerstad acts both as a healer and as a bell-ringer, he has two different religious roles, which are integrated within a Christian context. Taking into consideration that one of the most important roles of Jesus in the Gospels was as a miracle worker and a healer, there is nothing contradictory about acting as a healer within a Christian context. It is perhaps more strange to do it in a society that is one of the most secular in the world and which has one of the most expensive public health services, and to achieve such national acclaim. Even if critical voices exist they have in the main been drowned by the overwhelmingly positive reception.

In 2009 Bishop Tor Singsaas invited Gjerstad to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim.⁵ Gjerstad was received in a crammed church with 1000 people standing outside, because there were not enough seats. The conversation between the Bishop and Gjerstad took place in the context of the divine service and ended with the Bishop blessing Gjerstad and walking with him down the aisle. The Bishop compared him to the Joseph of the Old Testament who worked in Egypt as a seer and interpreter of dreams. In other words, Gjerstad seems to have been accepted by the Church of Norway.⁶

One might think that since Gjerstad's healing practice intersects with several of the main expert systems in contemporary societies, that would have got him into trouble—but even if he is criticised by some, he has obviously found a *modus vivendi* in relation to science, medicine and religion. How is it done? One answer is that he, as mentioned, is a pious Christian, and does not make specific theological claims about, for instance, angels or miracles. He stresses that he co-operates with doctors and wants people to be treated in hospitals.

Märtha Louise

Märtha Louise was born in 1971, is a princess and has trained as a physiotherapist and Rosen therapist. Märtha Louise has started her own business, among other things working as a teller of fairytales for various organisations. She has written a children's storybook and in 2007, together with Elisabeth Samnøy, started Astarte Education, known as 'The Angel School', where people can

5 It was the cathedral of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Nidaros (1152–1537).

6 Siv Ellen Kraft has pointed out, while Gjerstad's own memoirs construct him as a pious Christian, the television programs and the biography of Kolloen present his healing powers without much stress on his Christian belonging (Kraft 2010b).

buy courses and learn about angels as personal helpers, among other things. Märtha Louise has a reputation for talking with horses, and she makes a connection between talking with horses and talking with angels. The initiation of the school was a huge media event in Norway and also abroad. On July 25, 2007, one of the BBC news headlines on the internet read: 'Norway princess "talks to angels"'. The day before the story had made the frontpages of all the national Norwegian newspapers. In the BBC version it read as follows:

Norway's Princess Märtha Louise says she has psychic powers and can teach people to communicate with angels. The 35-year-old daughter of King Harald and Queen Sonja made the announcement on a website promoting her plans for a new alternative therapy centre. She says she realised as a child that she could read people's inner feelings, while her experiences with horses had helped her make contact with angels. Princess Martha Louise is fourth in line to the Norwegian throne. The royal palace says it has no official link to the princess's planned alternative therapy centre, the AFP news agency reports. The princess, who trained as a physical therapist, says on the website for her Astarte Education centre that she has 'always been interested in alternative forms of treatment'. Students at her centre, she says, will learn how to 'create miracles' in their lives and harness the powers of their angels, which she describes as 'forces that surround us and who are a resource and help in all aspects of our lives'. 'It was while I was taking care of the horses that I got in contact with the angels', she says. 'I have lately understood the value of this important gift and I wish to share it with other people, maybe with you.' A three-year programme at her centre costs 24,000 Norwegian crowns (\$4,150; €3,000; £2,000) per year.

When the princess recently mentioned briefly that she thinks it is possible to speak with dead people there was a new media storm, but it faded out, probably because the princess for the time being did not have any intention of taking it further.⁷ One could say that the princess and Samnøy have found their niche in the religious market, among other things by selling angel-therapies.⁸

7 Lisa Williams who has appeared in television shows in several countries, was on her first tour to Norway in 2010 and allegedly talked with the dead. Her performances were in the main sold out.

8 Emma Heathcote-James, bestselling international writer about angels was taken to court for using a picture of the princess on the cover of a Norwegian translation of her book. Notto Thelle, a Norwegian professor in theology, has called his book,

While the public in general seems to accept the angels as odd, but mostly harmless, conversation with the dead was in general seen to be over the top. In 2009 Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy published the book, *Møt din skytsengel. En innføring i å møte din unike kraft* (Meet your guardian angel: an introduction to encountering your unique power). The book has been translated to eight languages and sold *ca* 100,000 copies.

In this book the princess and Samnøy make a distinction between religiosity and spirituality. Religiosity is connected to a religious society, while spirituality is ‘to have spiritual experiences, which means experience of a universal power of love or a divine power of love, if you will. Therefore one can very well be a member of a religious society and still be spiritual. The spiritual tools that we offer you, are like a map and a compass to find your unique way.’ (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 9.) The concept ‘spiritual tools’ refers to specific techniques that make the spiritual power in each human visible. It also implies that these tools can be used across religions.

Central to the book is the universal power of love, but in line with the individualising trends in modern therapies, the focus is on the individual: ‘When you live life in love with yourself, you want only the best for yourself’ (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 178).

The book contains a meditation technique, called ‘Give to yourself’ and the authors say that the ‘most important thing that we want to convey is the joy and excitement in having an honest meeting with yourself’ (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 11). The book presents 18 meditations. Their main points are to be present in the body, keep the aura in appropriate distance from the body, move the energies of others out, connect with the earth, connect with the universe and invite the angels into one’s life.

There is a universalising trend throughout the book as well as a strong tendency to synonymise: vital energy is compared and made identical with Indian *prana*, Chinese *chi* and Japanese *reiki*. This energy is also compared to energy as a scientific concept, and the authors refer to Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein. The angels are universal and exist in almost all religions, for instance in the form of *devas* or *amesha spentas* and so forth. In some religions people have a personal angel, and the princess and Samnøy teach that everyone in reality has one. According to them, each angel has a specific tune, light, taste,

which discusses the relationship between Christianity and New Age, *Prinsessens engler* (The angels of the princess, 2010). The cover of the book alludes to the cover of the book by the princess and Samnøy, which, similar to their book, has the wing of an angel.

smell, feeling and colour that it can recall in you (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 164). Angels communicate with us in as many ways as there are people on earth. In other words, angels and the experience of them are flexible and accessible.

In several ways Märtha Louise and Samnøy offer typical, contemporary, spiritualised therapies. Anne-Christine Hornborg mentions four characteristics of such contemporary rites: they are individual-centred; it is important to realise one's authentic Self; the leaders are self-appointed (mainly women); and a radical transformation of one's being is an intensively emotional experience. A fifth characteristic, is commercialisation. (Hornborg 2010.) These characteristics fit very well the meditation techniques and the communication with angels that are offered by Märtha Louise and Samnøy.

While angels are part of the Christian universe, traditionally these intermediate beings remain on the fringes of the Lutheran supernatural universe and act as messengers for God, not as helpers who come at the beck and call of humans (Gilhus 2012). Representatives of the Church and the theological faculties have criticised the views about angels that are presented by Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy (Thelle 2010; cf. below).

Blurred boundaries and post-secular religion

To understand the function and meaning of Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy, they should be seen in a broader cultural and religious context. To do this, we will use a spatial model of religion.

Jonathan Z. Smith has presented a model of religion in late antiquity as 'religion here, there and anywhere'. Religion *here* is religion as practised in the home; religion *there* is religion practised in the temple/church as public, civic and state religion; while religion *anywhere* is religion practised by religious entrepreneurs as magicians, fortune tellers and prophets. (Smith 2003.) The last type of religion occupies an interstitial space between religion *here* and religion *there*. In late antiquity, according to Smith, the third locus became expanded and more prominent.

The spatial model can fruitfully be applied to contemporary religion as well, but in addition to religion *here*, *there* and *anywhere*, we will add the dimension of *everywhere*, which is dependent on processes of mediation. Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy are religious entrepreneurs who personify religion *anywhere*—as for instance when they appear at alternative fairs, bookfairs, angel-congresses and magical weeks. But they are

also examples of religion *everywhere*. They write books, appear in newspapers, radio and television and are discussed in the public sphere, and are therefore known by virtually everyone in Norway. The focus on the individual and on the intensive interaction between religion *anywhere* and religion *everywhere* are clues to modern religious success stories.

In Jonathan Z. Smith's model, *here* is the home and the graveyard—places that are connected to the family. One might also include in the *here* dimension places connected to where one lives and to family roots, in other words, the local aspect can be seen as part of the *here* dimension of religion. In the case of Joralf Gjerstad the local aspect is Snåsa, for Margit Sandemo it is Valdres. The local aspect, especially of Joralf Gjerstad—frequently called 'Snåsamannen' (the man from Snåsa)—is stressed in the way he is presented in the media. The three spaces of religion in Smith's model are sometimes in tension with each other. Religious entrepreneurs frequently challenge the *there*-dimension of contemporary religion in Norway, which is dominated by the Church.

The therapeutic turn in modern culture has a huge influence on religion. Judith A. Macpherson points out that 'one of the most visible aspects of New Age thought and practice is the widespread concern with health' (2008: 55). Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy are Norwegian examples of the therapeutic turn in post-secular religion. All relate some way or another to science in their practice and/or books. Gjerstad relates more directly to medicine.

In 2004 a law concerning alternative medicine was passed in Norway. It replaced the Law of Quackery from 1936. The new law has a customer view of medicine and shows greater tolerance for what is usually regarded as harmless varieties of alternative and complementary therapies. A National Research Centre for Alternative and Complementary Medicine (NAFKAM, Nasjonalt forskningscenter innen komplementær og alternativ medisin) and an information centre (NIFAB, Nasjonalt informasjonssenter for alternativ behandling) were established in 2000 at the University of Tromsø. One can see these initiatives as reflections of a more open attitude, but also as a means to take control of alternative medicine and fix it in one place, both in geographical space and within the Norwegian medicine/health system. Kolloen (2008: 227) urges Gjerstad's former patients to join the Registry of Exceptional Courses of Disease (Register for eksepsjonelle sykdomsforløp), a body which collects information from people who have experienced an unexpected outcome of a disease subsequent to using alternative treatment, as compared to what was expected based on medical examination.

Gjerstad's attitude towards his patients makes his treatment complementary rather than alternative in relation to medicine/science, and he does not want to replace, but to supplement medical treatment. As mentioned on the cover of Ingar Kolloen's book (2008), Gjerstad does not want to be called a healer. This implies that Gjerstad creates a boundary between his own and other types of alternative therapies/treatments and does not want to be associated with the latter.

Meredith McGuire (1988: 18–31) has described five types of ritual healing in suburban America: 1) imitating Jesus as healer, 2) healing through harmony, for instance meditation, 3) ego generated illnesses, 4) healing by means of external powers, 5) specific practices. The typology is useful in a Norwegian context as well, to highlight the differences between Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy.

McGuire proposes that Christian healing is primarily based on the New Testament with Jesus as the model (1988: 19). The healing practice of Joralf Gjerstad is in line with this approach (type 1). Margit Sandemo heals houses and does so by means of external powers, which makes her in line with types 4 and 5. Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy combine healing through harmony with use of external powers, which makes them in line with types 2 and 4.

Joralf Gjerstad is unique among the examples in this article because of his positive relationship with and acceptance by the Church.⁹ He follows a biblical model, and tries neither to explain his experiences and practices, nor to challenge the creed and dogmas of the Church. In other words, he does not interfere with its theology in a non-acceptable way. One might say that Joralf Gjerstad is a Christian answer to the therapeutic turn in religion.

Angels have for centuries been at the margins of Protestantism, but are today being invited in. This new openness can partly be explained by a certain angel craze in contemporary culture, starting in the United States, and partly by the Church having realised that angels are in danger of being overtaken by New Age/spiritualism. The Church has signalled a wish to defend what is 'theirs' and to use the angels more actively in the service of the Church (Gilhus 2012). The angels of Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy are seen by theologians as too subordinate to their human masters and to have maintained too little of their quality as messengers of God to be accepted by the

9 The Church of Norway is Evangelical-Lutheran. Eighty-one per cent of Norwegians are members. The Church is strong on rituals of passage—baptisms, weddings and funerals. People seem to belong, but without believing strongly.

Church. This leaves Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy in a more ambiguous situation in relation to the Church than Joralf Gjerstad (cf. Thelle 2010).

Sandemo uses traditional Norwegian intermediary beings, Christian figures (Lucifer and Virgil who guided Dante) and New Age concepts. She maintains a boundary towards the Church and the Church maintains a boundary towards her supernatural universe.

While the spokesmen of the Church, to a certain degree, have treated Margit Sandemo as an enemy in the latter part of the twentieth century, at the beginning of the twenty-first century Joralf Gjerstad is being treated as a friend of the Church. When the alternative has become mainstream and the post-secular has turned multicultural and potentially multi-religious, the Church needs friends and success stories. Joralf Gjerstad, the man from Snåsa, has given it exactly that.

Conclusion

Contemporary, post-secular religion in Norway is expressed by Marit Sandemo, Joralf Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy, among others. They personify in different ways the therapeutic turn of contemporary culture and religion, which challenges traditional religion as well as the field of medicine/science.

Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy try to solve everyday problems—illness, difficulties in mastering life and personal relations, the need for safety, feelings of unease in one's house—problems that are basic in human life, but in some cases neglected by the expert fields or not able to be solved within them.

Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy allegedly interact with intermediate superhuman beings (Sandemo and Märtha Louise and Samnøy) or superhuman power (Gjerstad) and represent a return to elementary or basic forms of religious life (cf. Sutcliffe 2006). The intermediate beings are close to the human sphere, as seen in the case of Märtha Louise/Samnøy and Sandemo, unexplained and mysterious in the case of Gjerstad. However, in Gjerstad's case, the Christian universe is clearly the context for his beliefs and practices.

Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy personify different aspects of contemporary religion—connected to Christianity and healing (Gjerstad), connected to spirituality and angels (Märtha Louise and Samnøy) and connected to traditional non-Christian conceptions and beliefs

(Sandemo). Their religious practices are developed in interaction with the secular media. They represent a strong combination of religion *anywhere* (religious entrepreneurs) and religion *everywhere* (mediated religion), which is a striking dimension of post-secular religion. Gjerstad draws in the *here*-dimension with his connection to Snåsa and he relates positively to the *there*-dimension, the Church, as well.

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