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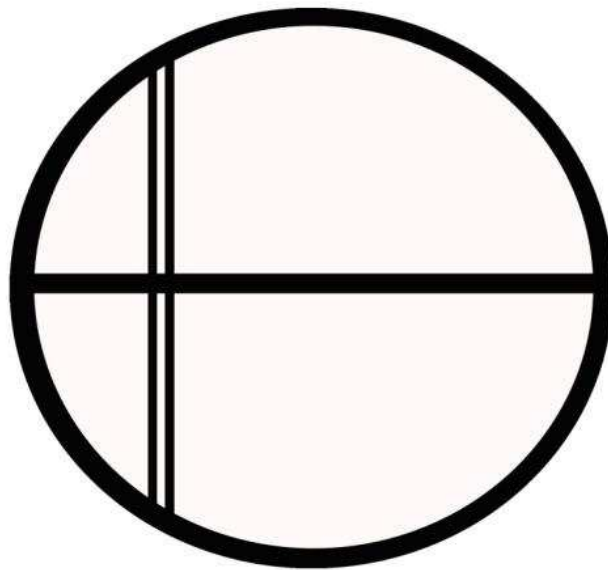
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TRANSCENDENTAL BLACK METAL



A VISION OF
APOCALYPTIC HUMANISM

BY

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PROLEGOMENON

One could propose a new meaning for black metal along with a new array of techniques to activate that meaning. The meaning of Transcendental Black Metal is Affirmation, and its new technique is the Burst Beat.

The will to power has two stages. The first may be called Fortification; the establishment of a paradigm or set of rules and the ensuing exploration of potential that lies within those constraints. The second stage may be termed Sacrifice; an auto-destruction, a self-overcoming whereby the initial rules, having been fully digested and satisfied, are thereby mutilated. They are transformed into the basis for something new and unprecedented.

Transcendental Black Metal is black metal in the mode of Sacrifice. It is a clearing aside of contingent features and a fresh exploration of the essence of black metal. As such it is solar, hypertrophic, courageous, finite and penultimate. Its tone is Affirmation and its key technique is the Burst Beat.

The black metal that was born in Scandinavia in the mode of Fortification can be termed Hyperborean Black Metal. Hyperborean Black Metal is lunar, atrophic, depraved, infinite and pure. The symbol of its birth is the Death of Dead. Its tone is Nihilism and its key technique is the Blast Beat.

Today USBM stands in the shadow of Hyperborean Black Metal. The time has come for a decisive break with the European tradition and the establishment of a truly American black metal. And we should say "American" rather than "US": the US is a declining empire; America is an

eternal ideal representing human dignity, hybridization and creative evolution.

The act of renihilation is the betrayal of Hyperborean Black Metal and an affirmation of Transcendental Black Metal. And it is at the same time the constitution of an apocalyptic humanism to be termed Aesthetics. As such, the question of Transcendental Black Metal is only the tip of an iceberg at the base of which is hidden a new relationship between art, politics, ethics and religion.

PART I THE DEATH OF DEAD

THE HAPTIC VOID AS FINAL CAUSE

The history of metal can be considered in terms of levels of intensity. Considered in this way, black metal shows itself to be a culmination or endpoint of this history, and also a dead end.

The historical development of extreme metal is not a chance series of stylistic shifts. It is teleological - governed by a dimly understood but acutely felt Ideal, or a final cause. This final cause is named the Haptic Void.

The Haptic Void is a hypothetical total or maximal level of intensity. It is the horizon of the history of metal.

Orientation towards the Haptic Void is expressed as feeling. The feeling is a unity, but in thought we can break it down into four elements:

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There is first of all a certain muscular clenching, a constriction of the jaws, fists, arms and chest.

Secondarily there is an affect: a certain aggression or brutality, a paradoxical sense of power, destruction, fullness and emptiness.

Thirdly it features a primordial satisfaction relating to the affect which acts normatively. Good metal produces a satisfying bouquet of clenching, constriction and brutal affect.

Finally there is a barely discernable *je ne sais quoi* that says “not enough”. A complementary dissatisfaction – as though no brutal breakdown can be quite brutal enough. It is a fissure, a crack, a lack of being. An insufficiency compared to the promised plenitude. Maybe it’s the inability of any concrete song to measure up to the inspiration that gave birth to it. Paradoxically this dissatisfaction is felt in direct proportion to the level of its complement.

It is this dissatisfaction, this fourth element, which causes extreme metal to develop new styles over time. This is the pull of the final cause. This opening, this fissure, is the angel that guides metal’s history. We see metal march towards the void, leaving thrash, death metal and black metal, successively, in its wake.

But the promise made by the Haptic Void is a lie. Only its absence is ever present.

TRANSILVANIAN HUNGER

Hyperborean Black Metal is the culmination of the history of extreme metal. Hyperborean Black Metal was born in the

Arctic Circle, which is traditionally known as the Hyperborean realm. The Hyperborean realm is a land that is fallow because it lacks periodicity. There is no birth or death there because the sun neither rises nor sets.

Hyperborean Black Metal is the culmination of the history of extreme metal (which is itself the culmination of the history of the Death of God). The subject of this history may be compared to a mountaineer, maneuvering over and across the various terrains of thrash, grindcore and death metal – or rather, carving these terrains into the mountainside - and striving to reach the Haptic Void, dimly understood but strongly felt, glimmering brightly at the summit.

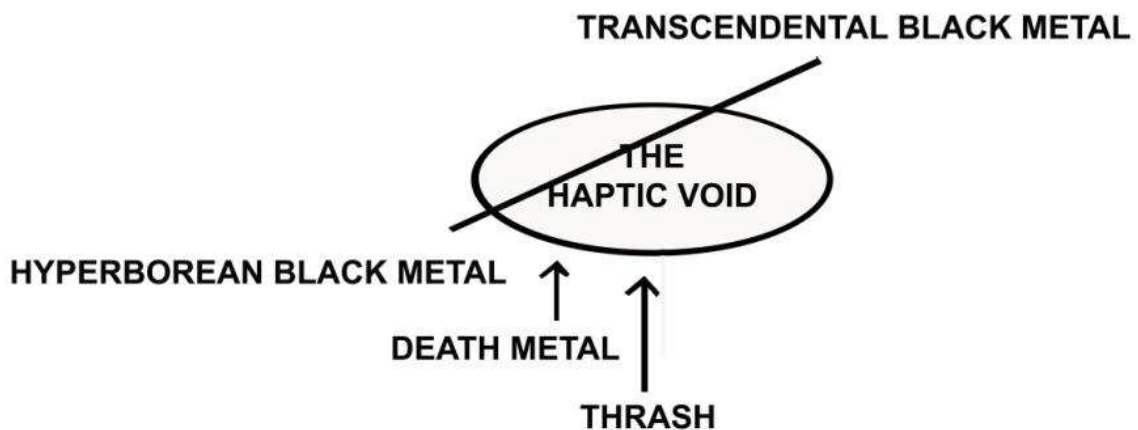
Hyperborean Black Metal represents the mountaineer's arrival at the peak and a supposed leap off of it, directly into the Haptic Void. A total, maximal intensity. A complete flood of sound. An absolute plenitude.

But there he learns that totality is indistinguishable from nothingness. He learns that it is impossible to leap into the horizon. And he is left, crestfallen, frozen and alone, in the Hyperborean realm. It is a dead static place, a polar land where there is no oscillation between day and night. But stasis is atrophy. The Hyperborean realm is dead with purity, totally absolute, selfsame and eternal. The mountaineer undergoes a profound apostasy that he cannot fully understand and arrives at nihilism.

The technique of Hyperborean Black Metal is the blast beat. Pure black metal, represented by Transilvanian Hunger, means continuous open strumming and a continuous blast beat. But the pure blast beat is eternity in itself. No articulated figures, no beginning, no end, no pauses, no

HIDEOUS GNOSIS

dynamic range. It is a bird soaring in the air with nowhere to perch even for a moment. What seemed at first to be a great clamor dwindles to an atrophied hum. Having climbed to the peak of the mountain, the mountaineer lies down and freezes to death.



PART II THE AFFIRMATION OF AFFIRMATION

AMERICA

Transcendental Black Metal represents a new relationship to the Haptic Void and the self-overcoming of Hyperborean Black Metal. It is a sublimation of Hyperborean Black Metal in both its spiritual aspect and its technical aspect. Spiritually, it transforms Nihilism into Affirmation. Technically, it transforms the Blast Beat into the Burst Beat.

Spiritually we acknowledge Nihilism, and we refuse to sink into it, impossible as the task may be. Transcendental Black Metal is a Renihilation, a “No” to the entire array of

Negations, which turns to an affirmation of the continuity of all things.

Transcendental Black Metal is the reanimation of the form of black metal with a new soul, a soul full of chaos, frenzy and ecstasy. A specifically American joyful clamor which is also a tremor. Or maybe it is the opposite act: a peeling away of the husk of convention, the dead skin of clichés and a fresh exploration of the living soul of black metal, with the aim to reactivate its purest essence and produce something that grows from it but does not resemble its earlier incarnations because it is built from the ground up in a different time and place. Built in America. An America that has never existed and may never exist. The America that represents the apocalyptic humanism of William Blake. The America celebrated by Aaron Copeland's Appalachian Spring or Ornette Coleman's Skies of America.

This America is a metaphor for pure unrestricted creativity, the courageous exercise of will and the joyful experience of the continuity of existence. A celebration of the hybrid and of creative evolution.

THE BURST BEAT

The backbone of Transcendental Black metal is the Burst Beat. The burst beat is a hyper blast beat, a blast beat that ebbs, flows, expands and contracts, breaths. It replaces death and atrophy with life and hypertrophy. This transformation is accomplished by two features: acceleration and rupture.

HIDEOUS GNOSIS

The first feature of the burst beat is acceleration. The burst beat accelerates and decelerates. It has an ebb and a flow. This flow both mirrors life and stimulates life. It expands and contracts like the tide, the economy, day and night, inhalation and exhalation, life and death.

The second feature of the burst beat is rupture. The burst beat features sudden ruptures or phase transitions. Just like all natural systems, it breaks suddenly from one state to another. Consider the horse as it switches from walk to trot to canter. Consider water as it switches from ice to liquid to gas. The moment of the rupture is the moment of transcendence. What is holy if not the moment that water turns to steam? Or the moment that a walk turns to a run?

The burst beat expresses an arc of intensity. It responds to and supplements the melodic flow rather than providing a rhythmic container or backdrop. The rate of change of the tempo, whether positive or negative, corresponds to a level of intensity. Any static tempo is a zero degree.

The burst requires total expenditure of power and its very exercise fosters growth and increase of strength. And yet the burst beat never arrives anywhere, eternally “not yet” at its destination, eternally “almost” at the target tempo. Like a nomad, the burst beat knows it will never arrive.

By mirroring life, the burst beat stimulates and fosters life. By fostering life, Transcendental Black Metal affirms life.

HYPERBOREAN	TRANSCENDENTAL
NIHILISM	AFFIRMATION
ATROPHY	HYPERTROPHY
BLAST BEAT	BURST BEAT
LUNAR	SOLAR
DEPRAVITY	COURAGE
THE INFINITE	THE FINITE
PURITY	PENULTIMACY

PROPERTIES

Transcendental Black Metal exists as a unity, but in thought it can be analyzed into seven properties.

Why is Transcendental Black Metal affirmative?

Transcendental Black Metal is in fact nihilism, however it is a double nihilism and a final nihilism, a once and for all negation of the entire series of negations. With this final “No” we arrive a sort of vertiginous Affirmation, an Affirmation that is white-knuckled, terrified, unsentimental, and courageous. What we affirm is the facticity of time and

HIDEOUS GNOSIS

the undecidability of the future. Our affirmation is a refusal to deny.

Why is Transcendental Black Metal hypertrophic?

Growth is life, stasis is decay. We are committed to striving eternally, living a sort of permanent revolution. Just as a well exercised muscle is beautiful and powerful, so we will be beautiful and powerful. In truth, there is no stasis. The only choice is between atrophy and hypertrophy. The celebration of atrophy is confused, weak, and neurotic. The celebration of hypertrophy is honest and alive.

Why is Transcendental Black Metal solar?

Transcendental black metal is solar in three respects, following three aspects of the sun: periodicity, intensity and honesty. The sun lets things be born and grow, so that they may die. The burst beat is periodic because it rises and sets like the sun. The sun mesmerizes and burns. We participate in intensity because we are not sentimental and we know that death comes. But why not follow a goal, follow the sun and chase after its flairs? Why not go up in flames rather than dwindle to a speck of sand? The sun represents Truth and reveals all that it touches. We are honest because we refuse to lurk in the shadows, we refuse to point fingers, we refuse to perform our rites in secret. We are not sickly, spiteful, hateful. We do not hide behind costumes or esoterica.

Why do we revere the finite rather than the infinite?

What is sacred is the taking of each concrete step. Each honest decision. The infinite is obvious and everywhere. To

engage the finite takes courage and produces hypertrophy. God is infinite, nature is infinite. The infinite is everywhere and cheap. It is the finite that is rare. It is the finite that is peculiar to humankind. Finitude means confronting what is present at hand authentically and doing what is honest with the means one has at one's disposal. The solar nourishes the finite. The finite is born, strives, and dies.

Why do we revere penultimacy?

Transcendental black metal sacralizes the penultimate moment, the “almost” or the “not yet”, because it has been found that *there is nothing after the penultimate moment*. The penultimate moment is the final moment, and it takes place at every moment. The fabric of existence is open. There is nothing that is complete; there is nothing that is pure.

Why is Transcendental Black Metal courageous?

Courage is open and raw. Courage means flying towards the horizon with no guarantee of a place to land. Courage is the active, honest leap from one moment to the next. No dissimulation, no excuses, no irony, no complaints. Courage has no object of attack. Courage is not jaded, disappointed, disaffected. Courage is not a flight into fantasy or nostalgia. It is the opposite of Depravity. Depravity is false freedom. A poison dart shot from the shadows. A retreat that seems like an advance. An attack that is really only a shield. Depravity is dissimulation; courage is authenticity. Courage has no image of itself. It is trailblazing. It has no path before it. Its only trace is the wake it leaves behind.

EPILOGUE SEVEN THESES ON AESTHETHICS

1. Black Metal represents the self-overcoming of Counterculture and the rise of Aesthetics
2. The Aesthetic could be a third modality of art alongside the comic and the tragic. Neither saccharine nor ironic, concerned neither with ineffable truth nor the all-too-obvious. It would be a directly neural art fostering joy, health, resonance, awakening, transfiguration and courage.
3. The Aesthetic is aesthetic, ascetic and ethical
4. The ancients identified the True, the Good and the Beautiful. After the dust settles, and the work of modernity and postmodernity is done, and the divisions between high culture, mass culture and counterculture have been obliterated, what is left? A single, shining Culture which is True, Good, and Beautiful.
5. In the age of information culture has traveled down from the superstructure into the base. Stripped of coercive power long ago, culture has now been granted unprecedented economic force, which enhances its spiritual power, power over minds and hearts. The question remains of what its function should be.

6. The murder of Euronymous by Varg Vikernes appears as the founding gesture of the tradition of black metal. In fact, it is a mere origin myth, foreclosing the real founding gesture. The real gesture, though it is less notorious, is the suicide of Dead. Compare Cobain “I betrayed the counterculture” to Dead, “I betrayed myself to the counterculture”. Dead’s death secretly inaugurates the birth of black metal and the death of counterculture as such. Just as the absence of Dead’s voice haunts De Mysteriis, so Attila’s recent return to Mayhem signifies that we are ready to explore the implications of Dead’s suicide.

7. Aesthetics is a resurrection of the aura and an affirmation of the power of meaning to mean.