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Black Metal Theory Symposium

P. E. S. T.

Philial | Epidemic | Strategy | Tryst



Organized by: Nicola Masciandaro, Michael O'Rourke
and Karin Sellberg, in collaboration with Into the Void Records.

Media partner: RMEDL | Metasound

Date: Sunday 20 November 2011

H: 14.00 (Ireland) | H: 15:00 (Italy)

Online at: www.radicalmatters.com/metasound

Location: **The Pint Bar**, Eden Quay, Dublin, Ireland

SCHEDULE

2.00-2.15 Opening: Michael O'Rourke

2.15-3.15 PHILIAL

- 2.15-2.30 Zachary Price
- 2.30-2.45 Karin Sellberg
- 2.45-3.00 Nicola Masciandaro
- 3.00-3.15 Q & A

3.15-3.30 Drinking Break

3.30-4.15 EPIDEMIC

- 3.30-3.45 Aspasia Stephanou
- 3.45-4.00 Scott Wilson
- 4.00-4.15 Q & A

4.15-5.15 STRATEGY

- 4.15-4.30 Steven Shakespeare
- 4.30-4.45 Ben Woodard
- 4.45-5.00 Vincent Como
- 5.00-5.15 Q & A

5.15-5.45 Drinking Break

5.45-6.30 TRYST

- 5.45-6.00 Paul Ennis
- 6.00-6.15 Diarmuid Hester
- 6.15-6.30 Q & A

6.30-7.30 Refreshments

8.00-11.00 LIVE ACTS

- Eternal Helcaraxe
- Wound Upon Wound



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ABSTRACTS

The Mutual Pesteering of Black Metal and Theory

Michael O'Rourke

If Black Metal Theory in all its incipience and not-yet-here-ness involves a mutual enblackening, then it also necessitates a mutual openness and pestering. That is to say that theory must open itself up to its parasitical outside (which is always already inside) and black metal too must open itself up to its own parasitical outside (which is always already inside). In order to fashion, however provisionally, a black metal theory, a moving-back-and-forth between black metal and theory, one needs what Deleuze called "intercessors", forces which come from the outside attracted by incipient conditions for their coming in and feeding on. The forces which this paper activates—from diverse fields including ecology, literary theory, art, politics, and philosophy—are a series of cuttings-in or inter-scissions which create trouble, a thickening cloudiness, a smudging which bridges both black metal and theory and their participations with a shared outside. These reverberations or resonances—openings to, butcherings open by, the outside—are attuned to the temporality and politicality (and by extension the ethical stakes) of a Black Metal Theory which is always to-come.

"Destroy Your Life For Satan": A Buddhist Exploration of Black Metal Toward the Establishment of Necroyana

Zachary Price

The American Nihilist Underground Society (ANUS) once published a piece sketching the apparent affinity between death metal and Buddhism. The article recounts the story of a man who, focusing all of his attention on death, learns the Buddha's open secret. "Only death is real." Total awareness of death brings death metal into a space where it may begin to realize the Buddhist path to enlightenment; it is, after all, what set young Siddhartha on his path to become the Buddha. Simply recognizing death is only the beginning, however. Without a liberatory practice, death metal stalls and binds itself more deeply to illusion. Looking is not enough. One must "taste and see." Where its forbears have only gazed, black metal insists on going. It relies on active dissolution, as evidenced in common lyrical themes, production values, and even on-stage mutilation. In Tibetan Buddhism, as well, many practices—for instance, the phowa, or transference of consciousness—involve enacting a dissolution of the body, a grinding down into its constituent elements, as well as a dissolution of the mind. These overlapping methods demonstrate that black metal is a practice of death, just as Buddhism essentially consists of the practice of death in meditation. Thus, it is also a meditative practice. Practicing death, like all meditative practices, is a liberatory process. It frees its practitioners from the illusion of life—which is to say, it unearths and makes present the truth that we are always already dying and rotting away. Therefore, black metal is akin to the yantras of Buddhist practice, a vehicle for the realization of enlightenment. It is necroyana, the vehicle of death itself, a body of practices against the body. A "massive conspiracy against all life." Not a diamond, but a femur pestle. A rope portal to the actualization of the empty essence of mind. [References: "Destroy Your Life For Satan," Mutilation, 2001; Buddhism and Death Metal," ; Psalm 34:8; "Massive Conspiracy Against All Life," Leviathan, 2008]

Dead Gifts

Karin Sellberg

"Take thou some new infection to thy eye / And the rank poison of the old will die" (Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet*, 1.2.49-50). The Norwegian/Swedish word 'gift' connotes both married bliss and poison. It also shares a common root with the English 'gift'. The OED tells us that a gift is something bestowed without the expectance of anything in return. Giving, in its ideal form, is thus a pure expenditure or expression, but as George Bataille reminds us gift exchange often harbours more complex structures. Whether passionate or poisonous, most gifts are imbued with a vein of sacrifice – and the lacerations following its sacral thrusts contract the giver to his gift. Black Metal lore is full of sacrifices and 'sacred' gifts. The most infamous example is possibly the suicide of Mayhem's vocalist Dead (Per Yngve Ohlin), after which the rest of the band members were said to have feasted on his brains and made 'special gifts' out of fragments of his skull. The brain stew was later claimed to be a false rumour, but the band has confirmed the existence of skull amulets. Whether true or not, the myth of both these omophagic philliations pose a number of interesting questions: is there a particular allure to Dead's discarded physical remains? What type of power are the Dead Gifts invested with? Bataille and Reza Negarestani offer us a few clues. Death is both contagious and cathartic. As several of the Mayhem members attest to, Dead always saw himself as dead: "That is the reason he took that name. He knew he would die" (Occultus), but in death Dead became something more elevated and universal. He became the image of Death – its allegorical counterfeit. As his bones were shattered by the force of the gunshot, his body grew steadily more formless and molar. When Dead came to personify Death, Death itself was split open. The Medieval saint Angela de Foligno recognises that the ingestion of Death (in her case through a mouthful of leprous pus) opens her body to Christ and infinity. Dead's gifts of Death allow their recipients to commune with transcendence.

On the Mystical Love of Black Metal

Nicola Masciandaro

“Deep in the shadows wings take to flight through clouds of chaos where stars die” (Inquisition, “Across the Abyss Ancient Horns Bray,” *Ominous Doctrines of the Perpetual Mystical Macrocosm*). “That which neither creates nor is created . . . is classed among the impossibles, for its essence lies in that it cannot be [cuius differentia est non posse esse]” (John Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon*). The love of black metal twists toward absolute cosmic exteriority along a mystical path of intensive inversion. Ordinate mysticism takes an inward and upward path to God as the source and goal of everything, withdrawing from the exterior phenomenal world in order to ascend beyond it to the One in a movement that is anabatic, apophatic, and anagogic (Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.8.1; Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.10,16; Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*, 1.1). The love of black metal, reversely and contrarily, leads downwards and outwards into a paradoxically disordered and multiple cosmos that is no less divine, pursuing a musical path that is catabatic, cataphatic, and apogogic (a path, however, that necessarily twists these terms according to its own essential negativity). Where music traditionally aims to mimetically ascend to hyper-central divine truth through the harmony of the celestial spheres, black metal’s noisy anti-modern sonic drive coordinately plunges into the depths only to release and radically fly upon the infinite centrifugal power or negative cosmic wind of sound itself. Crucially, this distinction, between the ordered mystical love of God and the disordered mysticism that love of black metal inescapably is, is not a pure opposition. Like the Petrine Cross that at once marks the temporally separate twin foundations of the terrestrial ecclesia and the heavy acosmic kvlt, black metal love is a most intimate transposition of its spiritual precursor, a dissemblance that exacerbates and intensifies the still, unmoving point of identity with what it inverts. This point, the secret moment or punctum around which black metal assemblies anarchically gather, is perversely legible in moments of black metal complicity with essential ‘disordering’ counter-movements within medieval mystical discourse, for instance, Richard of St. Victor’s representation of the God-enflamed soul as spontaneously sinking into the divine will like liquefied black metal (*On the Four Degrees of Violent Charity*), Mechthild of Magdeburg’s exaltation of the soul’s descent into the night of separation: “O blissful distance from God, how lovingly am I connected with you!”, and Meister Eckhart’s prayer to be rid of God. Arguing that the modern love of black metal is, willy-nilly, a profound and fresh form of mysticism, a desperate contemplation of the divine manifesting the ‘desire to be everything’ (Bataille), this lecture will demonstrate, with special reference to the works of Inquisition and John Scotus Eriugena, how black metal and mysticism are lovingly united in the dark pestilential space of excessive and compound negativity, a new realm of the not not God.

Contagion and Solipsism

Aspasia Stephanou

This paper will examine the possibility of contagious proliferations in Black Metal, as well as the vampire/monstrous self as an enclosed capsule at the centre of the black metal universe. While black metal narratives open up the self to horror and epidemic contagion, dissolving boundaries between the self and other, between the self as a good meal for the other, at the same time the monstrous persona of black metal refuses to be eaten or eat with the other, sustaining thus the boundaries between a dominating self and a submissive other. Such a relationship is always imagined in terms of a masculine voice and imaginary self who invites the female other, in order to deny her her own jouissance, retaining thus his integrity and wholeness. As Joan Copjec writes, the vampire represents our overproximity to the object of the breast, the objet petit a, which the vampire now possesses but as a source of jouissance (36). For Copjec, vampires are male and their victims are female. Similarly, the vampiric black metal self dominates the female other, even when such contagious transactions occur, re-establishing thus limits and hierarchies. If the vampire messes up meal and its economies, as Negarestani argues, it also functions as a fictional prop to conjure up the horror of pestilence through the masculine prerogative to consume without the possibility of exchange or openness towards death mess and necrophilic contamination.

Musca amusica and the sound of Satan’s ascension

Scott Wilson

“Halo of Flies Over My Head / I am decaying Satan’s Wrath / The one to walk planet earth / alone / Spreading disease, death and war” (Impaled Nazarene, ‘Halo of Flies’ *All That You Fear* [2004]). “Attractive to the flies ... I am their mephitic trough ... a buzzing which engulfs all ... Through compound eyes / I envision eternity” (Lugubrum, ‘Attractive to Flies’, *De Vette Cueken* [2004]). Flies are a frequent trope in both black and death metal. For the latter, buzzing flies pullulating over a rotting corpse lyrically figures death metal’s pulverizing a-subjective affections of the body; for the former, flies are related to a metaphysical problem bound up not so much to the paradoxical notion of the death of God but the death and deification of Satan. The ultimate reference (perhaps since Iron Maiden and across numerous genres) is to Satan as ‘Lord of the Flies’, or as Malkuth put it, ‘Great Black Goat God (Lord of the Flies)’ (1994). But as this reference to Golding’s famous novel suggests, Satan is already, here, a rotting animal’s head: the sacrificial offering to the Beast misperceived as the Beat itself. Or rather become the beast through the hideous teeming acephalic noise of the flies that swarm about its decapitated head. The process of self-identification and self-transcendence that holds the God-Satan-Man triad together is transformed through parasitic consumption. Flies, not Man, maketh the Beast, but first through turning the flesh into ‘a mephitic trough’, a Styx of digestive liquid’ (Lugubrum) in which ‘Transformed man [is] dethroned’, Nominon, ‘Hordes of Flies’ (2005). For Nominon, then, the process of complete post-parasitical transformation – ‘Innate insects part of me / Parasite inside eating me / Host of flies born inside – sees the Satanic ‘Beast’ (the satanic multiple) resurrected from the swarming darkness of base matter where death has no dominion: ‘Absence of life I am the lord of flies’. Companion species, no doubt, since the migration of homo sapiens from Africa, musca domestica have lodged in the margins of human civilization, incubating and pupating in its shit and garbage, feeding on wounds and rotting flesh, defecating and vomiting waste matter teeming in deadly bacteria and viruses: typhoid, cholera, dysentery, tuberculosis. In black metal’s buzzing, its musca amusica, flies are both the locus of amusical ex-sistence and figure of Satan’s divine inexistence and ascension. ‘Through compound eyes / I envision eternity’.

Into the Vomitorium: Diseased Sacraments

Steven Shakespeare

Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* has been likened to a 'cathedral' of thought. It is striking, then, that its final article deals with sacramental dilemmas such as: what happens if the eucharistic host decays, or is eaten by mice? What happens if the priest goes insane during mass, or throws up after receiving communion? An image is spawned: at the consummation of the cathedral's mass, a priest lurches outside to vomit the infected host. Satanic black metal pursues this corruption of the holy through scenes of violation, deliberately perverting sacramental imagery. This paper traces the ambiguous relationship it maintains with Christian eucharistic theology, focusing particularly on the work of Deathspell Omega. In their hands, black metal becomes a tool for pursuing the kenosis of God to its ultimate end in an identification with diseased flesh, a supplement which ungrounds the sanctity and wholeness of the divine. Whilst their earlier work is still encumbered with a normative misogyny which replicates the failure of Christian orthodoxy to follow the logic of incarnation to its decaying end, from 2004, Deathspell Omega realise the strangely liberating corruption of transubstantiation (the 'of' to be taken utterly ambiguously). Emblematic of this shift is the appropriation, on 'Diabolicus Absconditus', of Bataille's image of the whore as God. The paper ends by turning to the queer theology of Marcella Althaus-Reid to further subvert the unholy alliance of narratives of sanctity and rape. Althaus-Reid affirms an unstable, scavenger God, constructed through the material, sexual lives of the excluded, celebrating "a Eucharist in which Christ's transubstantiation depends on a discarded piece of rotten bread." In this encounter, orthodox Satanic mimesis of Christianity becomes, neither echo nor reversal, but an intimate, putrefying *communicatio idiomatum*.

Folding a Cadaverous Scream: The Disharmonious Flesh of Recombinant Horror

Ben Woodard

This essay aims to harvest a philosophical provenance for recombinant horror – a particular form of body horror (or biohorror) that focuses on contagions that rearrange bodies both internally and externally with examples being *Dead Space*, *Resident Evil*, *Parasite Eve*, and others. This form of horror I argue indexes the strange mathesis of Leibniz (and Deleuze's reading and Negarestani's response to that reading), Nick Land and Bataille's discussion of the Labrynth, as well the tension between biological and architectural models of thought in Kant's architectonic. Black Metal will be stitched through this form of horror through the odd complicity between music and architecture in Bataille's pornographic rallying against the former, Land and Negarestani's howling inorganics, and the sickly biological upsetting the prestablished structure of Kant's thought. By looking at instances of biohorror in music I will attempt to discern how lyrical approaches coalesce or fail to demonstrate the nonstructural but structure-dependent horror of recombinant horror. In the end the guiding question will be if the sickly noise of the inorganic can be sufficiently absorbed by the intentional sonic and how this informs the mediation between pattern in flow in the gross inevitability of a dark vitalism, in which fecundity and negativity are inseparable, in which the body is twisted into a labyrinth, in which the inorganic screams with the pain of its self-induced flailing.

Tune In, Turn On, Curse Out

Vincent Como

The artwork/imagery being used to promote this, the third Black Metal Theory Symposium, is from a series of 23 works based on ancient *Defixiones*, or Curse Tablets, which apply an invocation—for good or ill—toward another party most often with whom you are either besotted, or who has wronged you in some matter of business or personal relation. In speaking about the works in this Hexe series, we will summarize the traditional role of the curse tablet and how these particular works are constructed in order to achieve similar results through a structural analysis and an exploration of their material properties in relation to Hermetic traditions. This will then allow us to move beyond the physical object of power and discuss intention and the psychology of belief as an entity in its own right, which leads directly into the overarching theme of PEST. One's complicity with the complex and layered structure that is belief is such that when encountering the intentions of another, it ultimately challenges the insular domain of one's very being; destroying the barrier of the self, and forcing an engagement with the realm of an other. This, then, turns virtually all human interaction into a psychic attack being perpetrated by and upon everyone at all times. Existence, as we will come to understand, is a relentless barrage of intentions, ideas and the surplus of decaying belief systems being recycled from the beginning of time to the present. This perpetual assault goes predominantly unnoticed until it is tapped into and channeled by an object, person, or collective group, at which point the focused intention may cut through the omnipresent universal static to fulfill its purpose, to cause affect upon a receiver.

"The Hopeless Soul Keeps Mating": Notes on Black Metal and Contemporary Fiction

Diarmuid Hester

This contribution considers the recent interest in black metal amongst writers of experimental American fiction. Utilising a conceptual framework derived from Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, we will demonstrate that the conduction of black metal themes, cadences and intonation through fiction conforms to the Deleuzo-Spinozist outline of a disagreeable or poisonous relation. Black metal's encounter with writing does not bring forth amplification, accretion or combination to form a higher power but is, rather, corrupting and pestilential: decomposing and diminishing what we might call fiction's subordinate –and therefore constituent– relations e.g. the range and affective capacity of character, plot, syntax, etc. This reflection obliges us to reassess the merit of a Deleuzo-Spinozist ethology and to pursue the vitalist prejudice which circulates at the very heart of this system.

On the Internal Pest: Jack the Ripper as a Not-So-Alien Maniac

Paul J. Ennis

In his 1937 oddity 'Jack the Ripper; or, When London Walked in Terror' Edwin T. Woodhall claimed to have read a postcard

dated September 9th, 1888 from the Ripper (the date, more or less, when people realized that something was up). The postcard likely never existed, but as a fiction (about a real crime consistently fictionalized) it at least resists the temptation to cast Jack as an outsider. The ditty in the postcard runs as follows: "I'm not an alien maniac, nor yet a foreign tripper, I'm just your lively, jolly friend, Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper." At the time of the crimes the list of Ripper suspects tended to be comprised of those on the margins: Polish Jews, foreign sailors, American psychopaths, menacing Irish rogues, and a whole host of outsiders. These were the 'external' pests of the day, but these suspects were likely designed to shield Londoners from a more startling possibility – the 'internal pest.' Jack was, I suspect, one such pest, but so too is the Unabomber, or the Zodiac, or even the early black metal scene and its attack on traditionalist Norwegian Christianity. In this paper I want to demonstrate a simple thesis: that the Ripper was the first contemporary internal pest, the first blip on the modern way of life, and a singular kind of blackening of the consciousness it has given rise to.

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