

1. Liturgy is well known for being in a demonstrative, conceptual and analytic approach. You establish a new form of Black Metal, in particular by adopting an iconoclast attitude. How do you deal with this mission? Thanks to this intellectualized reasoning, are you looking for a legitimization? Or is that a kind of provocation?

I think that there is a deeper meaning to black metal that most people in the metal community don't see. I would like for Liturgy to be a midwife for this deeper meaning. Black metal is much more than counterculture, much more than rock music. It is a link to everything that has ever happened in history and an active living window for transcendence. The potential is there in black metal itself, so in a way it is not a mission at all. Black metal is in the throes of a Nietzschean self-overcoming. Henry Miller said something about the world already being dead but that it still needs someone to stick a grenade in its ass. That's sort of how I see black metal. But the insertion of the grenade is an affirmative gesture.

2. In the same manner, when you wrote the "Transcendental Black Metal" manifesto, stating your positions, did you want to announce the birth of a new movement? The manifesto used to be an artistic statement but is no longer used anymore (In France, the last one in the New Realists one, dating from 1960).

Yes the manifesto is a dead form, though people still write them. I just saw a manifesto written by Rachel Harrison. In a way I think of the manifesto as more of a declaration. The interesting thing about a declaration is that it is saying two contradictory things - first, it declares that someone is already true. At the same time it is also saying that it is not yet true, but will be true in the future. Otherwise there'd be no need for the declaration. I think that status of already existing as not yet existing is very interesting and exciting, and that is the status of Transcendental Black Metal. I don't expect it to form a movement the way that manifestos do. I will be happy if it always remains in the state of existing as not yet existing. A little bit like God's future existence in Quentin Meillassoux's writing.

3. In Ancient Greece, during Dionysus' celebrations, you could hear choral singings ("goat song" gave the etymology of the word "tragedy"). Maybe we could find a parallel with Liturgy: the sacrifice of the Black Metal (the Goat), odes sung in public during the ceremony (liturgy). Do you consider Liturgy as a form of tragedy?

In a way it is a Dionysiac tragedy, especially in connection with the goat song. Though I think of it really as a form that is neither comic nor tragic, but aesthetic instead. Aesthetic is a hybrid of aesthetic and ethical, a hybrid between art and ritual. I am most interested in producing levels of intensity and catalyzing more and different kinds of intensity. So catalysis is very important, which has more to do with pure energy than tragedy per se.

4. Your music is very powerful and deeply touches people's feelings. According to me, the use of the tremolo is a part of the explanation. Do you think, like Monteverdi, that it can express human passions, doting and warlike? Does

the “burst beat” you defend, by its sensitive movements, lead us to the same sensations?

Yes when I mentioned intensity above, I also mean emotion and feeling. Though intensity has a wider range of meaning than feeling does. My favorite thing about the classical tradition up through Mahler, especially during the romantic era, is the mapping of emotions onto harmonies. We are so accustomed to hearing this in film scores and so on that we don't take it seriously and find it to be a cliché. Most extreme rock and metal bands avoid the kinds of tropes that trigger the emotional reactions that we have absorbed from romanticism, but not Liturgy. But we want to trigger these emotions and also rupture them, like putting on a mask and then smashing the mask.

5. Your aim is to reach a kind of musical transcendence. Are you on a Kantian vision of the transcendence, trying to achieve the Sublime?

I am wary of identifying with one philosopher or another. There are different aspects of transcendence. The Sublime of Kant is a terrifying index of the unrepresentable. The Holy in Rudolph Otto is similar. So yes there is the infinite that cannot be touched. But then there is a different transcendence found in Nietzsche, Bataille and Deleuze, which has to do more with excess, Dionysus, the schizophrenic, the pineal eye and so on. Similar to the grenade in Henry Miller I mentioned earlier, and also the figure of Ololon in William Blake and certain ideas of Ginsberg and Burroughs. This surging excess is an important aspect of the transcendence, though the Holy aspect is there also. As musicians, we don't need a clearly defined concept.

6. You identify True Norwegian Black Metal to the moon and Liturgy to the sun. In that case, can we interpret the Renihilation cover as a metaphor? Do you introduce a Manichean vision of the Black Metal universe? Can we envisage the solar element as a reference to Nietzsche's Midday Zenith concept?

Yes the solar element is a reference to Nietzsche's noon. On Aesthetica we have a song called “High Gold” which is about this midday zenith.

7. Music is known to allow direct accesses to spirituality. With Liturgy, you keep on broadening the semantic field of the Religious (band's name, songs' titles, covers). Are you looking for a kind of sound sacralization or do you try to perpetuate a Black Metal mysticism?

I don't believe that there are natural boundaries that separate music, art, politics and religion. I think they shoot from the same force in each individual, and it is only society that forces people to channel their divine creative energy into one channel or the other. I propose that we fuse the four together again in what I call the Arkwork. I am working on a new record that deals with the Arkwork in connection to the figure of Ololon in Blake. Black metal is the form that is most appropriate for this kind of project because these ideas are already part of black metal culture.

8. You feed yourself with philosophy. But, is it philosophy that feeds your music or is it your music that echoes to philosophy?

Yeah that's a difficult question. I've always been very interested philosophy and follow its contemporary developments as closely as I can. Very interested these days in Graham Harman and Speculative Realism. The past five years or so have been a very exciting time for philosophy, with Deleuze's ideas and Badiou's ideas beginning to ricochet in the English speaking world and new philosophies developing. For a time it seemed like the only interesting philosophy was coming out of France, but hopefully that is beginning to change. As for the connection between the music and the philosophy, I think that they both come from the same source, which is an ecstatic and tragic experience of being. Each develops separately and I try to tie them together, which is usually successful because of their shared source. But really the music is the main thing.

9. According to me, the Black Metal is a contemporary expression of the Romanticism movement. Do you agree?

I agree completely. I also think that Romanticism never ended, and that there is something superficial about both modernity and post-modernity. Like those two eras are actually sub-eras of Romanticism, which is still going on. Romanticism began when capitalism grew strong enough to liquidate a scramble culture, and when the west came into contact with Vedic wisdom (which happened at the same time). At that time it became possible to see and deal with the law of becoming that was previously hidden. We are still in this era, just accelerated. Therefore black metal is very significant.

10. The Renihilation cover was influenced by a Thomas Ruff photograph, the Immortal Life cover reminds me Ed Ruscha works. How do you assimilate contemporary art in your work? You collaborated with the artist Erik Lindman. Is that something you envisage to develop?

The artists that have been the biggest influence on Liturgy are Joseph Beuys and Matthew Barney. Beuys's use of alchemy and mysticism and his rupture of the boundary between art, ritual, and politics - I aspire to do something similar using music, though it is much less successful. Matthew Barney works with an idea of hypertrophy, a constant striving energy that cascades into different qualitative moments in the creative process. I see hypertrophy as the thread tying together the riffs in our songs, and the Burst Beat as a hypertrophic gesture. Erik Lindman is a wonderful painter and we share similar ideas about the absolute and transcendence. We have done some writing together as well as some sculpture, which has gone pretty well. Collaboration is always a strange thing, but I think it will develop in interesting ways.

11. Contemporary art often refutes past authoritarian gestures. Do you consider Liturgy as a postmodern Black Metal band?

No I don't believe in postmodernism, only in romanticism.