Darkening Scandinavia

Darkening Scandinavia:
Four Postmodern Pagan Essays

By

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PREFACE

REDEEMED READER AND APPLIED PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCISC ÖRMÉNY'S *DARKENING SCANDINAVIA*

ADRIANA TEODORESCU

Francisc Örmény's book is located at the intersection between philosophy on the one hand, and literature, music and film on the other. Synthesizing, we can say that his work is placeable in what is acknowledged as applied philosophy, that is, an attempt to address the issues of everyday life, in its many social, political or economic aspects, or some cultural artistic elements, using tools considered to belong to the philosophical sciences, such as critical and analytical approaches. However, such classification is unable to capture the specificity of the book and ignores the originality and the poignant freshness of current research methodology. The novelty brought by *Darkening Scandinavia* does not lie so much in the research results obtained by the author (the discovery of unusual connections between different fields of knowledge, the implicit demonstration of the applicability of some apparently outdated philosophical models, the highlighting of the [neo]pagan substrate of postmodern cultural syntax and so on and so forth), although none of these aspects are to be ignored as they present a high degree of interdisciplinarity which can be exploited in several fields of knowledge (cultural studies, literary criticism, film criticism and so on). The novelty lies primarily in the way in which the author builds his research approach, whose construction deserves our closer inspection.

An assumption present in an implicit way in Örmény's approach, which acts as a pre-condition of the research is that the artistic territories – literature, music and film – understood in their absolute sense, that of Art, or in their relative sense, that of being potentially artistic (the case of the mass culture, for example), can be deconstructed in textual units approachable from a philosophical point of view, as they are compatible

with philosophical methods. In other words, the respective texts can be placed in a philosophical co-text and, by extension, in a cultural co-text. It is an assumption which, at a first glance, might seem too *common-sensical*, but which is significant if we want to understand the conception according to which philosophy should not necessarily have as its point of origin what may be considered, metaphysically speaking, essence, and nor the pretence of a nude reality (a reality uncoded socially and culturally). Philosophy may as well start from realities that are already culturally coded such as literary works, cinematographic or musical compositions belonging to genres such as metal – one considered by many people as belonging to mass culture.

The basic characteristic of the philosophical grid of interpretation used in *Darkening Scandinavia* is the diversity of the theoretical concepts and the plurality of methods. We come across phenomenological methods related to the social constructivist philosophy; concepts belonging to the existential philosophy of Heidegger and Lévinas, or to the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis; but we also come across concepts associated with the cultural theories of postmodernism or, why not, concepts drawn from E. Burke's aesthetics of the sublime. Furthermore, the use of this extensive grid of interpretation demonstrates the attention that the author of the research invests in the text that he submits to investigation – the search for the areas of interpretive necessity within the text and for an adequate response to them. If the author had wanted, by any means, only to apply a philosophical investigative tool, then the whole approach would have meant rather the determination in demonstrating the existence of a dialogue between the humanistic sciences and in emphasizing conceptual or empirical correspondences, and less the attention given to the wealth of meanings of the examined text. Because of this kind of approach to the texts, Francisc Örmény initiates the ritual killing of the authors, freeing their readers – as sum of possibilities – from any predetermination in which the authorial intention might have placed them. Umberto Eco defined the Model Reader as textual strategy for a complex reading of the book. Francisc Örmény disengages (unknots) the Model Reader from the text, and throws him in full co-text, forces him to integrate the possibilities of communication with other texts, especially with those gathered in alluvial heaps by his cultural and philosophical set of instruments. For this reason, here we are not necessarily discussing literary texts, but, one could say, cultural texts.

At the beginning of each chapter a *conceptual framework is proposed*. This contains the working hypothesis on the literary, cinematographic or musical text to be investigated, and it sometimes specifies the philosophical

tools with which the author will work. Even without mentioning the methods, the conceptual framework is already worded in terms that emphasize its philosophical dimension and, in addition, the concepts and methods with which the author operates are presented to the reader before the actual textual investigation.

Francisc Örmény's philosophico-literary, philosophico-musical and philosophico-cinematographic analyses offer a spectacle of intelligent semantic and conceptual associations, an explosion of ideas that retains its coherence and that does not allow itself to be undermined, neither by gratuitousness nor by redundancy, dangers that often lurk behind literary analyses, and sometimes it may be the case that they might affect more those analyses that use comparative methods.

We return to the idea mentioned above, that the author of this book carries into effect, by means of his very methodological approach, and in the postmodern style already announced by Roland Barthes, a ritual killing of the authors of the texts that he submits to analysis, in view of exorcising the text, that is, of eliminating the prime polluting authorial intentionality. One should note that this killing has the effect of the return of the reader. A complete way of enouncing the phenomenon would be to say that the return of the reader is, before being a result of some critical strategies of relating to the text, the very triggering mechanism of such strategies. Indeed, Francisc Örmény is a great liberator of readers. In turn he enables the irruption on the scene of his own book, of the readers of Per Petterson's novel *Out Stealing Horses,* of the readers of the musical texts of the band *Lake of Tears*, and also of the readers of the cinematic production *Valhalla Rising* and of those of the one-man musical project *Burzum*. The liberty of these readers is, as Jean-Paul Sartre would say, one full of responsibilities. All these readers are twofold-conditioned in *Darkening Scandinavia*: to co-exist and open themselves, beyond the semantic and the functional possibilities with which the source-text endowed them, towards the cultural and interpretative exigencies that Francisc Örmény imposes through his mode of configuring the book. The reader of *Darkening Scandinavia* is released, redeemed from the brutal intentionality of the author, be he Per Petterson, the director of the movie Valhalla Rising, Burzum or Lake of Tears, but he is also exposed to the author-as-critic – who is also a versed reader in his turn – Francisc Örmény.

The book is structured into four chapters. *The first* is entitled "The Killing Real and the Sublime Aura in the Music of Burzum" and is focused on the Norwegian Black-metal project Burzum. Among other aspects, the section has the merit of being able to approach, from a

perspective belonging to the phenomenology of music and to postmodern neo-paganism, a difficult subject such as the meaning of death and dying, a subject discussed to the point of saturation by the researchers of recent decades. The set of philosophical instruments used here is extremely diverse, from Democritus, Kant and Humboldt, through Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Roland Barthes, and up to contemporary Romanian philosopher Virgil Ciomoş. Death is what can never be defeated (an eternal *personal failure*), nor communicated (*a continuous malignant proliferation of the lack of communication*). Among the conclusions of the chapter we also find the one according to which the personal sun, the inner sun, might be stronger than the outer, natural one, an emblematic conclusion for highlighting the tension nature-culture, present, in filigree, throughout the whole book *Darkening Scandinavia*.

"Valhalla Rising – Of Wrath, Might and Meat" is *the second chapter* of the book, one which (by means of a postmodern phenomenological perspective and a recuperating Freudian perspective) aims at bringing to the surface those ideatic joints less visible in the cinematographic production of 2009, joints that allow the interpretation of the film as belonging to contemporary neo-paganism. The author does not refrain from questioning the artistic functionality of feminism understood as political correctness, nor from pointing out its cancellation in *Valhalla Rising* by means of an offensive of the aesthetics of the masculine and paternalistic naturalism (man does not alienate himself in giving birth to *an / the* other, on the contrary, he is responsible for his own creation). An intermediate grid of interpretation, derived, to a certain extent, from the postmodern grid, is that of the aesthetic theories of the Baroque, and an extremely interesting relatability is that between the authenticity that the film assumes as its intention and the postmodern concept of simulacrum, belonging to Jean Baudrillard.

The third chapter entitled "The unnameable luring Black Blood of Darkness seeping deep into us (an essay on the true nature of persistence and craftsmanship based on Per Petterson's novel *Out Stealing Horses*)" is intended to be an essay about man's relationship with nature, a relationship based on the ontological absence of a direct response of nature to human needs and, therefore, a relationship within which the adaptation of *human frailties* to the *totality of nature* is *negotiated*. Among the concepts employed by the author in this third chapter are Nietzsche's concept of darkness (as a form of fertility), Vico's concept of common sense (as judgment without reflection); and also the Heideggerian notions of *opening* and *stretching*. Örmény discusses the aesthetic of the everyday work approached as craftwork (craftsmanship) – the type of work that

appears in Petterson's novel as an alternative to the work subjected for too long to the *primitivism of logic*; the reinventing of the self as a constructor of meaning; the ambivalent and maternal, but not feminized, valences of darkness, those that are able to relate the Being to the wild side of the self (as it cannot be known, nor explained, by means of human cultural meanings), but also to one's own facticity (whose acceptance becomes possible through the contemplation of still life).

The last chapter is again a philosophical musical criticism, this time starting from the musical creations of the Swedish Death-metal band Lake of Tears. "The Secrets of the Swedish New Moon – an essay on the music of Lake of Tears" is dedicated to a predominantly phenomenological investigation of the texts of the band, and it insists on the neo-pagan cultural coordinates present in their messages and in the music of the Swedes. Paganism is defined, in an evolutionary context, as desire for life and for biological identitary coagulation. Among the operant concepts we now find the death drive (Freud) or the absolute void (Lévinas). One of the conclusions of this chapter captures the similarity between Heidegger's philosophy and the music of the band *Lake of Tears* in the propensity to escape from historicity and to find compensatory energetic spaces.

What emanates from all four studies, at the thematic level, is the preference for paganism and the temptation to propose and support the existence of a cultural paradigm of postmodern neo-paganism, and, at the methodological level, the ability to juggle with various concepts and tools of textual investigation.

In addition, in all four essays, Francisc Örmény advances a phenomenology of the void. He puts it forward for consideration, in the sense that he observes the preeminence of certain textual contents which can be grouped under this concept (as they communicate intra- and inter-textually among themselves), and also in the sense of a comprehensively-interpretative practice of his own. In other words, the author develops a personal phenomenology of the void, as a sort of reflex, no matter how lucid, critical, or tender he may be in front of the text that he subjects to analysis. The void is, in the conjugated acception of the analyzed cultural texts and of the author himself, a space that (by virtue of the absence of some strident semantic personal characteristics) becomes able to generate fertility and thus sustain the elements that surround it and in which it insinuates itself. It may be said that the void is pure syntax, the blind functionality of which only those who are too accustomed to the comfort of images can be frightened. Örmény discloses in his book small portions of the cultural history of the void (in its phenomenological dominants), certainly not from a desire aiming at an archaeology of the concept, but, in

a personal style, in order to enrich it with new interpretations. Moreover, the cultural history of the void (this time, as practice of interrogation) becomes here a displaced history. This is so because the author does not hesitate to mark on the cultural map of the void new territories, regardless of the fact that they belong to the sphere of literary theory, of philosophy, fine arts, the theory of language or that of psychoanalysis.

In the first essay, dedicated to the music of the project Burzum, Francisc Örmény re-assumes Democritus' conception of the void, which is defined as non-spatiality which makes possible the spatiality; as a full or saturated space would never allow movement. Further, he continues with Roland Barthes where he identifies the void within the core of the intertext, that specific text which preserves (maintains, conserves) the trace of some partially long gone texts – insomuch as their context can no longer isolate them from other co-texts – which it places together, reveals them to each other, being itself this trace, as well as that which surpasses it. The author sees the scream as an interesting cultural location of the void. In this point we are in full musical phenomenology. The disarticulation of language reduces the socio-cultural expression of the ontological constituent and makes room for some potentialities which are not trapped or stuck in a human specificity. The author seems to suggest that if we can interpret *the scream* as force of language which erupts from silence, then, *its* road back to the soundless and still origins of intentionality cannot be denied. In this way, the scream may also be understood as abandonment of language, as regress – in a pagan sense – towards silence. In this context, the author characterizes the void as possessing a "sublime availability", one due to which man cannot remain for too long within the pure, authentic form of the scream, at least not without risking dissolution. The tension of some infinite possibilities which can no longer coagulate the human being finds its "repose" in the morpho-syntactic rules of language.

More or less directly, Francisc Örmény reveals himself to be a supporter of the transitory necessity of the void, as source of regeneration of the being. In culture – it itself being the most complete intertext, if we consider the problem carefully –, the scream of the music finds its correspondent in the white of the painting. The example that the author offers is that of the Russian painter Kazimir Malevich with his "White on White", a canvas that attempts to reveal not the visible but that which makes it possible, the invisible, the empty interval. Moreover, in this first essay, the author defines the real, following Lacan, as being threatening precisely because it does not permit the void. Unlike reality, the real is impenetrable, indivisible and impossible to be captured in any way. There

is no alteritary direction for the real, even reality seems to be a rib of the real, colonized without the participation or opposition of the latter, entirely non-functional in relation to it.

In the second essay, the author considers that the movie *Valhalla Rising* displays and artistically represents the negative effects of the void, understood in a Nietzschean style (key) as a painful place of the emergence or of the coming-into-being of the self. The infernal fertility discussed by the author in relation to the characters of the movie, but also with Nicolas Refn's directorial logic of the re-writing of history, is put in motion by the void, and is, up to a certain point, the void itself. Once again, we are dealing here with a symptom of the void, which is, this time, the silence and not the scream. The place of the verb does not remain empty, on the contrary, and precisely because of the void it is invaded by action, by flesh.

In its turn, Per Petterson's book shelters the void. This appears as retrievable within that human availability to allow oneself to be attacked by nature, within that weakness of the cultural joints of the characters, always ready to sprain their legs – legs which, apriorically, do not even hurt anymore. The intuition of darkness denotes the proximity of man to the void, to the (Heideggerian) openness towards mystery. Here, maybe a little more than in the other essays, Francisc Örmény insists on the issue of the fertility of the void, while bringing forth the positive valencies accompanying its discovery. The void acts in the sense of a re-enforcement of the roots, be they even impersonal, after having attained the zero degree of the significances of the being. The main character deals with the fabrication of things because, under the action of the void, he has the intuition of the self and the impulse to give it a distinguished shape. In other words, there is an uncertainty of the self, a lack of fixation which imposes research. Although he primarily regards it as a pure function that exists by associating for itself forms and semantics by means of the others, as part of a second meaning, the author recognizes in the void "the place where the major dialogical principles of the Self have their roots, and via them, the place where all restorations (of power, of identity) have their origin". The void is, really and truly, a pedestal of ontological stability, but one from which the author extracts all forms of comfort. The dialogism provided by the void is, in our author's conviction, an eminently savage one.

The last essay, dedicated to the musical band Lake of Tears, notices the same dangerous, but necessary and functional fertility of the void. The void is detectable at the ideatic and conceptual level of the band's texts as distance between the varied representations of the self and the possibility

that such a self can exist outside its representations. Furthermore, it is the one that allows the advancement of the concept of phenomenological surrealism or autumnal surrealism, defined as the keeper of the traces of the summer (to be read as "of other spaces", "of some significances that pre-exist the ones that are activated"); a surrealism that contains the axis of degeneration as the inversed sign of the cause and effect movement, an axis possible only through the emptiness (void) which permits the transformation and the morpho-temporal variation.

CHAPTER ONE

THE KILLING REAL AND THE SUBLIME AURA
IN THE MUSIC OF BURZUM

Summary

The first study of the present collection is a short incursion into the phenomena by means of which the undefined reaches a definition (at the level of consciousness and of its afferent identities) in the music of the Norwegian Black-metal legend Burzum. Metaphors are interpreted as the hidden engines capable of revealing and setting in new motions the unconquered dimensions of the real (and of death as the final and most radical manifestation and expression of this real). A virulent signifier is on the one hand something capable of forging an authentic identity against a disintegrating background of death and chaos, and on the other hand, something capable of signalling aspects that lie beyond language and its configuring patterns (here we will focus upon Black-metal artistic screaming as a way to give a direct expression to both the real and the sublime). The study assumes and applies to the representations and messages contained within the lyrics of Burzum, notions from the theories of Immanuel Kant, Jacques Lacan, Martin Heidegger, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Søren Kierkegaard, Democritus, Roland Barthes and Virgil Ciomoș, and organizes them around some central concepts such as "displacement", "revealing" (Heidegger's "Lichtung" and the idea of a personal sun capable of outshining and giving meaning to the natural one), "communication" (the demonic and the dead being the uncomunicatable), "valorizable void or lacuna" and "translatability". Burzum was chosen as fertile soil on which to apply, test and verify some phenomenological premises and intuitions, because Varg Vikernes created one of the most poetic and philosophical musical projects in neo-paganism, one highly compatible with the phenomenological terminology and overall methodology – if not one which demands such approaches explicitly. The aim of this material is to provide acute insights into the nature of darkness and into the ways in which artistic creation could respond (by ensuring the most

prolific, sustained and safe placements) to the destabilizing intrusions of death, of the real and the sublime. The riddles and the knots of this world can be answered and undone only by means of an intelligently gathered and focalized energy – one capable of withstanding both the corrosiveness of the undefined as well as the weight of solidified symbols, meanings and representations.

Donald Woods Winnicott's third trans-contextual area of phenomenality (the area of "formlessness" and constant shape-shifting agglutinations within the pulsating architecture of the Self) is interpreted here as the very place where any kind of cultural experience effectively "takes place", as adventure (revelatory play in the dark) of the Self in search of its archetypal crossroads.

1. Preliminary remarks on the nature of the valorizable void and on the general translatability of existential frequencies (communication and its necessary area of incommunicability)

Pagan Black-metal and the way in which this music approaches the subjects of death and immortality should count first and foremost as a part of a larger effort to restore the consciousness by revealing its necrotic areas and by regenerating the contextually and phenomenologically appropriate hidden emotional engines (the ones which fire the imaginary and its uncanny psychic and behavioural reverberations). The uncanny, "das Unheimliche" or "the unhomely", is used here in a very unusual and rare sense, namely in that of deterritorializing or conquering instincts. From this introduction alone one can already see that the neo-pagan way of withstanding the alluviums of time and of gaining perspective upon immortality rests on one's capacity to disclose the dead (shadowed) areas and the inexplicit arenas of life and on the capacity to capture the turmoils (inevitable remnants of previous chaoses and intrusions of untameable energies in our daily reality) within an effective conscious vector of meaning and of need.

In Emil Cioran's interpretation, such attitudes towards life and artistic endeavour are equal with the act of setting on fire things such as apathy, torpor, irritability, physical asthenia, anorexia, nausea, intermittent pains, myalgia and so on and so forth, with the aim of burning what Heidegger would call the accumulated residual crust of tradition and with that of revealing anew the ravenous roots and veins of life (and of extracting from them a new warmth and the freshest possible sap, as they emanate straight from the essences):

"If I could, I would drive the entire world to agony to achieve a radical purification of life; I would set a fire burning insidiously at the roots of life, not to destroy them but to give them a new and different sap, a new heat. The fire I would set to the world would not bring ruin but cosmic transfiguration. In this way life would adjust to higher temperatures and would cease to be an environment propitious to mediocrity. And maybe in this dream, death too would cease to be immanent in life." (Cioran, 1992, p. 15)[1]

This is a "philosophy" of creative and energizing (revigorating) fulfilment, as it implies a passionate effort to reach an unpredictable and violently-crafted identity (being authentically torn from the compact membranes of death and turned into pulsatile personal universes). It is opposed to that of the Christian atonement – a confusedly empty and emptying state of general relief and drain of oneself out of oneself; a disinterested, impersonal and neutralized delivery of one's worthy inner self into the hands of an artless principle of abstract unity.

An authentic identity passes the tests of time precisely because it is always forged against a disintegrating background of death and oblivion, as it is a statement of subtlety or sophistication able to valorise delicate details and to withstand (by means of these latter ones) the all-simplifying, shiftless and irresponsible temptations of social power.

The will to power as will to create (as ambition to force the given conditions into personal comforts) stands opposed to the will to adapt and to accept the uncomfortable nature of *the datum*.

Christian doctrines and philosophies encourage the raw acceptance of the problematic areas of reality and compliance with them as well as with the rigid nature of the greatest discomfort of all: Death. In a disheartening majority of cases, when transposed into art, such a compliance discourages creation (because it constantly conditions it from a "politically"/politically configured notion of morality) and results in artificial artworks which Kant used to call "without spirit" (*geistlos*) – that is, artworks "filled-in" with a weird and sinister emptiness and coldness (that paralyzing coldness which appears when no idea, passion or ambition has real meaning for its bearer).

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[1] The Romanian version: "Dacă aş putea, aş aduce întreaga lume în agonie, pentru a realiza o purificare din rădăcini a vieţii; aş pune flăcări arzătoare şi insinuante la aceste rădăcini, nu pentru a le distruge, ci pentru a le da altă sevă şi altă căldură. Focul pe care laş pune eu acestei lumi nar aduce ruine, ci o transfigurare cosmică, esenţială. În acest fel, viaţa sar obişnui cu o temperatură înaltă şi nar mai fi un mediu de mediocrităţi. Şi poate în acest vis nici moartea n-ar mai fi imanentă în viaţă." (Cioran, 1990, p. 22)

The rest of this study will interpret the spirit as an entity inscribable in the spaces (corridors) of transfer and movement (displacement).

Pagan Black-metal understands death as a challenge of the undefined towards acquiring defining representations of the world and of oneself as well; as a challenge of the meaningless matter towards a fight meant to assign meaning and passion; as a challenge of the uncreated and of the unspoken towards creation and towards the ambition to give a voice to those obscure and deep dimensions of existence that normal language cannot reveal properly. This is the "darkness of matter" against which Fijo's husband is fighting in the song "*Frijos goldene Tranen*" by Burzum. To fight the darkness of the world is to search for selfhood among lost projections. Identity is always more than what one can recollect or project in dreams and in fancies or derive from moral codes. Identity as liberation, as urge, as a platform on which one can work for real and create a phenomenological structure capable of growing by absorbing and by devouring every possibility around, is always a question of opening up the *dark and inaccessible matter of phenomena*; of forging a channel which will somehow allow for some other manifestation of the essence to gain access into our world and vice versa (for human intrusions into the otherwise denied dimensions of signification). Burzum calls such a channel (most probably an interface) a path capable of leading beyond the places where normal sense and common roads would lead (parenthetically it is being said, the normal roads lead to death while a path beyond these roads should lead to what lies beyond death):

> "While we may believe
> our world – our reality
> to be that is – is but one
> manifestation of the essence
>
> Other planes lie beyond the reach
> of normal sense and common roads
> But they are no less real
> than what we see or touch or feel."[2] (Burzum, *Lost Wisdom*)

Death remains in this context the unconquered dimension and a symbol of personal failure: the inability to find a path beyond the common roads and a loss of the sense of the self…an aimless wandering through the woods of the meaning. Death can also be interpreted as an expression of

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[2] All lyrics from the songs of Burzum were taken from http://www.burzum.org/eng/discography/, consulted on the 9th of March 2013, 12:44.

the lack of passion and of the afferent will to ignite a personal sun into and above the hostile and impenetrable unknown. To capture the untamed on one's own ontological frequency means to be able to give voice to the unspoken, to express or *to invent an appearance for that which has no expression and no recognizable form*. In the vision proposed by Varg Vikernes to do so is to emerge from *the river of forgetfulness* ("*Glemselens Elv*"), to open the closed rooms and to carve the hidden runes. One should nevertheless notice that these are but beginnings of future adventures and quests for self-improvement, signs of expansion and sources of future lives (that is, continuous processes growing out of possibilities) and never something accomplished. Only death closes cycles and completes identities (in Varg's terms, "answers all the riddles" and "unties all the knots of this world"):

> "Come death, dear death;
> give me the answer to all riddles,
> give me key and wand,
> untie the knots of the world.
>
> Why in death, my friend, and only in death?
> Why do you dive into the river of forgetfulness? (...)
> Let me open the closed room,
> let me carve the hidden runes." (Burzum, *Valen*)

And it is by no coincidence that when Søren Kierkegaard faced the same dilemma, he assigned the demonic to the very incapacity to communicate, that is, to the incapacity to express ideas, to assign meaning, to render something into something else, to feel the energies of details in the form of a call and to instil that call into the wet (in the sense of fertile) and life-thirsty eyes of others.

 To communicate is always a case of a reciprocated identity and it involves a *double phenomenon*: the capacity *to impregnate* others with your desires and then *to recuperate* yourself back onto yourself from the passion they have in their eyes for the seed that you have planted therein. What we are doing here is to continue Humboldt's metaphor of communication as a sexual act: according to Humboldt, when two consciousnesses communicate, they leave in each other's cerebral "womb" a germinative content which will further develop into a real "foetus" – the foetus standing here as a foundation and as a psychosomatic bound necessary for future revelations, the ones meant to expand the personality of the receiver to new and unexpected dimensions.

Death is the incapacity to see or to create this phenomenological corridor into what is different and "hostile" by virtue of its very alterity, and the malignant and obtuse proliferation of the lack of communication.

Death is perhaps the most direct and virulent expression of this denied dimension, and in the music of Burzum personal fulfilment is a question of to have or not to have the necessary wisdom and inspiration to see and then to release "the way through", the way out of the very monolithic and impenetrable structures of existence. This is exactly what Michelangelo said about statues: "Every block of stone has a statue inside it, and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." The channel of communication between our world and its silent but intense "backgrounds" is seen by Varg as "A Gate out of Hell / Into the Void of Death (*A Lost Forgotten Sad Spirit*), a formulation which can also be interpreted as a gate out of the hell of need and of desire into that type of void signalled by Democritus, namely the void which assures the possibility of movement and evolution:

> "But Democritus' starting point resides in the fact that he believes in the reality of movement, as thought is movement. It is his point of attack: the movement exists, as I think and thinking has reality. But if there is movement, then there must be a void as well, which means that the non-being is as real as the being. Should the space be entirely filled, there could be no movement in it." (Nietzsche, 1992, p. 116, our translation from the Romanian edition)

"The way through" refers to the "unused ways" and, in the music of Burzum, to the unknown tracks left behind (as marks of specificity or as *diacritics* for the letters with which our reason operates in the ordinary course of events) by states of mind sufficiently extreme so as to be able to incarnate themselves in translucent beings made of intellective passions (such as the intense madness that could radiate vectors of positive and negative transformation). To cause the stony sands of time to pass through exquisite diffusions and infusions, towards the essences, is to recuperate *the fires* of illuminating creations and also *those* of the sacred coagulations of the Self around rare magnum opuses, *from the heat persisting in the track left by the paw of an archetypal animal on the grass or on the ground*:

> "A terrified creature in the shadows,
> (…)
>
> Hated by most,
> but loved by the best.

She gladly travels long (time) and long (distance),
she walks alone, barefooted in the dirt,
on unused ways, on overgrown paths,
in animal tracks and dangerous lairs." (Burzum, *Madness*)

This is the true pagan essence of the Democritean space of movement which transcends personal and collective histories of conquering and of adjusting and which restores the quality of elegance to the reflective processes. We are speaking about those processes which decrease denials and increase the awareness of oneself – that is, increase the personal involvement in the crystals of the symbols and the valorisation of the *strangeness* of antitheses as *a space* where our imagination can create by bringing the (lost) spirit back into our blood. The empty spaces of strangeness, from hostile and disturbing non-principles of the Self, become great revealing and never-ending *surfaces, depths and heights of availability – as they ensure and sustain* "spatially" the becoming through conquest and adaptation (successful connection) of beings and of other entities.

It is very important to track this principle of evolution (*of attaining higher levels of actuality*) through the understanding of the of the importance of the empty (in the sense of both available and inviting) spaces in the formation of signification (a process dependent on the mobility of ideas, perceptions and syntheses: re-combinations, re-calibrations and re-assumptions resulting in the restoration of fire and of its warmth on new orbits of synchronization) back to its Pagan sources and days, namely back to the genius who first saw the true direction of this dynamic – Democritus. According to Jan Patočka it is no coincidence that Democritus was the first for whom there existed a plurality of worlds, as he regarded progression not as a series of successions (as if along a ladder), but as a complex web of concurrent phenomena (processes happening at the same time; operating or acting in conjunction with one-another; convergent, complementary, synchronous, harmonious and complementary at the level of functions) taking place within the increasing identity of integrated energetic wholes:

"But except for Melissos, none of his predecessors discovered that this great revealing whole is *never-ending*; that things which are here, in our proximity, are encompassed within something that is endless. The same story is always repeated over and over again: near, far, near, far, and on and on. And when I take hold of this thing in its entirety, I have something like infinite space before me. Democritus is the author of the idea of *empty space*. (…) Yet, Democritus is the first for whom there exists something like never-ending empty space. For that reason, Democritus is also the first

for whom there exists a plurality of worlds. In older thinkers we know
about, the plurality of worlds is a successive plurality, not a concurrent
one. But the plurality of concurrent worlds in infinite space is something
fundamentally different from the mythical plurality of successive worlds."
(Patočka, 2002, pp. 78-79)

In the music of Burzum, the progression achieved by means of
exploiting the fertile void which connects the blood to the season of the
spirit – in the ways of an unpredictable and dangerous sea (of passions,
hopes and regrets) along simultaneous and integrated (concurrent)
phenomena – is best illustrated in the song "*The River of Forgetfulness*"
(*Glemselens Elv*). Here *seasons* coexist and tear the pasts with the same
passion with which lovers tear delayed love-letters about impossible
destinations ("Below the ground, the hidden world, / behind the clouds
towards the west, / ends the long boat journey, / where winter and autumn
are feasting"). And also, here, *the dead and the living* can be said to live
the great constitutive Democritean void as the transitional place where the
gods insinuate themselves into our lives: "the dead and the living / The
dead rest in white clothes, / behind heavy cold stone doors, / but if you
listen to the army of the dead, / you can sometimes hear them sing." Such
a consubstantial song is the highest possible expression of one's sense of
honour towards his purposes in life, and also the greatest possible defiance
of death and of man's fears of himself.

*This valorised space of movement can be seen as "death assimilated
into the throbbing of life and subordinated to the purposes of the living",
instead of things being the other way around (as usually happens in the
natural course of events).*

Should we chase this idea back into the parallel mirroring that
communication uses in order to focalize, heat and heal the social spectrum,
we must specify that it was still Humboldt who first observed that
communication – whatever its type (ranging from human discourse to the
experiment with the communicative containers in physics) – presupposes
as a *sine-qua-non* condition, the existence of *an area of incommunicability*.
This latter area constitutes a fundamental imperfection within the equation
of a *balanced (stable)* and *with-an-open-horizon* becoming. If meaning
can never be exhausted beyond all possible remainders[3], then any

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[3] This principle was fully demonstrated by Heidegger and assigned to the recurring
phenomenological distance between *Dasein* and *Sein*. The constant interplay and
teasing between *man* and *his Being* is possible because of this impossibility to
eliminate all remainders from a sphere of meaning – more specifically, to eliminate
by revealing – as Heidegger would always speak throughout his work of the

understanding must simultaneously be a misunderstanding – in order for that understanding to be an evolving phenomenon: "in its dynamics, thinking needs to deal with a datum similar to it and at the same time with something different from it. The resembling element inflames it while *the different element constitutes for it an indispensable touchstone to test the value of what it produces through its own resources*." (Humboldt, 1974, p. 195)[4]

This space that stands different from the pathways on which our thinking usually unfolds its firm branches and launches its psychic tentacles is, in fact, the very space of occurring for the productive imagination – as only by means of imagination can resources be mobilized into a transformative agency. The language is stretched from within at the level of the essence of all its possibilities and of all its edifications by this space of the authentically free variations.

Roland Barthes calls this space "intertext", arguing that it is permanently in exactly the place where it should be, namely "at distance but not afar" (Barthes, 1994, p. 81, our translation from the Romanian edition); that it is "a continuously displaced extreme, a void, mobile and unpredictable extreme." (Barthes, 1994, p. 82, our translation from the Romanian edition)

The intertext – the text living and breathing between texts – is to be regarded here (not necessarily in faultless accordance with Barthes' definition) as precisely what gets lost in each and every translation, and also as what makes possible all future translations and interpretations, id est, that sacred space which saves an idea from dying by entering into a final form. It is Erik Danielsson, the vocalist and bass-player in the Swedish Black-metal band Watain who best observed this aspect in an interview conducted by Paul Kearns and Roy Kristensen:

> "The music of Watain to me is a translation of an energy within us. And the more and more we are evolving in artistic skill, the more pure this translation will become. And the goal would be the day when nothing is lost in translation, when the expression doesn't differ at all from the source that we want to express. That is a very ambitious goal of course, and I am

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primordial role of *the Hidden* in the evolution of *the Expressed*…(for which reason he heavily condemned the conquering of the moon by U.S. astronauts)

[4] Wilhelm von Humboldt, La différence de construction du langage dans l'humanité et l'influence qu'elle exerce sur le développement spirituel de l'espèce humaine, in *Introduction à l'oeuvre sur le kawi et autres essais*, Eds. du Seuil, Paris, 1974. Our translation from the French version and our italics. Work initially published by Humboldt in 1835.

not convinced that it will be fully achieved…I'm not sure that's possible
but that's always something that we are striving for." (Erik Danielsson)

Assuring the life of an idea by means of continuous interpretations and
translations is how we are going to read Varg's words from the song
Beholding The Daughters Of The Firmament: "In every night there's a
different black." Due to these never-ending types of darkness, existence
itself can appear continuously as a yet undiscovered planet orbiting at the
dark fringes of a personal (inner) solar system.

2. The metaphor and the resurrection of the signifier; the Kantian sublime and the reduction of language in Black-metal

The question arising at this point of our demonstration is the following:
"what is the relationship between language and the intertext (as we have
[re]defined it)"? Of course, the answer is rather simple: the language is a
finite form, we might even say *a dead form of an idea* or a "stolen
possibility" – while the intertext is still an authentic state of becoming, one
that retains that visceral form of energy involved in any violent (to the
point of being ground-breaking) creation. The intertext becomes that
particular something which, basically, keeps language alive, as a trans-
formative entity. This is true, but let us insist on the subject and see what
nuances could be gained as a consequence of the fact that we assume the
full weight of this phenomenological premise.

This intermediary space assures the necessary displacement (distribution,
dissemination, translation, superseding and so on and so forth) of the
referent, for metaphors to be able to form and acquire their spectacular
clusters of images and representations. This phenomenon equates to what
Sigmund Freud identified as "*the process of sublimation*" (the mechanism
that allows people to act out their unacceptable impulses by converting
them into socially acceptable expressions – and indeed metaphors do hide
cataclysmic forces and intuitions). Sublimation, in its turn, when taken to
its phenomenological extreme, settles into the "form" of the sublime, in
the precise way in which Kant understood this sublime: the sublime no
longer relates to art in the way we used to understand art, because within
the sublime, at the level of the ideation, nothing can any longer be fixed
onto a representation. *When nothing can any longer be bound to
(immobilized into) a representation, we witness the deconstruction of
language and of representations – and I think that this is the very essence*

of the relation between Black metal and the sublime. The best support for this idea in the music of Burzum is to be found in the following lines:

> "After a Hundred
> Men's Lifetime
> In Analyzing
> I learn
> To Consume
> The Sphere
> Of Immense Power." (Burzum, *My Journey to the Stars*)

We will examine in as much detail as possible what these strange words can really mean. But first, let us come back to the previous idea of displacement and ask ourselves *what exactly* opens up by means of this shift from a determinate idea to an indeterminate one? The answer is: *the displacement (or the shift) itself.* More precisely, that state in which the artist finds himself while creating (in Varg's terms – when he "journeys" into "darkness" towards personal lights ["stars"]). Of course, everybody is familiar with proverbs which say that it is not the destination that counts but the journey towards the ends; that it is not the product but the process that makes all the difference for the producers.

In the case of the artist, this kind of process or journey has a much more special and specific name: *the metaphor.* The metaphor is that particular process which allows the artist to remain a constant striver and not to become a bourgeois of his own successes. The process is an exuberating and triumphant explosion of free floating signifiers, while the work of art (the final product) is a mere signified *or a killed signifier*…a signifier that was trapped into the stone of a definite form. The metaphor is this process and possibility that the artist possesses in order to be able to remain suspended in full passage (in full process or at the living intersection of all possibilities), freed from the past and from the present as well, but with the authentic possibility to establish new kinds of links and relationships with both of them. Thus (due to this liberation) the metaphor becomes man's way of overcoming the "rigor mortis" of the past and the accumulated wisdom (and technique), a way which allows him to assume that past once again in the present contexts. The metaphor is that "sphere of immense power" that Varg speaks about. To learn how to produce and how to read metaphors is to learn how to consume a sphere of great influence ("power") – a substance capable of escaping all fixed (*dead*) instances, because when producing and when assimilating metaphors the artist is neither in his work, nor in his natural life, *but in the very energy that creates life and works of art* (he is in full *passage / process /*

ontological corridor). That is why the artist is happy not when he finishes his work of art (that is, the moment when the signifier gives its final breath [speaks its final word] and becomes a signified or a *dead signifier*) but when he is in full process of creating (in full stream of possibilities). Yet, in order to remain in such a full stream of possibilities, he must pursue with the destruction of language and of representation – *which destruction, as we have shown, equates to the state of the sublime* (in which case, the sublime is the living, nameless and overwhelming stream of possibilities). This stream operates the above mentioned displacement and that is why Kant says that while "the sublime *moves*, the beautiful [*author's note:* only] *charms*." (Kant, 2003, p. 47)

Coming back to Varg's lines, wisdom and skill are mirrored in one's capacity to pass *from analysis to creation,* or, in other words, *from comparison to metaphor*. Analysis is carried through by means of comparisons while artistic creation is achieved in metaphors: if in the case of the comparisons, though they are contrasted and put in relation to one another, the semantic and ideatic spheres do not interpenetrate each-other and remain separated (and the meanings stay the same) – in the case of the metaphors these spheres enter into a true interpenetration, transfer of essence and fusion of nuclei (resulting in new and unexpected meanings). We could say that while comparisons write fanciful obituaries about a glorious past signifier, metaphors resurrect unexpected demons within that signifier and it along with them. Due to these processes *a work of art (an immobilized signifier) is not to be confused with what the artist invests or instils (introduces by gradual, persistent efforts) in that work.*

In this sense (that of the metaphorical rejuvenation), Virgil Ciomoş states that man is an entity which expresses his potential and his power of signification first and foremost through his capacity to translate a level of significance *into another and by means of another*, thus transcending all static, homogenizing and ultimately deadly-paralyzing pressures of standards, canons and typizations:

> "*Being of passage* depends on something even stranger than the passage itself and that which results from it. This it is not about the simple fact that *everything* has to change. One should now change the very concept of being, as it should be the case with that of change. In this way, the being would no longer be the effect of a passage, be it that of birth or of death: it would reveal itself in the change itself, or even more, as a change." (Ciomoş, 2008, in Avant Propos, our translation from French into English)

This idea of translating a level of significance into another and by means of another (idea which constitutes the phenomenological basis of every metaphor) in order to escape (elude, avoid) the mortifying instincts

of reality (instincts manifested – as Berger and Luckmann show in their *The Social Construction of Reality* – in the form of the unproblematic habitualization), is present à-la-lettre in the music of Burzum:

"From high up there I fall from time;
down into the bottomless, empty and timeless.
(...)

Into death, from death.
Into life, from life.
Downwards and across the river
without a source.

Into darkness, from darkness;
into cold, from cold.
Through time, from time." (Burzum, *Jeg Faller*)

"To fall from time" or to become "empty" (in the sense of "available to be filled up with new and fresh meanings"), "bottomless" (freed from the conventional limitations of traditions and norms and thus ready to discover new depths) and "timeless" – is equivalent to being able to avoid the corrosive aspects of time by remaining (as we have shown) suspended in full passage (at the living intersection of all possibilities), in the full intensity of the creative and transforming energy, freed from the past and the present and ready to establish new kinds of links / relationships with both of them. *Downwards and across, above and below, beyond and behind – these are all metonymies*[5] *for immortality, for the possibility of escaping (eluding) temporality and death by means of artistic sublimation.* The metaphor operates this "*timeful timelessness*"[6] which is in fact (as once again Virgil Ciomoş points out) the very special "time" that Marcel Proust is searching for in his famous novel *In Search of Lost Time* – a time which is not at all the past (as all ignorant and superficial readers believe) but a time between times, a time above and beyond all other times: the time of inspiration and creation.

The power of the metaphor retains something of the infernal purity and instability of the energy – namely its imponderableness and wild unpredictability…its freedom to devour spaces and regurgitate the time back into its source (and thus kill death itself). Giuseppe Ungaretti, when commenting upon Valéry, made the following outstanding remark in this respect:

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[5] Special types of metaphors.
[6] Syntagm coined by the author of the present study.

> "(...) the continuous dissimulation of the tragic aspect of being human to human conscience which is reflected in order to be questioned is very much like when an object is reflected in the sea. The object becomes a plaything in water, a nothing. It is an ineffable emblem which, once fixed, changes according to the moods of the monster: a poetry of sweet disclosures, a long drawn amorous lamentation, an apparent encountering pining away with antinomic destinies."[7] (Ungaretti in Grassi, 1990, p. 198)

In this latter case we see that the resurrection of the signifier coincides with the resurrection of the Demon. Yet, the *power of this Demon to defy death* is to be found elsewhere, namely in its capacity *to identify a common source for different phenomena* and to reunite their energies within an overwhelmingly unknown new formula.

Previously in this study we have discussed the importance that Heidegger assigns to the hidden dimensions of existence. Now it is time to discuss also the far greater emphasis that Heidegger places upon the phenomenon of revealing – if we are to understand the power of the metaphor to overrun death. The darkness of death can be overturned and redeemed in the light and at the cost of creation and understanding. Heidegger here proposes perhaps the most courageous (though rather implicit, if we consider the way in which the idea is developed throughout his work) thesis: *human understanding and artistic conception can create a glade in the dark forest of the Being (Sein)*. What we can logically deduce from this is that the Being is the dark and that human spirit (that of the Dasein) is the bringer-of-light: the German word for this glade is "Lichtung" which in English translates as "*clearing*"– a term which stands for a tract of land within a wood or other overgrown area from which trees and other obstructions have been removed. This term also denotes, as its main meaning, the act or process of making or becoming clear. In Heidegger's work, this term mostly refers to the necessity of a clearing in which something (an idea) can reveal itself from the hidden or from the implicit (Heidegger, 1962, p. H.133). Therefore, "things show up in the light of our understanding of being." (Dreyfus, 1995, p. 162)

The most interesting aspect is that this imagery constitutes the very heart of the album *Hvis lyset tar oss* (Norwegian for *If the Light Takes Us*):

> "A glade in the wood
> Where the sun shines
> Between the trees we are imprisoned

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[7] Giuseppe Ungaretti, 'Testimonianza su Valéry'. In Vita d'un uomo, p. 461, quoted by Ernesto Grassi in *Vico and Humanism [Essays on Vico, Heidegger, and Rhetoric]*.

In this God's glade
It burns it scorches
When the light licks our flesh
Goes toward the sky a smoke
A cloud of our form
Prisoners of the burials
Tormented by God's goodness
No flame no hate
They were right we have come to Hell." (Burzum, *If the Light Takes Us*)

Of course, this envisioning becomes very troublesome when related to the pagan tradition of worshipping the sun and its life-seeding wheel. Everybody witnessed the failure of the symbol of the sun within the Christian dogma because of some insufficiently radicalized theories, but to see this symbol attacked inside a pagan vision may appear a little bit strange, so one may ask himself what is the real implicature of such lines as the ones mentioned above. The answer to this dilemma necessarily constitutes the key needed in order to understand the neo-pagan vision of Burzum upon the process of constitution and self-assertion: Varg implies here the existence of a personal human (inner) sun capable of outshining the natural one (ultimately a source of death and destruction) – and this is a truly Heideggerian vision upon enlightening (as explained above). The motif of the inner sun capable of outstripping the natural one is present in other Black metal milieus as well – let us think only of the famous song "*The Light that Burns the Sun*" from Watain, a song which speaks of personal flames able to "ignite the heavens and scorch them thoroughly":

"Shining from the Serpent's eye.
The Boundless Light that burns the sun.
The fire of the Fallen One.

God of Death primordial.
Flame of the unknown.
Mould my heart into a vessel,
And possess it as your own!
Make my torch into a furnace.
So that I can see the secrets clear.
Holy, radiant, silent.
A light so strong it bears the wrath of a god.
(...)
The wings of Lucifer unfold.
Transcending now into formation

To burn the sun and all creation." (Watain, *The Light that Burns the Sun*)[8]

Both songs relate heavily to biblical motifs and they both invoke a Luciferian vision upon light – namely light as cognition, as knowledge, as capacity to reveal and to create the world by uncovering the true zones of meaning and of passion (Heidegger's "Lichtung"). The act is equal with the capacity to transcend all mythologies as dead or immobilized signifiers and to forge *upon* and *into* them a personal mythology, along with a world successfully brought on one's ontological frequency.

In this respect, it would be fair to mention an almost fascinating linguistic phenomenon manifesting itself in the part of Europe from which this interpretation emerges – Transylvania, a region where Romanian and Hungarian culture meet. According to Virgil Ciomoş, there are only two languages in the world (Hungarian and Romanian) that have the same semantic root (a fact suggesting an identical origin for two different phenomena) for the words *light* and *world*: in Romanian we have "lumină" (light) and "lume" (world), and in Hungarian we have "világosság" (light) and "világ" (world).

Following this last thread, we can once again quote Giuseppe Ungaretti's vision upon the rejuvenation of reality via metaphors – one according to which, the main function of metaphors is to reveal the common root of the phenomena as the reference point which configures and supports our consciousness. This common root explains all involuntary attractions and irrational compatibilities as well as the infernal purity of beliefs and emotions which constitutes the true presentness and the real intensity of reality (in other words, due to this visceral and almost occult con-substantiality, reality appears as something alive and unpredictable – not as something dull, altered, inanimate or plainly dead in matters of available perspectives):

> "(...) a mystery, which in poetry is that involuntary attraction of roots that bring the words together in a bond beyond their meaning, mystery perceivable in the distances of space and through time that's given to objects and such as to bring them into view in a plateau of forgetfulness, to be divested even of their names and become, impatiently, the criers of dreams...there's no poetry if objects, from the depth of space and night of time, cannot suddenly recall their names and overwhelm us, dazzling and frightening us with the beauty of their presence. At that point we are invested with the precision of this beauty, a precision outside of human

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[8] http://www.darklyrics.com/lyrics/watain/sworntothedark.html#5, consulted on the 1st of March 2013, 16:16.