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Oro-Emblems of the  
Musical Beyond

Lieut. Nab Saheb of Kashmir  
Denys X. Abaris, O.S.L.

# BERGMETAL

Oro-Emblems of the Musical Beyond

by

Lieut. Nab Saheb of Kashmir

with

Introduction and Commentary

by

Denys X. Abaris, O.S.L.

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BEYOND BY LIEUT. NAB SAHEB OF KASHMIR,  
WITH INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY BY  
DENYS X. ABARIS, O.S.L.

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*Where does Mont Blanc end, and where do I begin? That is the question which no metaphysician has hitherto succeeded in answering. But at least the connection is close and intimate. He is a part of the great machinery in which my physical frame is inextricably involved, and not the less interesting because a part which I am unable to subdue to my purposes. The whole universe, from the stars and the planets to the mountains and the insects which creep about their roots, is but a network of forces eternally acting and reacting upon each other. The mind of man is a musical instrument upon which all external objects are beating out infinitely complex harmonies and discords.*

– Leslie Stephen



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## Preface

By a way I came, but I went not by the way.

– Lal Ded

This book was sparked by an email message I received ten weeks before my second deployment to Siachen glacier, the highest altitude battlespace on the planet. The message came from Dr. Manabrata Guha of the National Institute of Advanced Studies (Bangalore), whose writings on Indian military strategy and the SIMAD I had studied with great interest. My first deployment to Siachen had resulted in torturous physical depression and maddening psychic fatigue. Thankfully, Dr. Guha's delightfully abstract and theoretical writings helped me understand how this traumatic experience was not really traumatic, not a wounding from which I needed to recover, but rather a structurally necessary and most natural participation in a geo-military situation "in which strategy decomposes into pure tacticities and where combat has less to do with destruction, and more to do with the alchemy of decay" (Guha, "Introduction to SIMADology: *Polemos* in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"). This sentence in particular encompasses for me the strange form of exhaustive terror that had settled in my soul at Siachen and left me wondering whether it would be possible for me to return. For living and fighting so deep and high in the mountains is not only an arduous task and venture, but a truly inhuman mode of existence where, pinched between the eternal collapse of the Himalaya and the self-fracturing stress of attritional warfare, one's life remains in a state of embering frozen evaporation, as if the very forces responsible for the consolidation and ordering of our material world are way up there working against themselves to pro-



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duce a mode of being that is neither dead nor alive and beyond both. Preparation for death is a relatively easy matter, and I feel ready to die in whatever manner God wills. But this scorched active existing as something awfully in between, this in-existing as a metaphysically exposed and blackened being, what preparation can there be for that?



Dr. Guha, who is an ardent fan of Black Sabbath, referred in his communications to a blog entitled *Bergmetal*, consisting of sound clips of mountain-themed heavy metal songs and accompanying annotations. My imagination was captured by images like the Propagandhi album cover pictured above and the al-

bum cover for a lost *Bergmetal* album showing the desiccated corpse and skull of a dead mountaineer:



Exploring the site of *Bergmetal* spontaneously became for me a kind of insensible preparatory meditation on my imminent return to combat at Siachen, a way to reproject myself victoriously into the inhuman martial grinding of the sacred glacial spheres. It helped me to grapple and mount towards my destiny, both as an individual spiritual being bound for obliteration into the infinity of Reality and as an historical entity, a little man from Kashmir caught up in the oropolitical carnage of this unheroic age. Contemplating the harsh strains and concepts of *Bergmetal* restored my senses to the ancient spiritual significance of warfare and the

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special occult force this alpine battle is exerting within the subtle spheres—all the more so because of its forgotten status—to steer our civilization away from the materialism, dogmatism, and the false forms of non-violence which keep humans cowardly and irresponsible. Happily, I have since learned that my own region has produced one death metal band called Zanskar whose song titles are thematically confluent with my discovery of Bergmetal—“Deployed,” “Melting Ice Caps,” “The Sun Shines Over the Forgotten Land”—and whose first and only album cover shows a turbulent mountain landscape.



Perhaps, when the violent blasts of heavy metal are heard throughout our great range, when the modern sonic metal of the Western youth is brought back to the planet's youngest peaks in the East, peaks which

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are themselves historically inseparable from the West's own belated and essentially modern fascination with the alpine sublime, perhaps then we will lay to rest our metal killing machines and let them sink into the mountains from which their heavy matter came. Something in me broods with strange hope that the heroic demon-screams of heavy metal, like new divine names spoken through the amplifying weirding modules of a more holy war, will one day shoot down the pathetic man-machines of poisonous conflict and bring to earth not peace but nobler battles.



For then we might have remembered that the true war, the war that so deeply delights the soul and sends it fighting boldly across the secret chasms of cosmic abyss, is the war within the soul itself, a war that plays dangerous and free with its own indestructible Life!

Indestructible,  
Learn thou! the Life is, spreading life through all;

It cannot anywhere, by any means,  
Be anywise diminished, stayed, or changed.  
But for these fleeting frames which it informs  
With spirit deathless, endless, infinite,  
They perish. Let them perish, Prince! and fight!  
He who shall say, "Lo! I have slain a man!"  
He who shall think, "Lo! I am slain!" those both  
Know naught! Life cannot slay. Life is not slain!  
*Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter II*

Even though the musical styles of heavy metal sensibly repel my person, the strange and regressively Western formulation of Bergmetal blew into my spirit trumpet blasts from our ancient mystical battlefields, enchanting me into an unshakeable memory of the fact that true love is not a game for the faint-hearted and weak, but an arduous physical and spiritual *battle* that demands strength and understanding: "Thus live your life of obedience and war! What good is long life? What warrior wants to be spared? I do not spare you, I love you from the very heart, my brothers in war!" (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*). As I loved Bergmetal despite my aesthetic disgust, the pure idea of Bergmetal showed me in new form the great and noble difference between loving and liking—a difference sadly lost on the masses of this lost world where modernity makes a mockery of life and traditionalism knows not the savor of its own truth. So, after printing a few mountain-metal images to pin to the bulletin board above my desk, I was moved to inscribe them with short poems written in English but following the classic quatrain rhyme-scheme of Kashmir's great mystical poetess Lal Ded (Lalleshwari). It seemed that the verses might re-fashion the Bergmetal genre into a quieter, more pleasant lyrical form and at the same time furnish definite inner entry into the *true divine terror* of world-destroying verbo-musical SOUND, a hidden lurking

fear of which was no doubt behind my reactive repulsion towards the harsh musical style. Inevitably, my words were infected with some of the alogical and barbaric aspects of heavy metal lyric. Writing the little poems became of way of travelling into the aesthetic *steepness* and *coldness* of Bergmetal, a manner of tracing the alien heavy metal mountain with new routes and lines of ascent. The poems presented themselves to me as a contemplative act of scripting fate, of facing the mountain of Reality and *never backing down*. Whether or not the lines have literary merit is beside the point, though I do entertain hope that they please the reader. That Mr. Abaris has found them worthy of commentary is a surprising and welcome discovery, all the more so as his elaborations give more attention to the principles than to the superficial effects of my words and often reveal ideas which my thought was only dimly aware of from within the work of counting syllables and finding rhymes. The labor of making this book is entirely his. Under his intellectual hands the Bergmetal concept has taken a reflective form I could not foresee and the creative product of this fortuitous collaboration instills me with certainty that we will one day have the pleasure of meeting in person—in this world or another! In fact, an experience of mine two days before my return to Siachen confirmed the fact that space and time are not at all obstacles to certain kinds of freely willed endeavor. Restless about my impending deployment and wanting distraction from the numb tedium of inner and outer preparations, I took a day trip down to the ancient solar temple at Martand. Having by that time completed the set of Bergmetal poems from which this small selection is chosen, I brought the pages with me for final checking and perusing. Sitting near the temple with my verses in hand, verses whose Occidental weirdness silently harmonized with the marked Greek styling of the tem-

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ple stones and the fading golden light of the setting sun, I saw a nearly naked disheveled but not unlovely old woman approaching the temple from the east. I could not tell whether or not she was looking at me, or what she was doing there at all. At first I thought she must be a beggar or madwoman, but she was not begging and did not show the erratic self-enclosed energy of the typical mad person. Instead she walked with a slow purposiveness of total sanity which beggars and madmen naturally cannot show, being consumed with subjective phenomena and wants. As she walked nearer to where I sat, with an inexplicable force of presence accentuated by that supernaturally clean kind of charismatic dirtiness found only on our omphalic subcontinent, I observed that she was carrying a smooth dark stone about the size of a grapefruit. For a moment we made eye contact and she said in English, holding out the stone without stopping on her way, *this is yours too*. In the moment I turned to watch her pass, she had vanished. Then no one had to tell me who she was—it was clear. So in turn I trust that the present reader will find in these words something stony of their own, something hard and heavy as a mountain and lighter than the wind.

Nab Saheb

Srinagar  
2013

## Introduction: On Bergmetal

Denys X. Abaris

Mountains toppling evermore  
Into seas without a shore.

– Edgar Allan Poe, “Dream-Land”

Bergmetal is a supremely actual, mythical, and still-to-be-discovered genre of musical experience, an aesthetically retrograde alpine chain of ascent-portals opening the flatness of present cultural presence into multiverses of acosmic abyss. In its pure form, Bergmetal always has, does, and will exist, even if there is no one to listen to it. To the intrepid sonic-conceptual explorer, the untouched peaks are innumerable, stretching to horizons far beyond this world. To those who prefer to remain generically where they are, these peaks do not exist, or are at best pale projections of a more familiar sphere. This book is neither a guide for explorers nor an armchair entertainment. It is more a frantic sketch from an intimate distance, a journal of incomplete ascents and saturnine basecamp timepass composed with leisurely intoxicated haste over the course of two winter weeks when, sick with life and self, *something else had to be done*. Peaks screamed to be climbed and/or fallen from. “*Here the bergmetal as phonological event comes to us as the present tense of a past adverbial eternity.*”<sup>1</sup>

Historically speaking, the origins of the concept of bergmetal are both obvious and obscure. The genre,

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Murray, “286 Passages into the Logar : Lordship and Bondage of the Provincial Ascent” (*Bergmetal*, 2012).



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which is simply the sub-category of heavy metal thematically invested in mountains, predates by many years Domink Irtenkauf's seminal unpublished paper, "To the Mountains, or, Rocking Against Melancholy: The Implications of Black Metal's Geophilosophy" (*Melancology*, Black Metal Theory Symposium II, London, 2011), as well the blog *Bergmetal*, initiated in 2012.<sup>2</sup> The concept already finds overt expression, for



example, in Wallop's *Metallic Alps* (Bone Breaker, 1985). Many metal bands now apply mountain adject-

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<sup>2</sup> On the concept and theory of Bergmetal, see Tristan Vivian Adams, "Interview with Nicola Masciandaro on Bergmetal," *Notes From the Vomitorium*, 2012); David Peak, "Return to My Realms: Dungeonsynth, Fortification, and the Alpine Sublime," *Basement: Studies in Seclusion* 7 (2012): 1-13.

tives to their generic self-descriptors—‘mountain metal,’ ‘alpine black metal’—and/or locate themselves in artistic fidelity to specific alpine regions: Cascadia (Wolves in the Throne Room, Alda), Rocky Mountains (Schrei aus Stein, Deafest), Dolomites (Lorn), Sierra Nevada (Valdur), Alps (Stormcrow, Rauhacht, Wacht), Bavaria (Draumar), Transylvania (Negura Bunget), Himalaya (Ugra Karma, Weird Anxiety)—to name only some obvious examples. Many more just aesthetically and conceptually affiliate their metal with mountains. To show but a few prominent examples (Howling Wind, *Into the Cryosphere*; Aylwin, *Soil and Cold*; Hammers, *Orogeny*; Battle Dagaroth, *Eternal Throne*; 深山, *Deep Mountains*; Horn, *Jahreszeiten*; Draumar, *Gebirge*; Wacht, *Indigen*; Mgła, *With Hearts Towards None*; Bergthron, *E. A.*):



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Yet there is within this elevated field simultaneously a slowness to address bergmetal as such, to own and identify it as viable distinct genre, despite the massive historical and cultural roots of the mountain-idea. There is a strange sense in which bergmetal itself is now necessarily persisting as an uncharted mountain, one which hides behind the very figure of the mountain as dependable backdrop of multifarious artistic and intellectual purposes, especially those affiliated with mysticism, romanticism, high fantasy, anti-humanism, cosmicity, anti-modernism, eco-apocalypticism, and traditionalism. But as metal continues to proliferate and ramify into ever more specific faithful heresies of itself, this will likely change and bergmetal will eventually emerge as its own distinct heavy metallic topos. As this happens, the deeper, psycho-tectonic forces behind the musical orogeny will become more apparent and bergmetal will ascend to colder elevation and brighter visibility as a distinct alpine chain stretching into music's deep metal future and past, perhaps unveiling a wholly new, now-unimaginable idea and reality of BERG. Until then, a full typology or mapping of the genre would be premature, despite the existence of several obvious ready-made formations, such as the misty ranges of Middle-Earth, the hyper-alpine monstrosities of Lovecraftian mythos, and good old-fashioned icy Hyperboreanism. Such oro-constellations will remain significant, but the coming emergence of bergmetal *will not* be determined by them, being a flow of deeper-than-cultural forces whose lines and patterns of evolution are yet too profound and chaotic to admit clear rational categorization.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Samuel Forsythe, "Five Alpine Projection Maps of the Coming Metal Cosmos," *Computational Sound Art & Theory* 23 (2011).

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Two complementary early proto-bergmetal moments, however, do merit highlighting at this stage as potential reference points for future measurements. The first is the appearance of the mountain as object of ludic post-futurity and mystical flight in Black Sabbath's "Supernaut": "I want to reach out and touch the sky / I want to touch the sun / But I don't need to fly / I'm gonna climb up every mountain of the moon / Find the dish that ran away with the spoon" (*Black Sabbath Vol.4*, 1972). The subject of this song is the darkly innocent paradox of a conquering spirit who has left conquest behind, a pure climber-flyer who summits everything without needing to fly, exceeds all limits, yet is not in the least weighed down by the accomplishment of doing so and who alpinely dwells above all contingency and relation: "Got no religion, don't need no friends / Got all I want and I don't need to pretend." The Supernaut is a mystically playful mountaineer of telos and time itself, one who thus ends up assuming the high apophatic topos of the old God of Mt. Sinai whom none can see and live: "Don't try to reach me, 'cause I'd tear up your mind / I've seen the future and I've left it behind." The appearance of the mountain under these terms is significant



precisely in light of the general elision of the mountain from Black Sabbath's vision, an elision which is conspicuous in light of the apocalyptic dimensions of the mountain-figure in the Western imaginary, as famously illuminated in John Martin's [doom metal album cover] *End of the World* (1851-3). What founds this elision is precisely the cosmic *planetary*, après-lunar-landing scale of Black Sabbath's apocalypticism, wherein the whole earth is not to be made new—"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (Revelation 21:1)—but *left behind* by a new humanity, the "sons of freedom," who rocket *into the void* on wings of "burning metal through the atmosphere": "Rocket engines burning fuel so fast / Up into the night sky they blast / Through the universe the engines whine / Could it be the end of man and time? / Back on earth the flame of life burns low / Everywhere is misery and woe / Pollution kills the air, the land and sea / Man prepares to meet his destiny" (Black Sabbath, "Into the Void," *Master of Reality*, 1971). Given this trajectory, the mountain can only appear in Black Sabbath where it does, *after* the overcoming of redemptive teleology and salvationism by the *absolute individual*,<sup>4</sup> the Supernaut, who, mystically, is the Super-Naught or Hyper-Zero of the rare one who self-negates, who is eternally saved in the realization that there is *no one* to be saved.<sup>5</sup> "I would go down unto Annihilation and Eternal Death, lest the Last Judgment come and fine me Unannihilate, and I be seiz'd and giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood" (William Blake). "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and

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<sup>4</sup> Vide Julius Evola, *Teoria dell'Individuo assoluto* (1927).

<sup>5</sup> See A. K. Coomaraswamy, "*Ākimcañña*: Self-Naughting," *Metaphysics*, ed. Lipsey (1977), 88-106.

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every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne” (Revelation 6:15-6). Only for the Supernaut is the mountain given in its universality and authentic modernity as place for the free play of endless *climbing*.

Sabbat’s “Rage of Mountains” (*Sabbatical Demon*, 1990), in perfect counterpoint to Sabbath’s post-telluric mountain, speaks for the mountain itself as living earthly symbol of the immanent beyond and calls down its wrath in warning upon all human scum who mistake the mountain’s silence for indifference: “We hear their screams, great mountains / By way of a symbol of great ground / They tower over in your life / They had been watching, defending you / Making your water in heavy clouds / Giving greens to you, the law for the living / But! Devils’re blighting for heartless souls / You’ll be touched with rage of mountains!! / They’re gutted and processed by your hands / But they don’t cry, keep silence / Silence is just warning of screams of revenge / Everything is your sins.” Bergmetal is here the scream of the mountain itself as



betrayed (a)cosmic source and law of life. Mountain is majestic throne of the noble demon who sits in black judgment of stupid evil idiot self-centered man. Unheeds he the fraudulent counsel of any interrupter who would have *his* ear, enforcing with perfect inescapable scepter of human skull on pole. HAIL SATAN!!!

Together these two early moments of bergmetal—symbolically differentiated by the presence/absence of an *h*, the letter which marks the human in continuity with earth (*homo-humus*)—provide a charged pole for measuring the *avenir* of bergmetal as a dynamic trans-human geo-tectonic musical system harshly impinging upon the identity of man in relation to this weird earthly place. The pole symbolically forms the *axis of the mountain*, a screaming vertical vibratory silence which essentially says: Man, be yourself, or not, the choice is yours.

By unexpectedly transforming found moments of bergmetal into poetic *emblems*, Lieut. Nab Saheb has with remarkable insider-outsider intuition authentically received the genre along this axis, finding in it variegated heavy metallic images of *deep alpine decision and will*. His spontaneous poetic responses to bergmetal icons thus fulfill the practico-theoretical truth of the emblem, which is all about looking out into an impossibly clear landscape of semiotic bodies and living signs within a con-templative auto-allegorical poetic frame, so that to properly decide the emblem *will* be to produce (*poiein*) or bring into real presence, this day or the next, its truth. That the man/mountain relation is itself emblematic of this auto-allegorical situation of decision, that the *emblem is oro-topology* or place where one paradoxically authentically decides by presently judging oneself as *another* (*allegoria*, lit. other-speaking, speaking about something else—‘je est un autre’), is evident from the 8<sup>th</sup> of



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Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (1531), which concerns the divine guidance of the mountain:

VIII. QUA DII VOCANT, EUNDUM  
[WHERE THE GODS CALL, THERE ONE MUST GO]



In trivio mons est lapidum: supereminet illi  
Trunca Dei effigies, pectore facta tenus.  
Mercurii est igitur tumulus: suspende viator  
Serta Deo, rectum qui tibi monstret iter.  
Omnes in trivio sumus, atque hoc tramite vitae  
Fallimur, ostendat ni Deus ipse viam.

[At the crossroads is a mountain of stones; the shortened figure of a god rises above it, figured as far down as his chest. This then is the hill of Mercury. Traveler, raise up garlands to the god, that to you he may show the proper road. We are all at the crossroads, and we mistake our course in life, if the God himself does not show the way.]

Look to the mountain!<sup>6</sup> This is the perfectly hopeless hope of bergmetal—a looking that I hold to be worthy of commentary regardless of what that looking seems and does not seem to see. Such is the power of bergmetal, to provide a way of seeing in the evident absence of way. The very fact that we *are* looking to the mountain is proof of this.

Revering this evident eighthness of the Saheb-Alciati emblematic oro-complex and its unmistakable horizontal correspondence to the infinity beyond time and space ( $\infty$ ), I have delimited this volume to commentary on only 7 of Nab Saheb's emblems which the *Bergmetal* authors kindly provided me upon request. No doubt you could have done better. "In the shadows of its craters / On the mountains of its ruin / Solar rays carve its valleys / Endless graves reign in caves" (Inquisition, "Force of the Floating Tomb," *Obscure Verses for the Multiverse*)

*Caveat ascensor!*

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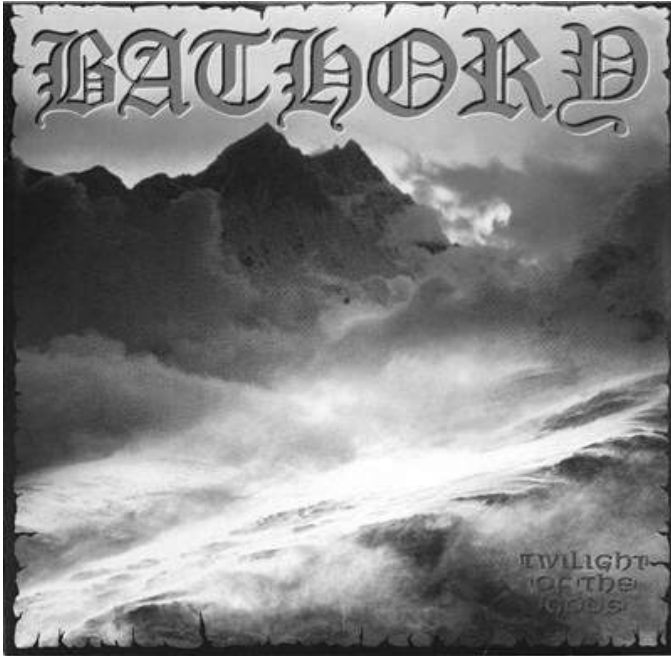
<sup>6</sup> Cf. Wallace Stevens's "The Poem that Took the Place of a Mountain": "There it was, word for word, / The poem that took the place of a mountain . . . Where he could lie and, gazing down at the sea, / Recognize his unique and solitary home."

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## I. ENTER THE MOUNTAIN



Bathory, "To Enter Your Mountain," *Twilight of the Gods* (Black Mark, 1991)

△

Shining in the crimson distance of ancient days,  
Summoning itself in cosmic cold immanence,  
The mountain remains so indifferent to all ways  
That silence itself is absorbed by its presence.

Sad mobs applaud, knowing nothing of this ascent,  
The blissful pain of blind effort past *yes* and *no*.  
Desolate crystal worlds burn in dire black lament  
For they who into their mountain refuse to go.

## I. ENTER THE MOUNTAIN

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*THE CRIMSON DISTANCE OF ANCIENT DAYS*: The crimsonness of alpine distance concerns the temporal depth of geologic being as primal analogical *flow* of life, the stygian blood of being itself as a stream between irreconcilable worlds—"The hills, which, as compared with living beings, seem 'everlasting,' are, in truth, as perishing as they: its veins of flowing fountain weary the mountain heart, as the crimson pulse does ours; the natural force of the iron crag is abated in its appointed time, like the strength of the sinews in a human old age; and it is but the lapse of the longer years of decay which, in the sight of its Creator, distinguishes the mountain range from the moth and the worm" (John Ruskin, *Of Mountain Beauty*, XII.3)—and the deathly powerful feeling of this being: "the summits of the rocky mountains are gathered into solemn crowns and circlets, all flushed in that strange, faint silence of possession by the sunshine which has in it so deep a melancholy; full of power, yet as frail as shadows; lifeless, like the walls of a sepulchre, yet beautiful in tender fall of crimson folds" (*Ibid.*).

*COLD IMMANENCE*: A temperature of immanence? Immanent is that which remains, what perdures within. Coldness, as privation or absence of heat/movement, remains in things in the mode of entropy. Entropy, inevitable decay and passing away, operates as an unshakeable coldness. You can warm yourself up, but you are always already getting colder. And yet the unceasing permanence of entropy is itself a kind of heat, a constant movement that never stops effecting coldness. In these terms, the cold immanence of the mountain, which always presents itself under the paradoxical sign of *eternal decay*, touches the cosmos as a hot fading and unfadable heat, a diminishment which always returns with a mysterious spontaneous surplus of movement. Things fall apart, because they never

really do. The self-summoning of the mountain, the magnetic extra whereby it compels attention upon-beyond itself and though dying has already outlived you, is an index of this surplus. Likewise, the corporeal perfection of mountain experience is found in the body's ability to live in the 'dead zone', in temperatures of its own internal beyond: "In this great disaster I remained in utter solitude / The falling snow in the year's-end blizzard / Fought me, the cotton-clad, high on Snow Mountain, / I fought it as it fell upon me / Until it turned to drizzle. / I conquered the raging winds-- / Subduing them to silent. The cotton cloth I wore was like a burning brand" (*The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, "Song of the Snow Ranges").

*INDIFFERENCE TO ALL WAYS*: "[U]pon the Jungfrauoch [ridge top], there is a turning point that does not know the lower world at all . . . This landscape has never entered into human history, not even as a symbol—like the moor, the heath, the forest—capable of mediating between humanity and its secrets. The ancient Persians believe the moon to be a mirror hung at an oblique angle above the earth, reflecting it from beyond, the high mountain, however, belongs neither to this world nor to the one beyond. It lies at the Styx, which flows between both worlds—indeed it is this river's mouth: the sea where the Styx arrives and freezes solid" (Ernst Bloch, "Alps Without Photography"). The indifference of the mountain is thus not an indifference of something merely removed, but an indifference of that which stands in the very midst of ultimate difference (between this world and its beyond), an absolute in-difference. So a mountain both constitutes and is wholly removed from the ways up it. Cf. "High above all sorrow: yes, but not unwitnessing to it" (Ruskin, *Of Mountain Beauty*, XIX.3).

## I. ENTER THE MOUNTAIN

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*SILENCE ITSELF IS ABSORBED BY ITS PRESENCE*: “O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee, Till thou, still present to the bodily sense, / Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer / I worshipped the Invisible alone” (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Hymn Before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni”). As the silent presence of the mountain here absorbs its very objecthood before intellectual vision, splitting the mirror of spirit and matter and thus opening the expansive solitude of pure prayer or being alone with the alone, so the alpine mysterium shows forth as power to return and sink silence back towards itself, revealing silence as mountain’s own musical *dictation*.

*SAD MOBS APPLAUD, KNOWING NOTHING*: The Bathory lyrics begin by contrasting the blind dumbness of the crowd with the individualized visionary path of the one who enters the mountain: “Blind fools who see only what they tell you to / Open up your eyes you might see it too / See there is a lot to see within you too / Don’t be like the rest and let them take it from you / Dumb fools who say only what they tell you to / Speak up and find that there is more truth within you than you knew” (Bathory, “To Enter Your Mountain”). The low mute stupidity of the masses must be exited for the higher blindness and speechlessness—the ‘blind effort’ of the next line—found by entering the massively inhuman and exalted depths of the mountain. Cf. “my advice to you as look for a sight of the mysterious things, is to leave behind you everything perceived and understood, everything perceptible and understandable, all that is not and all that is, and with your understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can towards union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge” (Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*). The crowd’s applause of alpine feats proves ignorance of their true nature—both the nature

of the feat and their own nature. World-flattening humanity huddles together, makes of itself a dumb mass, precisely in willful blindness to the terrifying fact that the transhuman orogenic body of cosmos is already *within* the soul. This is the meaning of *your* mountain in the song—"To enter your mountain Go into your mountainside / To enter one's mountainside / Will take its man" (Bathory, "To Enter")—namely, that entering the mountain coincides with climbing into the depths of oneself and falling towards a summit of the absolute individual: "my essential being is above God . . . I am my own cause according to my essence, which is eternal, and not according to my becoming, which is temporal" (Meister Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, Sermon 87). Bergwerk is a single double movement encompassing brutal manual labor of mining the abyss and noble conquest of glorious summits. What the 'blind fools' cannot comprehend is exactly this simple conjunction of transcendent achievement and immanent humiliation wherein "the successful climber does not quite feel himself to be one" (Bloch, "Alps"), not because he is not one, but because he has experienced the pacific freedom of being lived by another self: "This ascent requires pure strength and a pure, calm, and uncompromising will. Slowly but steadily, something arises in us: that automatic, almost supernatural state of security, lack of tiredness, and lucidity that arises at great heights and in the face of mortal danger, after one's initial strength and sensations have been depleted" (Julius Evola, *Meditations on the Peaks*). The psychic economy of society *screens* this beyond within: "See there is a lot to see within you too / Don't be like the rest and let them take it from you" (Bathory, "To Enter"). Here lies the key to the hidden meaning of this song's obvious musical failure. Speaking the very function of the song, these lines, which conclude the first stanza, are set as a



## I. ENTER THE MOUNTAIN

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warning against the inane choral aesthetics of the song itself, which paradoxically demands affectively that you *not* sing along. The song is intentionally sung in a manner that *makes you feel stupid* if you join the chorus, re-exposing the listener to the very blindness one must refuse and see through. The social sound of the refrain is an instructive stupidity pushing the will away into its own mountain, a movement perfected in the song's conclusion where a single voice repetitively dilates mountain-entering into self-opening: "Mountain / He who enters his mountain / He who enters his mountain / He who enters his mountain / He who enters his mountain / He who enters his mountain / He who enters his mountain / Into one's mountainside" (Bathory, "To Enter"). The seven song-fading repetitions framed by the spatial distinction between the deep transcendental body of mountain itself and its immanent surface ("mountain . . . mountainside") mark a staged mystical ascent-descent by means of voice into the root meaning of *mountain* (*mons*, from PIE root \**men-* 'to stand out, project'), into the truth that *stands* there and needs no calling out to: "there He stands patiently awaiting whoever is ready to open up and let Him in. No need to call to Him from afar: He can hardly wait for you to open up. He longs for you a thousand times more than you long for Him: the opening and the entering are a single act" (Meister Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, Sermon 4). To enter your mountain signifies to truly stand with what stands, to *mout* through form to the sublime (sublimen) threshold or infinite *side* of what is beyond form, and thus, to step into the omnipresent mutual inclination of summit and home: "To return to the mountaintop: it is not given emphasis or developed in advance by anything human, and yet, as not only quantitative but also qualitative sublimity, it is not

turned away from the category of home, which expressly inclines towards it" (Ernst Bloch, "Alps").

*BLISSFUL PAIN OF BLIND EFFORT PAST YES AND NO:* The effort is not an opposition but a negation of opposition: "we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to affirmations, beyond privation, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion" (Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*). The distinction between true superessential negation, which goes beyond the opposites, and false ontological negation, which stays within them, is correlative to the true and false greatness of the mountain, respectively: "The alpine mountain is a real cipher, almost already a symbol of that which strives upward: beyond this cipher, however, such nature, as merely reified and fetishized greatness, represents precisely that which obstructs" (Bloch, "Alps"). The 'blissful pain of blind effort' is the paradoxical ecstasy of dwelling in the cipher of the mountain, the mountain of the cipher.

*LAMENT / FOR THEY WHO INTO THEIR MOUNTAIN REFUSE TO GO:* "I love those who do not first seek behind the stars for a reason to go under and be a sacrifice, but who sacrifice themselves for the earth, that the earth may some day become the overman's" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).

## II. No Way



Darkthrone, “Black Victory of Death,” *Total Death* (Monfog, 1996).

△

Evil black peaks scream piercing ice-shards from above,  
Way more malevolent than gunship, tank, or drone.  
Here the way is lost, lost all hope and every love  
As total death flows down the God-forsaken throne.

We always knew nothing makes it, nothing survives,  
That only death wins the cosmos where life is war.  
Bleakest death, the cryptic ruler of all your lives,  
Wastes mankind, earth, and universe forevermore.

*EVIL BLACK PEAKS*: There is a spatio-temporal zone, at the limits of space and time, where pathetic fallacy, reaching a terrible height, darkly inverts at the very summit of hyperbole into something palpably and indubitably true. Consciousness here reaches a kind of maximal separation from itself, an intellectual limit that, ceasing to reflect back anything *for* thought, suddenly becomes sharp and wounding. Like an archer whose arrow shot to the heavens returns to penetrate his eye, like a finger reaching out to touch a mirror that is really a cutting blade, experience here finds that there really is something evil *out there*, precisely at the point where evil seems scientifically and realistically most impossible, as shown in the malevolent accidentality of mountain experience, in the evils perpetrated by no one and everything, by forces omnipresent and nowhere. Given the momentary, piercing and formally unsustainable nature of such noetic auto-trauma, its event is typically represented in terms of terrible glimpse or fatal flash of horribly exterior insight, as in Danforth's final maddening vision of the Antarctic hyper-mountains, "highest of earth's peaks and focus of earth's evil": "It was not, he declares, anything connected with the cubes and caves of echoing, vaporous, wormily honeycombed mountains of madness which we crossed; but a single fantastic, daemonic glimpse, among the churning zenith clouds, of what lay back of those other violet westward mountains which the Old Ones had shunned and feared" (H. P. Lovecraft, *Mountains of Madness*, chapter 12). Such glimpsing of something terrifyingly *behind* the far reaches of the visible is simply a blind unveiling of the identity between matter and the thought of evil, the primal and seemingly permanent and inescapable positing of *there being something matter with things*, a malevolence coincident with being-there itself. Wounding itself upon this

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impenetrable point, consciousness here finds itself trapped within the true untruth of Gnostic materiality, inside the fact that matter is evil precisely because neither exist, because the inexistence of both is *the same thing*. Yet this inexistence is not nothing. There is *something* there. The mountain *is* trying to kill you. And it *will*. “[O]mnis qui tetigerit montem, morte morietur” (Exodus 19:12) [All who touch the mountain by death will die].

. . . *THAN GUNSHIP, TANK, OR DRONE*: The simple point of the comparison is that there is greater evil than man’s own, that the cosmic malevolence seen in the mountain is a malevolence more than war. This implies a critique of man’s narrow and solipsistic claim to war as his own evil, a critique prosecuted in the experience of mountain warfare, in which human agency is coldly delimited by telluric facts in the midst of exploiting them for tactical advantage, where hubristic usurpation of the alpine powers, a violation of the source of life, is buried under avalanche. The *dwarfing* of human war by the mountains figures the double bind of war’s nature as simultaneously man’s responsibility and instrument of higher, meta-human designs. Man goes to war in the mass psychotic insanity of self-interest, only to find that war is already there, at war with man from the very beginning. Man takes up war, but War already owns him, and uses man’s little wars to *fertilize* its own earth: “Go ahead! Achieve all your goals! Break all the damns! Faster! You are unbound. Go ahead and fly with faster wings, with an ever greater pride for your achievements, with your conquests, with your empires, with your democracies! The pit must be filled; there is a need for fertilizer for the new tree that will grow out of your collapse” (Guido De Giorgio, “Crollano le torri”). The waste of war does not destroy humanity, but drives it

onwards toward “the knowledge that man, instead of being a limited, separate individual, completely bound by the illusion of time and space and substance, is eternal in his nature and infinite in his resources” (MB, *Early Messages to the West*). Far from being a justification for war, the understanding of war’s fiery creative-accelerative force, a force the admission of which is heretical both to the reductive reification of war as misfortune and its ideological glorification—expression of the *forces* that want war for themselves—is the very understanding that would open man to higher and nobler war, to better war by more glorious means: “May your work be a battle, may your peace be a victory! (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*). Similarly, we find in the Darkthrone lyrics an invocation of the Earth that out-survives its own violation and by death becomes fertile with a new fiery blackened humanity: “Gaia! / Once mother of all life / Now raped by death / To breed the brethren of black fire” (Darkthrone, “Black Victory”). This necrotic breeding, earth’s dark motherhood of meta-human man, is totally her own doing. See that she is not a victim, not death’s wasted plaything or mere place for “Th’expense of spirit in a waste of shame” (Shakespeare, Sonnet 129), but a divinely transgressive goddess, a blackly transcendent whore who freely takes death as her lover and plays his game better than himself. And in case you are worried and upset about all those *bad men* who need to be punished for their crimes, in case you are concerned that the hyperchaotic Universe does not know how to handle the evil of false warriors (never mind your own falseness): know that Kali knows too well what to do with all the lost leaders and followers, the war pigs and pillaging soldiers, not to mention the base slaves who lose their heads butchering in the name of the One whose mercy grants only their wish and erases them from the book

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of life—"He governs the world through itself" (Ibn Arabi). Mourn neither man nor earth—your Dark Mother does not want you to cry. After all, today is her party, today is *her* age! Correlatively, at the geologic level, the obscure pre-solar dark divinity of earth is what one first faces coming into the cold deathly altitudes, where immediate reality destroys expectation in spectacles of elemental confusion: "Our first view of the glacier proper was absolutely contrary to our imagination. We had imagined a white frozen mass where reflecting sunrays might make us blind, as we had seen in the movies. What confronted us at the snout of the glacier was a black mass of mountainside, full of debris and black dust, making it very difficult for us to distinguish between the mountain and the glacier" (Shammi Arora, "Siachen," *SRISHTI – Creativity in Nature*). The violence of man is pre-exceeded, preemptively struck down by the purer elemental violence of archaic sacred earth, churning with Life beyond death and life, with holy DEATH—"sang en formation d'hyperbole" (Julius Evola) [blood in hyperbolic formation], the swerve of life into infinity . . .

There is also a secondary, more subtle meaning to the comparison in this line, pertaining to the continuum of shared reference to aerial military might and the vocal power of heavy metal death from above echoed in the first line ('scream piercing . . .'). Here the superior malevolence is the higher spiritual will and dark/hidden cosmic forces channeled and controlled in sonic metal voice itself.

*HERE THE WAY IS LOST*: In contrast to the previous emblem, which emphasizes the individual attainability of the mountain via a movement of setting forth into it, the meaning here focuses on the waylessness of seeking the mountain, and furthermore, mountain as itself what prevents and impossibilizes the taking of any

way towards it. "God is the one who leads me and elevates me to that state. I do not go to it on my own, for my myself, I would not know how to want, desire, or seek it" (Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*). There is no way to the mountain, as the mountain is both the transcendent terminus of all ways and their imminent impossibility. The way to the mystical mountain is perforce mystical, a physically and spiritually deathly passage found in darkness and *not* asking the way: "There is a Mountain situated in the midst of the earth or center of the world, which is both small and great. It is soft, also above measure hard and stony. It is far off and near at hand . . . In it are hidden the most ample treasures, which the world is not able to value . . . To this Mountain you shall go in a certain night—when it comes—most long and most dark . . . insist upon the way that leads to the Mountain, but ask not of any man where the way lies" (Thomas Vaughn, *Lumen de Lumine*). Cf. "The territory in question must be able to exist *in any region* on the surface of the globe" (René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*). The dark way to the mountain is a self-secret abyss opening to a vast wilderness whose grand inhumanity is mysteriously more home than anywhere else: "in darkness the soul not only avoids going astray but advances rapidly . . . To reach an new an unknown land and journey along unknown roads, travelers cannot be guided by their own knowledge . . . the soul, too, when it advances, walks in darkness and unknowing . . . persons who tread this road . . . are unable to describe it . . . this mystical wisdom occasionally so engulfs souls in its secret abyss that they have the keen awareness of being brought into a place far removed from every creature. They accordingly feel that they have been led into a remarkably deep and vast wilderness unattainable by any human creature, into an immense unbounded desert, the more delightful, savorous, and



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loving, the deeper, vaster, and more solitary it is” (John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*). The way to mountain is necessarily by means of being lost, abandoned, derelict—not just a categorical fact but the terribly actual ontological intensity of seriously not knowing or feeling how or where one stands, of *being* lost. “For whoever would save his life will lose it” (Matthew 16:24). Mountain is the wayless way of implacable entry into impenetrable death: “for man shall not see me and live . . . Behold there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock” (Exodus 33:20). The place where you grow silent and finally stop asking, but how does this help me? It does not. “Only that person who says: *My soul chooses hanging, and my bones death* can truly embrace this fire . . . Let us die then, and enter into this darkness. Let us silence all our care, desires, and imaginings” (Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind into God*). Only being undone in the black victory of totally disorienting death, only ascending the “skeleton throne” will one “Reign . . . / The realm of the beast” (Darkthrone, “Black Victory): “Son of a giant, I have never / From the wrathful run. / Son of a lion—of all beasts the king— / I have ever lived in the snow mountains. / To make a task of life is but a joke to me” (*The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, “Song of the Snow Ranges”).

*AS TOTAL DEATH FLOWS DOWN THE GOD-FORSAKEN THRONE*: Traditionally, the mountain summit figures at once the presence and the absence of God, the paradoxical *topos theou* or place of God, where God is and is not, where all that is found is a place and in that place the All. So Ruskin, reinventing this place in the context of the geo-romantic sublime, paints the alpine height as kind of lofty monument of perishing divinity: “Higher up, the ice opens into broad white fields and furrows, hard and dry, scarcely fissured at all . . .

and forming a silent and solemn causeway, paved, as it seems, with white marble from side to side; broad enough for the march of an army in line of battle, but quiet as a street of tombs in a buried city, and bordered on each hand by ghostly cliffs of that faint granite purple which seems, in its far-away height, as unsubstantial as the dark blue that bounds it;—the whole scene so changeless and soundless; so removed, not merely from the presence of men, but even from their thoughts; so destitute of all life of tree or herb, and *so immeasurable in its lonely brightness of majestic death*, that it looks like a world from which not only the human, but the spiritual, presences had perished, and the last of its archangels, building the great mountains for their monuments, had laid themselves down in the sunlight to an eternal rest, each in his white shroud” (*Of Mountain Beauty*, XVI.1, my emphasis). As much as the mountain presences the immanence of transcendent divinity, or earthliness of the heavenly, so does the mountain, precisely by pointing beyond itself, prove its separation and distance from the divine realm. This *negative divinity* of the mountain is the foundation of its modern sublimity, just as the scientific geological vision of mountains, which Romanticism permutes into the matter of poetry, rests upon the idea of mountain as *miscreation*, as a thing that should not be, a fundamentally *fallen* elevation that God could not have made, as per Thomas Burnet’s proto-geologic concept of the mountains as sacred ruins, remnants of the Deluge: “There is something august and stately in the Air of these things, that inspires the mind with great thoughts and passions; We do naturally, upon such occasions, think of God and his greatness: and whatsoever hath but the shadow and appearance of INFINITE, as all things have that are too big for our comprehension, they fill and over-bear the mind with their Excess, and cast it into a

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pleasing kind of stupor and admiration. And yet these Mountains we are speaking of, to confess the truth, are nothing but great ruines” (*Sacred Theory of the Earth*, I.11). The deathliness of mountains is thus connected to the sense of their durable impermanence, their inverse indexing of the whole universe/creation as gloriously passing away. The ‘total death’ flowing down from the mountain as abandoned throne merges with the very deathliness of life, not life’s essential connection to death as intimate opposite, but life itself as death or fate worse than death, as a terrible waking dream and fall into a too-solid empty becoming, a never-ending still birth into the black tomb of the cosmic egg. The decaying immobile substantiality of the mountain is the dead life of mortality itself, the horrible lifelessness out of which life is beautifully made by means of its own hopeless wounding. In these terms the deathliness of the mountain is for Ruskin providentially resolvable to the paradox of stone as substantial mortality, compound dust: “A harder substance had to be prepared for every mountain chain; yet not so hard but that it might be capable of crumbling down into earth fit to nourish the alpine forest and the alpine flower; not so hard but that, in the midst of the utmost majesty of its enthroned strength, there should be seen on it the seal of death, and the writing of the same sentence that had gone forth against the human frame, ‘Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.’ And with this perishable substance the most majestic forms were to be framed that were consistent with the safety of man; and the peak was to be lifted, and the cliff rent, as high and as steeply as was possible, in order yet to permit the shepherd to feed his flocks upon the slope, and the cottage to nestle beneath their shadow” (*Of Mountain Beauty*, VII.3). But the concept of ‘total death’ in this line clearly goes further, towards a non-dual realm

where life is overcome in total death, in a death so absolutely extensive and intensive that it 'is' its own kind of superessential life-flow. The line ought thus to be read as a dark mystical inversion of Ruskin's vision of mountain as life source: "And thus those desolate and threatening ranges of dark mountain, which, in nearly all ages of the world, men have looked upon with aversion or with terror, and shrunk back from as if they were haunted by perpetual images of death, are, in reality, sources of life and happiness far fuller and more beneficent than all the bright fruitfulness of the plain" (*Of Mountain Beauty*, VII.10). As a double sense of alpine superiority is established in this statement—that mountains are both the essential source of horizontal earthly life and a higher source of vertical, spiritual life—so the flowing total death here figured carries a double sense as both the cosmic ruination that falls on all things from beyond and the self-annihilation or *mors mystica* that alone makes life worthy of itself and which more than bread all beings willy-nilly, consciously or unconsciously, need. In the context of the Darkthrone lyric, the primal terror of radical oblivion shadowed in the mountain, the terror which at time's end weak humanity at last calls on for comfort and safety—"Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne'" (Revelation 6:16)—is, far from something to be fled, in reality something infinitely brighter, a hidden flame that earthly man will never understand: "Fire I greet Thee / Give life to shadows grim / So that they may writhe where you dwelt / In life, now dead within" (Darkthrone, "Black Victory"). Such is the terrible *crystal fire* man finds reflected in looking into stone:

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“This almost menacing perfection—for it rests on the absence of life, the visible stillness of death” (Roger Caillois, *The Writing of Stones*).

*CRYPTIC RULER OF ALL YOUR LIVES*: The pun on ‘cryptic’ must be taken seriously as a reflection upon the obscurity of the individual evolutionary-transmigratory path which is governed by the tomb as fit terminus and goal of each event of life. Death is a coffin cut to measure. A life dies (except in instances of improper or non-illuminated self-murder) when its life is finitely complete, when it reaches the crypt, a terminus which, far from being a truncation or mere perishing, is the very fulfillment of a *position* on the arch-vault of the transitory cosmic tomb (*crypta*, ‘vault, cavern’, from PIE \**krau* ‘to conceal, hide’). Death hiddenly governs all life within the non-Euclidean cosmic curvature by means of *cryptic* points of perfectly individuated death, driving all things onward to the absolute freedom of ultimate dissolution. To the one who knows and feels this, crypt is not enclosure but a locale of airy or astral homeward flight: “Tunnels of death are invisible wings / Mystique moons are floating tombs / Black cosmic sea, I sing to thee / Open the path, oh! Majesty / Infinite universe as /silent as death/ In this coffin I lay to rest / Astral bodies guide me to the throne / Now I have joined the cosmic crypts” (Inquisition, “Astral Path to Supreme Majesties,” *Ominous Doctrines of the Perpetual Mystical Macrocasm*). Death’s cryptic rulership is the life-storm of cosmic holocaust, found by those who, feeling its windy touch, are made to float upon and above the cold mountain flow: “My hair blows in the winds of reap / Still I float with the cold diabolical massacre winds / On the bestial wings of evil / Above the mountainside / And into cryptic winterstorms” (Immortal, “Cryptic Winterstorms,” *Diabolical Fullmoon*

*Mysticism*). Mountain and metalhead here reveal their mutual lithic resonance and shared lingamic significance, the flesh-made-mountain conceived by one black hworde as “Sarcophallic Metal Of Mystic Ancient Desolation” (Sarcophallus, “Mahapralaya”).

*WASTES . . . FOREVERMORE*: “Just as the varied world of experience completely disappears for the man who is in deep sleep, the entire objective cosmos which is the creation of *Maya* vanishes into nothingness at the time of *Mahapralaya*. It is as if the universe had never existed at all. Even during the evolutionary period the universe is in itself nothing but imagination. There is in fact only one indivisible and eternal Reality and it has neither beginning nor end. It is beyond time. From the point of view of this timeless Reality the whole time-process is purely imaginary, and billions of years which have passed and billions of years which are to pass do not have even the value of a second. It is as if they had not existed at all” (MB, *Discourses*). The inhumanity of the mystical mountain is inescapable: “I saw a great mountain the color of iron, and enthroned on it One of such great glory that it blinded my sight. On each side of him there extended a soft shadow, like a wing of wondrous breadth and length. Before him, at the foot of the mountain, stood an image full of eyes on all sides, in which, because of those eyes, I could discern no human form” (Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*).

### III. SLUMBER KILLED



Sleep, "Holy Mountain," *Sleep's Holy Mountain* (Earache, 1993)

△

Eyes wide shut to old Earth's sacred conspiracy,  
The doomed masses stray like ants around the map.  
Probing the mountain-planet without true theory,  
Losing free will to ascend and falling into trap.

Sleep wants to wake life, plunge lonesome entity back  
Into the superessence of its infinite sea.  
Alpine monolith emits, droning primal lack  
Of first silence, calling with quantum OM: there is no *we*.

*EYES WIDE SHUT*: The phrase denotes the unconscious sleep of waking experience, a sleep that does not know it is sleeping because it *thinks* that it is awake: “know that your present state of consciousness which you call being awake, when compared to the Real Awake State, is nothing but a dream state. Your life is a dream within the mighty Dream of God which is the Universe” (*Everything and the Nothing*). Spiritual sleep is the auto-hypnosis of self-centered being: “As desires aim at self-satisfaction, the whole consciousness becomes self-centred and individualised. *The individualisation of consciousness may in a sense be said to be the effect of the vortex of desires*. The soul gets enmeshed in the desires and cannot step out of the circumscribed individuality constituted by these desires. It imagines these barriers and becomes *self-hypnotised* (MB, *Discourses*). ‘Eyes wide shut’ also applies to the socio-political sleep of the masses, as signaled in the title of Stanley Kubrick’s secret-society film *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). There the phrase alludes both to the internal principle of cultic secrecy, which operates by enforcing conscious blindness to its own misdoings, and to the opiated slumber of hoodwinked masses. As Ziegler tells Harford in the film, “If I told you their names, I don’t think you’d sleep so well.” These two levels of waking sleep are *not separate*. Each operates through the other. The tyrant is one’s own inner usurping self-possession, your routine hostile take-over by forces that do not have your best interests in mind because you do not care for you own real self: “You care only for what happens to your sleepwalking personality, as when you force a smile to try to appear pleasant before others. It is this slumbering self that makes you feel so bad. See the tragedy of abandoning your own life. Start true self-caring by not caring for your dangerous sleep-walking self that cares nothing for you” (VH). So society at large is ruled by



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its own soporific mixture of material convenience and misuse of available means of spiritual liberation: "But look at the unfathomable spinelessness

of man: all the means he's been given to stay alter he uses, in the end, to ornament his sleep. We wear a hair shirt the way we would wear a monocle, we chant matins the way other people play golf. Ah, if only today's scientists, instead of endlessly inventing new ways to make life easier, would put their ingenuity into fabricating instruments to jog man out of his torpor! There are plenty of machine guns, but . . ." (René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*). The opening of Sleep's "Holy Mountain" slices through the death of sleep with the double-edged phrase "Slumber killed," which at once heralds the murder of slumber via spiritual awakening and expresses the paradox of spiritual awakening as itself a mode of slumber, a higher falling asleep in which one falls asleep to the dreamy self-world correlation and the sleep of false consciousness is finally *put to sleep* by the universal (s)word.

*OLD EARTH'S SACRED CONSPIRACY*: The secret sacredness of Earth here evoked concerns its being the hidden, spiritual center of the universe. Earth is not only one of many evolving planets in the cosmos, but *the* planet where one is initiated into the inward *involutionary* path of existential adventure, where the "Dreamer wakens to spectral gaze of light rays shining" and is up-beamed by the anagogic "Sunbound spacepod rising faster" (Sleep, "Holy Mountain"). "Thus it is that throughout the myriads of universes, there are planets on which the seven kingdoms of evolution are manifested, and the evolution of consciousness and forms is completed. But only on the planet Earth do human beings reincarnate and begin the involutionary Path to Self-realisation. Earth is the centre of this infinite Gross sphere of millions of

universes, inasmuch as it is the point to which all human-conscious souls must migrate in order to begin the involutory Path” (MB, *Everything and the Nothing*). This is Earth’s secret, the individual evolutionary meaning of the ‘journey to the center of the Earth’, a secret sensed by many but known only to those who *tear the veil of thrownness* and perceive the absolute individual Force which brings you here in the first place: “If one can allow one’s mind to dwell on a bold hypothesis—which could also be an act of faith in a higher sense—once the idea of *Geworfenheit* [thrownness] is rejected, once it is conceived that living here and now in this world has a sense, because it is always the effect of a choice and a will, one might even believe that one’s own realization of the possibilities I have indicated—far more concealed and less imaginable in other situations that might be more desirable from the merely human point of view, from the point of view of the ‘person’—is the ultimate rationale and significance of a choice made by a ‘being’ that wanted to measure itself against a difficult challenge: that of living in a world contrary to that consistent with nature, that is, contrary to the world of Tradition” (Julius Evola, *Ride the Tiger*).

*THE DOOMED MASSES*: The pun reinforces the *apocalyptic* vibe of doom metal in light of its cosmist trajectory: “Rocket engines burning fuel so fast / Up into the night sky they blast / Through the universe the engines whine / Could it be the end of man and time? / Back on earth the flame of life burns low/ Everywhere is misery and woe / Pollution kills the air, the land, the sea / Man prepares to meet his destiny / Rocket engines burning fuel so fast / Up into the black sky so vast / Burning metal through the atmosphere / Earth remains in worry, hate and fear / With the hateful battles raging on / Rockets flying to the glowing

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sun / Through the empires of eternal void / Freedom  
from the final suicide” (Black Sabbath, “Into the  
Void,” *Master of Reality*).

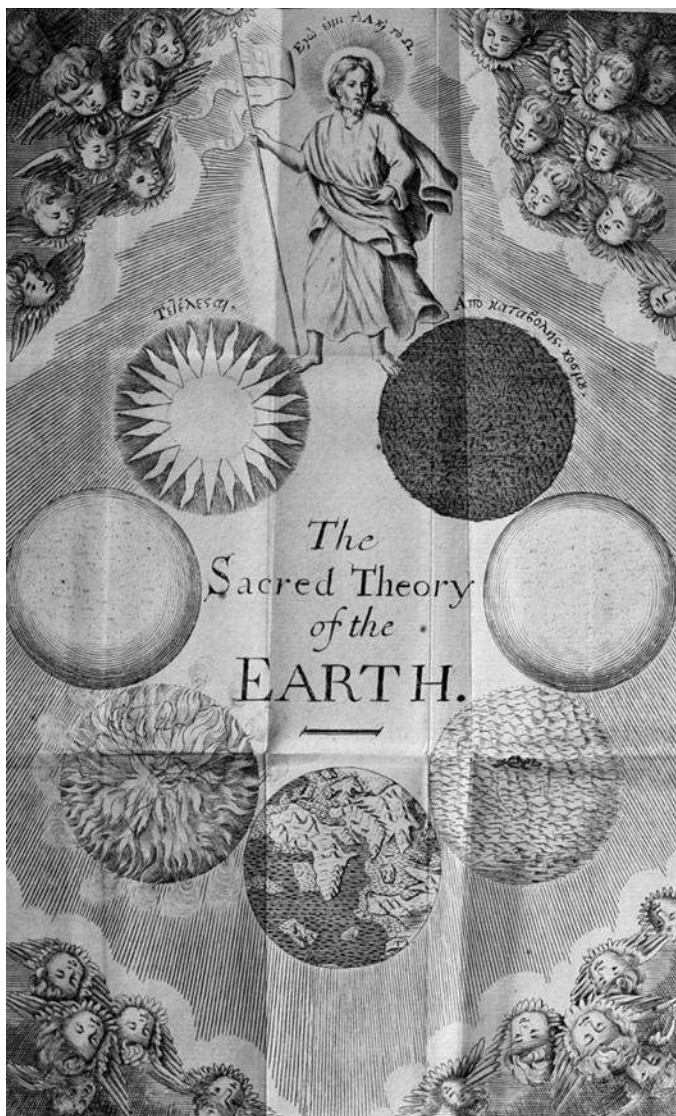
*PROBING THE MOUNTAIN-PLANET WITHOUT TRUE THEORY:*  
The theory in question here is the intellectual vision  
of Earth as mountain, as a vertically scalable site upon  
which one may ascend to ultra-mundane heights or  
sink to infernal depths. Metaphysically, Earth as  
mountain is proportional to the traditional concept of  
spatio-temporal existence as a way or bridge or middle  
(*middan-geard*, ‘middle-earth’) between non-Being  
and Being (or between being and its beyond), hell and  
heaven, such that existence on Earth is by definition  
not a dwelling but a *task* of passing through, as per  
Dante’s vision, which passes through the Earth,  
ascends a mountain, and is beamed up to God. To lack  
the theory of Earth as such a site of passage, to mistake  
your being here for home, is dumbly to *not get*, to  
simply be stupid toward the traditional warning born  
from millennia of experience, “surely it is the height  
of folly for you to linger on this bridge” (Hakim Sinai,  
*The Walled Garden of Truth*), i.e. to think that  
paradise (lit. walled garden, from Old Persian *pairi*  
‘around’ and *daeza* or *diz* ‘wall, brick, or shape’) is  
somehow *not* a walled garden, that you do not have to  
*climb* to get to it. So the traditional concept of the  
mountain is essentially paradisaical, as repeated in  
Dante’s Edenic summit, the medieval Prester John  
myth—“And a three journeys long from that sea be  
great mountains, out of the which goeth out a great  
flood that cometh out of Paradise” (*Mandeville’s*  
*Travels*)—and the modern idea of ‘Shangri-La’.  
Paradise—“today you will be with me in paradise”  
(23:43)—is precisely not something anyone ever has  
coming to them, but a mystical or hidden now reached  
only by self-crucifying ascent in the present of *today*—

a fundamental concept repeated in modern climbers' use of the word *crux* to denote the hardest technical moment of a climb, the movement one typically, with paradoxical clarity and confusion, knows precisely how and not how one did it. Mountain is the foundation and site of paradise, the originary *wall* of the perfect world: "the Sanskrit word *paradesha* means 'elevated site,' or 'high region,' and therefore, in a specific material sense, mountain peak. But *paradesha* may be etymologically associated with the Chaldean word *pardes*; hence the term *paradise*, which has been turned into a dogmatic theological concept by the later Judeo-Christian faith. In the primordial Aryan idea of paradise, we find an intimate association with the concept of heights, of mountain peaks; this association . . . is formulated in a clear manner in the Doric-Achaean notion of Olympus" (Julius Evola, *Meditations on the Peaks*). In light of this imperative to recognize Earth as mountain—a topos-event which perforce includes your being on it—the cover image of *Sleep's Holy Mountain* takes on special meaning vis-à-vis its psychedelic echoing of the iconic 'blue marble' image of Earth, an image which, perverting the first (now passé new-age) intuition and reception of the image as index of the immediate universal unicity of life and being, now governs the governing global-progressive idea of earth as preciously fragile ground of eco-gravitational nostalgia (cf. the 2013 film *Gravity*). There is nothing essentially novel, representationally, about the blue-marble image, insofar as earth has been poetically and scientifically imaged for centuries from above. What is novel about it is its technic fact, that it is a photograph and thus a record of ultra-mundane physical human presence and an instance of the techno-materialist-Romantic 'heroism of vision' in line with the high-altitude summit photography of the 1860s (e.g. Charles

Soulier's "Sommet du mont Blanc"). In and among the many senses floating on its surface, the perilous seduction of the blue-marble image lies both in its ideological/rhetorical displacement of the tradition of representation to which it belongs and the coincident alienation of human vision from the immanent power of the imagination. Paradoxically, the image shows the ultra-mundane gaze as inaccessible to individual consciousness, as instead only generically available to a techno-scientific human *we*, a *we* of cosmo-eccentric as opposed to cosmo-centric subjects. Saying in effect that *we* occupy the summit and *you* do not, the image reinforces the separation of summit and center so centerlessly central to the modern world and flattens further the imperative for individual ascent into the curvatures of earthly concern and anxious anthropocentric responsibility, as indexed by the contemporary eco-ideologization of climbing sport as form of earthly care or stewardship—as if the human will for ascent and psycho-physical self-overcoming were in need of socio-political justification! Replacing Earth-as-mountain with Earth-as-globe, the blue marble icon forgets the telic *alpine* unity of activity and contemplation: "because of the correspondence of 'center' with 'summit,' there is an analogous interpretation of mountain climbing; the radiating powers of the soul are so many paths converging to the mountain top (*ad eminentiam mentis*, in the words of St. Bonaventura, who likewise assimilates *mons* to *mens*), by which paths the Comprehensor can reach their source . . . climbing the 'slope' (*ucchrayam* . . .) that corresponds to the Platonic and Hermetic *anodos*. Of all the ways that lead to the summit of the mountain, those of the active life are on its outwards slopes, and that of the contemplative is an inward and vertical ascent, while the point at which they meet is one and the same" (A. K. Coomaraswamy,



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As if countering this erasure of the alpine from our iconic global ‘selfie’, the cover of *Sleep’s Holy Mountain* reprojects the blue-marble gaze back towards its pre-modern framing, as seen in the above examples of Athanasius Kircher’s drawing of the interior of the Earth and the frontispiece to Thomas Burnet’s *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* which, diagrammatically harmonizing the theory of geologic history within a Christianized Neoplatonic schema of creation as a sacred seven-fold procession of emanation and return, places the present form of the planet as one stage of the cosmically descending and ascending Earth, that which, being literally antipodal to the Creator, marks the conversational space of turning return to God, or, earth as cosmic center of initiation into the involutory journey to divine Selfhood. For Burnet, mountains were the key to understanding the spiritual-hierarchic meaning of Earth. As mis-creations of the Deluge defining a phase between the destruction of the planet by water and its future refashioning by fire, mountains here mark the present historical Earth-age as both at the furthest remove from the divine origin and centripetally bound to return to it. Sleep’s psychedelic refiguring of planet Earth as a Holy Mountain named Sleep reinvents this order of telluric sacred theory. The planetary form on the cover stylistically evokes both a comic literalization of Earth as a blue-orange marble—a literalization with its own paradisaical mystic meaning as per Julian of Norwich’s homely vision of all creation as a little thing “the size of a hazelnut” and Dante’s vision of earth as *aiuola* (small area of ground, flowerbed)—and our Earth as nadir-intermezzo, a blue-orange aqua-magmic mess always somewhere between flood and fire, a geo-liquid blob caught in the circus of the angelic and demonic forces represented in the upper-left and lower-right quadrants, respectively. Indeed the seven leaves emanating



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from earth may be correlated to Burnet's seven spheres with the 8<sup>th</sup> eternal stage now taking the lower position of the solar form at bottom-center. *Sleep's* globe may thus be seen as a single 7-in-1 image of the whole sacred process of Earth-as-mountain, a hierarchical place of spiritual descent and ascent. Ultimately, this mystical Earth, uncannily coincident with the material planet we now happen to inhabit, is the inner abyss which is crossed in sleep itself, namely, "that invisible mystical earth and dark intelligible abyss" [*mystica illa terra invisibilis ipsaque tenebrosa abyssus intellectualis*], i.e. the domain of the primordial causes of all visible things which "perceived by no intellect except that which formed it in the beginning" (Eriugena, *Periphyseon*). But this creative intellect is nothing but one's own absolute self. WHY DO YOU NOW HESITATE TO STOP THINKING—WHY DO YOU INSIST—THAT THERE IS SOMETHING OTHER THAN YOU WHO CREATED THE UNIVERSE? The invisible mystical earth and dark intelligible abyss is what you cross all the time, what you fall asleep and wake up through every day and night, that by which everyone, unknowingly playing God way more than they know, create, preserve, and destroy the whole world: "when man wakes up every day, then what is it that unfailingly creates for him his universe and all the things that are of it and in it? . . . God in the man state as man, consistently asserts Himself as the Creator of His own Creation through the dormant impressions of man; as the Preserver of His own Creation through man's leading the everyday life in the awake state, procreating the impressions of creation; and as the Destroyer of His own Creation through the opposite impressions of man when he falls asleep and ultimately passes away in the sound sleep state. Every day, finally destroying the very creation as individualized by his consciousness, man once again creates,

preserves and destroys the whole creation through the play of impressions. Even through the very being of everything and of every creature, God consistently asserts His infinite triune attributes as the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer (MB, *God Speaks*).

*SLEEP WANTS TO WAKE LIFE:* Sleep expresses need to fall asleep to waking life and wake up into God: “There is a profound and very real relationship between God-realization and sound sleep. The eternal desire of the soul is to become one with God, but because consciousness attaches itself to the gross, the soul seems to become one merely with the gross. In the stone state, for instance, gross consciousness makes the soul identify itself with the stone although, in reality, the soul is all the time one with God. To make this clearer, let us suppose that you take opium or an intoxicating drink. You feel elated or depressed, although there is no radical change in your body, and it is only the consciousness that is affected and gives rise to your feelings. Thus you, as an individual soul, are twenty-four hours within and one-with God, although you feel merely gross-conscious. Again, let us suppose that you feel tired and fed up and that you go to sleep. What is it that you are trying to do? It is nothing but to try to take refuge in God—your natural and inherent state. The whole Creation therefore has this conscious or unconscious tendency to take shelter in God the Over-Soul by entering the state of sound sleep for a time” (MB, *God Speaks*). Sleep is unconscious God-realization: “Every time you go to sleep you are unconsciously united with the Infinite Reality. This unification involves the extension of unconsciousness over consciousness. It thus bridges over the chasm between the unconscious and the conscious. But being unconscious of this union, you do not consciously derive any benefit from it. This is the reason why,

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when you wake up again from deep sleep, you become aware of the self-same hum-drum individual, and you begin to act and experience exactly as you acted and experienced before going to sleep. If your union with the Supreme Reality had been a conscious union, you would have awakened into a completely new and infinitely rich life" (MB, *Discourses*). God-realization is perfect sleep, as intimated in the quietist asceticism of the Hesychasts of the Mt. Athos (see Eugene T. Cosmas, "Falling Asleep on the Holy Mountain"): "When the individual mind is dissolved, the whole universe which is relative to the mind vanishes into nothingness, and consciousness is no longer tied to anything. Consciousness is now unlimited and unclouded by anything and serves the purpose of illumining the state of the Infinite Reality. While immersed in the bliss of realisation the soul is completely oblivious of sights or sounds or objects in the universe. In this respect it is *like sound sleep*, but there are many important points of difference which distinguish God-realisation from sound sleep. During sleep the illusion of the universe vanishes, since all consciousness is in abeyance, but there is no conscious experience of God, since this requires the complete dissolution of the ego and the turning of full consciousness towards the Ultimate Reality. Occasionally, when the continuity of deep sleep is interrupted by brief intervals, the soul may have the experience of retaining consciousness without being conscious of anything in particular. There is consciousness; but this consciousness is not of the universe. It is consciousness of *nothing*. Such experiences anticipate God-realisation in which consciousness is completely freed from the illusion of the universe and manifests the infinite knowledge which was hitherto hidden by the ego" (MB, *Discourses*). Sleeping man and sleeping God are literally the same: "This sound sleep state of man is literally the same

original divine sound sleep state of God. God in the God-Is state is eternally in the original divine sound sleep state, whereas God in the human state daily experiences alternately the sound sleep state and the awake state” (MB, *God Speaks*). “I sleep, but my heart is awake” (Song of Songs 5:2).

*ALPINE MONOLITH EMITS, DRONING PRIMAL LACK / OF FIRST SILENCE, CALLING WITH QUANTUM OM:* Like a thundering vibrating facture of the original word (OM), doom-drone metal (⊕M) takes place within the massing and amounting of deep geo-cosmic sound into primal *negative silences* that point back to the infinitely deafening orders of Silence which simply and superessentially ARE before the beginning and after the end of all things, earlier than the original noise of the ‘big bang’ and older than the perfect quiet after the cosmic death. Doom and drone are connected as mountain and earth, being more or less sculpted, more or less prominent forms of the same stony sonic substance. ⊕M is sonic mapping of the universal *mountain of silence*. See Owen Coggins, “Mountains of Silence: Drone Metal Recordings as Mystical Texts.” The geo-cosmic sonicity of ⊕M—as named in the constellation of Sleep, Earth, Sunn O))), Om, and (early) High on Fire—occurs at the triune mystical thresholds of abyss-earth-heavens and human-sound-mountain. It is the heavy musical shore, the grave sonic field of Mount Analogue: “For a mountain to play the role of Mount Analogue . . . *its summit must be inaccessible, but its base accessible* to human beings as nature has made them. It must be *unique* and it must *exist geographically*. The gateway to the invisible must be visible” (René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*). ⊕M partakes apocalyptically-pacificaly in the *il-y-a* or there-is order of sound calling towards restoration of world to ancient-futuristic primalness: “Earth drenched in

black under starless sky above / Man on the mountain sets free the holy dove" (Sleep, "Holy Mountain"). ⊕M's mountain of silence is a mystical holy mountain whose western archaeology moves back into Christian monasticism and desert/wilderness spirituality refracted through modern post-Romantic nature mysticism's literalizations and cultural artifactualizations (hippe/sci-fi/fantasy) or *stoning* of the ancient principles, which is why the monolith, as hyper-artifactual man-made mountain, is ⊕M's de facto emblem. ⊕M aims to be at once inhuman discourse and natural text, the sound of the words written by no one on the mountain of silence: ". . . a place, Mount Carmel, a physical and mythical presence to which the entire Western and Eastern monastic tradition was related since its origin, a fortiori the Carmelites born on its slopes in the thirteenth century; and also a long line of Jewish contemplatives. Earlier, in the ninth century *B.C.*, that mountain received Elijah into its silence, or protected him after he had cut the throats of the enemies of Yahweh with his sword, and then it drew him out of his cave 'by the noise of a light breeze.' In the Vulgate, a 'whistling' of the breeze [*sibilus*] is the song of the mountain by which the Voice speaks to the wild prophet. In the sixteenth century, the same sound again seized the host who had withdrawn into the (Teresian) 'castle' (that mountain of crystal) a 'whistling' [*silbo*] so soft that one could scarcely hear it' and yet so 'penetrating' that 'the soul cannot not hear it.' It was the spirit of the place. John of the Cross also unfurled upon Mount Carmel the 'ascent' of his discourse and he has drawn the map of this Dantean heaven in the form of a fantastic body, the lungs of which chant (like biblical verses) 'neither this nor that' [*ni eso, ni eso, ni estro, ni estro*'], a body divided by the central ravine [⊕M] in which the 'na-da' ('nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing') is repeated,

its base covered with a vegetation of writings that become more rarefied as they go up. The site becomes the mute hero of the story. The foundation of mystic science is indeed that mountain of silence” (Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*). Cf. “The Great Silence is something outside of yet including all nature sounds, which all nature feels and vainly strives to understand and express. On the high mountain tops and in the vast stretches of desert and plain, one seems to touch something that is more than silence; for silence, dead and ominous, broods over the ‘bad lands’ and brings no inspiration. But in the mountains one seems to feel the brooding of the creative Breath of Divinity, and in awe asks, Is this the Temple of Silence, and can we enter it? The mountains rear their heads in mighty grandeur or in fantastic ridges, as if bathing themselves in the mystic Silence, yet are dumb before that awful calm which seems like a living presence embracing all” (*The Temple of Silence*). The cosmically ancient silence is the (un)earthly mountain out of which  $\text{\textcircled{M}}$ , in deadening stupefaction and assassinating wonder (assassin, from Arabic *hashishiyyin* ‘hashish-users,’ a fanatical Ismaili Muslim sect of the time of the Crusades, under leadership of the ‘Old Man of the Mountains’), cuts its heavy *stone*, quarrying a sound that carries life towards new forms of living petrification or conscious sleep loud enough to ‘wake the stones’ in cosmic dawn: “Look onto the rays of the new stoner sun rising / Sonic Titan rides out on clouds of new horizon” (Sleep, “Holy Mountain”). This new horizontal sun is simply the psychic quantum alba in which the universal dimensions of sphericity are unveiled, the bright dawning of the *light globes*: “Suppose: A (Infinite) has its opposite term E (Finite); B (Light) has its opposite term F (Shadow); C (Yes) has its opposite term G (No); D (One) has its opposite term H (Innumerable). Now taking  $B \times D = \text{One}$

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Light, we get  $F \times H =$  innumerable shadows. As the opposites are always the outcome of the originals, it is clear as daylight that innumerable shadows are the outcome of One Light = God. The shadows are innumerable, countless, and numberless. Let us first consider the light-globes with millions of light-points in each. The light-globes are innumerable and their existence is not a matter for idle speculation. Some of them are actually seen by one who, entering upon Path, reaches the first cosmic plane. What scientists with their powerful telescopes worth thousands of dollars are unable to see, the spiritual aspirant, though advanced as far as only the first plane beholds with his spiritual sight, without the help of any earthly instrument" (MB, *Meher Message*). For "the stone is God, but it does not know it, and it is the not knowing that makes it stone" (Meister Eckhart). The evident corollary to this is that stoners are humans who, stirring with unsilenceable sense that their life is also lithically asleep, *neither want to wake up nor not wake up*, and so losing themselves in a strange assassination of the difference between the two senses of "slumber killed," feel preferably more or less alive being stoned: "Can't find a key to the sleepy silver door / I'm washed up on the shore of reality" (Dead Meadow, "Sleepy Silver Door," *Deadmeadow*). As the first evolutionary leap of consciousness is *from stone to metal* (the others being: metal to vegetable, vegetable to worm, worm to fish, fish to bird, bird to animal, animal to human being), a passage between the two kingdoms in which "life and energy are *dormant*" (MB), so is  $\ominus M$  a regressive, metal-to-stone movement of heavy metal that sonically drowns consciousness toward origin, because stone is "the shore of dreaming" [*l'orée du songe*] (Roger Caillois).

#### IV. OCCULT ROCK



Aluk Todolo, "Occult Rock VIII," *Occult Rock* (Ajna Offensive, 2012).

△

Shrouding ancient ways in obscenely solid mists,  
Our primitive lie overflies both poles. No gold  
Is found in these wastes, nor truth among growing lists  
Of things left, ruins of vertical days of old.

Fight centrifugal forces with cold inversion!  
Love in nigredo, the blackening of all ways!  
Live the perverse transcendence of all perversion!  
Remembering everything's nothingness today.



#### IV. OCCULT ROCK

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*SHROUDING ANCIENT WAYS*: The band takes its name from *Aluk To Dolo* ('Ways of the Ancestors'), the megalithic and animist religion of the Toraja (lit. 'people of the highlands'), an indigenous ethnic group from the mountainous region of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, which is a geologically complex subequatorial region defined by "the convergence between three lithospheric plates: the northward-moving Australian plate, the westward-moving Pacific plate, and the south-southeast-moving Eurasia plate" (*The Geology of Indonesia*). One expects the cover image to be of a mountain from this region, but its identity is not readily recognizable, accentuating the 'occult rock' concept. The peak appears to be part of a volcano, like the strange formations found upon Ol Doinyo Lengai, "Mountain of God," in Tanzania, which is also just south of the equator. The conjunction of vapor and rock, in which the elements of earth and water mingle in the air through fiery reformation, is analogous to the mythical origins of Toraja rulers in the union of sky men and water women: "In Tana Toraja, the idea of the *to manurun*, mythical beings who descended from the heavens on mountain tops and became local rulers, may have been borrowed from the Bugis . . . Toraja *to manurun* are always paired with an equally supernatural spouse, a woman who rose out of a river pool" (Roxana Waterson, "The Contested Landscapes of Myth and History in Tana Toraja"). Proportionally, Toraja entomb their dead at height, returning them to stony vertical dimensions in rituals involving the slaughter of river buffalo. Investing in this mythic imaginary in an intentionally obscure occult-primitivist way, Aluk Todolo found their music in the form an infective psychoactive force capable of elemental reconfigurations along the continuum of energy (vibration) and matter: "Consisting of eight hypnotic tracks of timeless and unclassifiable instrumental mu-

sic, this quintessential double album summarizes and transcends all preceding aspects of the band's discography and offers new insight into the fundamental principles and formulas of Aluk Todolo, permeating through other forms and resulting in an ultimateentheogenic ceremony. The production takes the side of fidelity in the transcription of the power trio's live energy and osmosis, revealing the individuality and roughness of each instrument, and emphasizing the inter-penetration of all the components of an organic and tetanizing trance ritual. This opus recounts the



alchemical transformation of the primordial vibration into matter, through all its elemental phases, leading to the sonic manifestation of the forces of the universe into the octagonal prism of Occult Rock” (*Norma Evangelium Diaboli*). Far from expressing either fidelity or ethnographic interest in *Aluk To Dolo*, Aluk Todolo, as per the upside down lettering of the cover, represent a profanation and inversion of the ‘Ways of the Ancestors,’ yet one whose embrace of non-clarity and overt *imprecision*, contrary to classic Black Metal’s satanic inversions of traditional Christianity, does

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not blacken but rather *blurs* tradition into new greys. Paradoxically, Aluk Todolo attempt a truly *messed-up* neo-primitivist stoner metal that claims forward stone-to-metal evolutionary and visionary unveiling of “the forces of the universe” in dark mi(d)st of *rock*. The obviously late European impulse is towards a primitivization of metal that alchemically purifies—not objectively but in the psycho-visionary space of its own confusion—metal’s becoming from rock of genealogical binding to African-American tradition. If the cover image does indeed show an African rather than an Indonesian volcano, this would further demonstrate this impulse. Aluk Todolo stand for, or state themselves as, a total blurry or self-shrouding immanentization of ancient ways that can only be followed by *not* following them. Thus, asked to comment on an accusation of abusing *Aluk To Dolo* tradition, the drummer responds, “I don’t remember that one, but I agree, ‘abusing the tradition’, that’s exactly what we do” (“Channeling the Internal Divine,” *Avantgarde Metal*). Whereas the Toraja triennially venerate and care for ancestors by redressing and processing their corpses in vertical living posture, Aluk Todolo subject ancestry itself to ritual abuse, transposing the cold Black Metal of the Occidental-Hyperborean alp into the steamy equatorial volcano of Occult Rock. Occult Rock is a mountain of metal prediscursivity, the site of a musical mass wherein a metalhead stays without affirming any fidelity of identity, where he may say, ‘I know where I am, if no one asks me.’ Hence the manner in which the question of metal identity is answered: “Aren’t you afraid that people will think you’re fuckin’ hippies with Aluk Todolo? AH: Not really no, and we don’t care. If someone thinks that well I think the album shall clear up everything. And I see no difference between a hippie and a Black Metal head by the way. They both have long hair and drink

booze and smoke pot the same way” (*Cooking with Satan*). Note how this answer is at once, indifferentially, both very true and totally stupid, a mist that clears up everything. Such is the playful logic of profanation, which both neutralizes what it profanes and returns it to free practice, “open[ing] the possibility of a special form of negligence, which ignores separation [of men and gods] or, rather puts it to a particular use” (Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*). As the mountain stands inviolable within the mists that occlude it, so the integrity and truth of the ancient ways, their still, polar center, is not only something that survives all inversions and transposition, but something that freely permits and authorizes its own significant (ab)use, giving to coming generations their task: “the profanation of the unprofanable.”

*OBSCENELY SOLID MISTS*: The ways of the ancients are today veiled in vapors so thick as to seem solid, tangible, material. Everywhere the wisdom of the ages is subject to gross interpretation, to forms and kinds of understanding that are fat, overgrown, full of themselves. The simplicity of truth is denied in favor of convoluted twists and knotting of its subtle golden thread, convolutions that temporarily provide illusory sensations of being in contact with truth’s solidity, transporting self-images of being up on the mountain. Mist and mountain, the impermanent and permanent, are hermeneutically confused in the vulcanism of intellectual activity, in thought that thinks itself as already within the mountain, or as the mountain itself, but which actually stays comfortably far way, thinking *about* the mountain but not *upon* it, gesturing *towards* it but not *according* to it, forgetting of the spiritual necessity of entering the image: “If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative

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Thought if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know then he would arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy. General Knowledge is Remote Knowledge it is in Particulars that Wisdom consists & Happiness too” (William Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgment*). Cf. “I would not speak of the mountain but *through* the mountain” (René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*). Appropriately, the etymology of *obscene* is itself notoriously unclear, misty, so that the verbal concept harmonizes with the very quality of obscenity as a phenomenon wherein a noxious fume of self-righteous thought, in the general sense of any thought that is blind to the fundamental distinction between truth itself and the thinking of it, grounds its illusion of truth and rectitude by means of fixation upon an external object, an object which is thus rendered grossly material by the fixing itself. In this sense the originary scene of obscenity is seeing and judging another’s sin: “For the contemplation of other men’s sins makes as it were a *thick mist* before the soul’s eye” (Julian of Norwich, *Showings*).

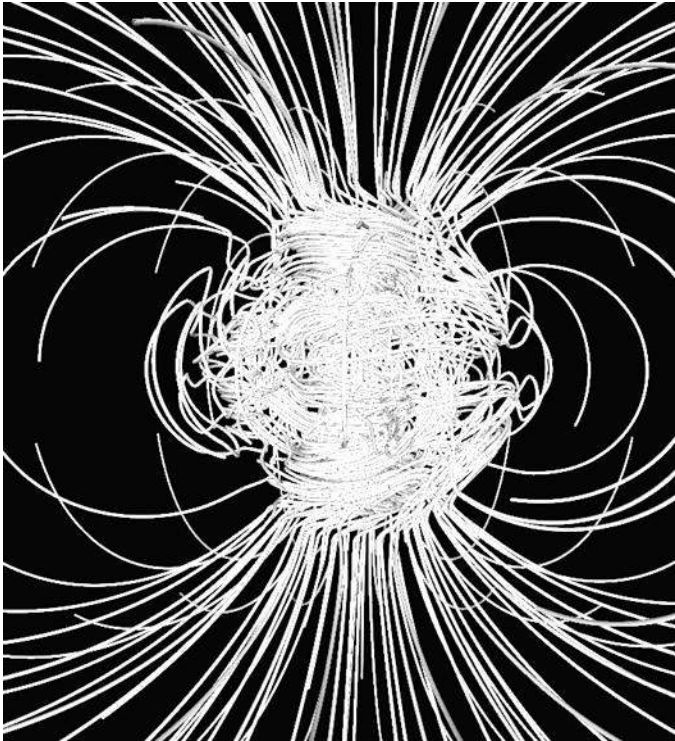
*OUR PRIMITIVE LIE OVERFLIES BOTH POLES*: Global aerial flight over the poles signifies departure from the cosmo-planetary hierarchy and disregard for the polar principle of metaphysical stability, as figured in the world-mountain of Meru/Sumeru, the Sufi concept of the perfect human or Man-God as *Qutub* (axis, pivot), and the Vedic formulation of regal being: “Remain steady and unwavering . . . Do not give in. Be strong like a mountain. Stay still like the sky and the earth and retain control of power at all times. The sky, the earth and the mountains are unmoved as unmoved is the world of living beings and this king of men” (*Rg*

*Veda* 10.173, cited from Julius Evola, "Polar Symbolism," *Revolt Against the Modern World*). 'Our primitive lie' signifies both the uncivilized nature of present civilization and the primal lie of temporal finite identity into which human nature is supposedly born, birthed heedless of the "Truth [which] consists in the knowledge that man, instead of being a limited, separate individual, completely bound by the illusion of time and space and substance, is eternal in his nature and infinite in his resources" (MB, *Messages to the West*). The wayward flight of present civilization, flying everywhere in endless fleeing from itself, is fueled by this primal lie, such that socio-economic orders are outrageously predicated on the illusion of separate, limited identity—the gobbet which each bite of consumerism swallows whole. The world *runs*, on the left and on the right, upon this lie, such that the imperative to convincingly perform the lie to oneself and others—above all via fear, worry and all the familiar sad hypocrisies of concern about the world—appears nigh inescapable. "Due to worry, this universe came into being. And now man is unable to realise his own real self due to engaging his mind in worry" (MB). Little do you know that there is absolutely nothing to fear—"This whole universe, with all its vastness, grandeur and beauty, is nothing but sheer imagination"—that fear is not only entirely in you, but *is* you, so that real strength, the very power of the invisible cosmic poles, eternally flows to the one who lets the dead bury the dead and leaves self behind: "Black Metal knows that, somehow, magically, the less of YOURSELF you put into it, the stronger it is. The playing is FOR THE SONG. Not FOR THE SELF" ("Show No Mercy," *Pitchfork*). Such a one becomes beyond Man and God: "It is a certain and necessary truth that he who resigns his will wholly to God will catch God and bind God, so that God can do nothing

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but what that man wills” (M. E.). That the lie ‘overflies’ the poles signifies a futile form of movement that both overreaches and completely mistakes its proper end, that both flies too high and has no idea where it is going, the self-congratulatory movement of they who fail to feel the terrible verticality and refuse to open life to the absolute inner hierarchy of the acosmic infinity. As the planet’s magnetic field lines flow from the spherical ‘head’ of Earth like hair and beard, so the innumerable universes flow out of the mystical head of man: “There are innumerable universes, which are interlaced with one another. One universe creates another in a chain reaction. These universes are so numerous that even Sadgurus cannot count



them . . . It is astonishing that, though the chains of these universes come out of the Sadguru and then merge back into him, they are still uncountable through his physical eyes . . . These universes come out of the Sadguru, and merge back into him after aeons. This is called Mahapralaya . . . Each individual human being is a universe unto himself . . . So first try to get hold of the head, because out of it comes everything. (Baba drew a man's head and hair.) The barber's work is to shave the head. And who is the barber in this case? Mahapralaya. For when it occurs, all the hairs—universes—on God's head are shaved off. It is said that the universes pour out of the Godhead. They are like God's hair. Your head may symbolise God, and your hair the universes" (MB). See "Invisible portals let sun's wind blow through Earth's hair," *Astro Bob*.

*NO GOLD / IS FOUND IN THESE WASTES*: 'Wastes' signifies both the ruining conditions of civilization and the vastness of destructive expenditure which misspends the natural excess and surpluses of life along self-serving luxurious circuits which aggravate rather than lighten the burdens of man, that increase labor rather than intensify joy. "Woe to those who, to the very end, insist on regulating the movement that exceeds them with the narrow mind of the mechanic who changes a tire" (Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*). Nor are the intellectuals exempt from this joyless wasting: "Gloom and solemnity are entirely out of place in even the most rigorous study of an art originally intended to make glad the heart of man" (Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading*). The missing 'gold' signifies the misrelation between mountain and man, unconscious and conscious, God and the individual: "There is a mountain of gold. Unless you excavate it, take out the gold, use it and sell it, you cannot get money for it. You



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without gold are helpless, and gold without you is of no use. You dig it out, sell it, and with it you get what you want. So used gold is conscious – unused, unconscious. Now the flaw is that gold is a metal and you, however, are human. The mountain is gold (God) and you are gold (God) – the one and the same God in all” (MB). What makes a person settle for so little, sell himself so short? What makes man think the metal must be *mine*? Bang your head till it bleeds! Seek revelation, not comfort. Nothing can hurt you. Become what you are, metalhead! As Aluk Todolo is ordered towards elemental, alchemical self-transformation, so the inversion of the letters on the album cover reveals the hidden source of gold: \*\*\*\* \*\*D’ORO (for obvious reasons, the meaning of the other letters must remain undisclosed).

*VERTICAL DAYS OF OLD*: As displayed in the traditional architecture of the Toraja: “The *tongkonan* is traditionally seen as the navel of the universe and a miniature cosmos . . . it is the meeting place of the north-south and east-west axes. It faces north, to the ‘head of the sky’ . . . The *tongkonan* is vertically divided into three levels: the attic where the regalia and family heirlooms are kept; the living area; and the space under the floor where domesticated animals are kept. These compare with the upper world, the middle world, and the under world” (“Tongkonan,” *Wikipedia*). Such old-fashioned coordination of the ways of life communicates and mediates spiritual access to the invisible worlds which are vertically above the material/gross plane which everywhere dominates modern man’s imagination: “The worst type of materialism . . . is not a matter of an opinion or of a ‘theory,’ but consists in the fact that man’s *experience* no longer extends to nonphysical realities. Thus, the majority of the intellectual revolts against ‘materialistic’ views are



only vain reactions against the latest peripheral effects stemming from remote and deeper causes . . . The experience of traditional man used to reach well beyond these limits, as in the case of some so-called primitive people, among who we still find today a faint echo of spiritual powers from ancient times. In traditional societies the ‘invisible’ was an element as real, if not *more* real, than the data provided by the physical senses. Every aspect of the individual and of the social life of the people belonging to these societies was influenced by this experience” (Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*). Correlatively, the marked *unrest* of the materialistic world, the radical inability of modern man to *sit* in his cosmic hut (*tongkonan*, from *tongkon*, to sit), demonstrates the immanence of the invisible realms: “The condition of the world, the strife and uncertainty that is everywhere, the general dissatisfaction with and rebellion against any and every situation shows that the ideal of material perfection is an empty dream and proves the existence of an eternal Reality beyond materiality” (MB, *The Everything and the Nothing*). As the ship-like roof of the Toraja home mirrors the horns of the buffalo which

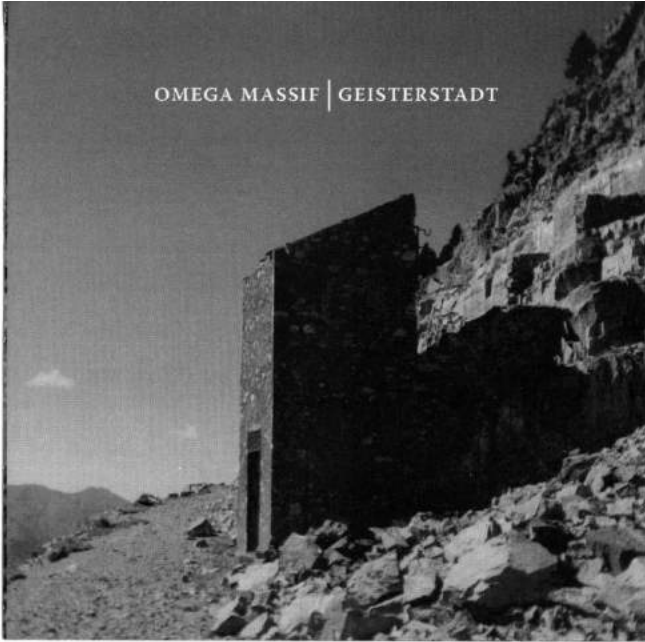
decorate it, pointing with inverted earthly curvature to the planetary poles, so the raised horns of the metal-head newly reaffirm the anciently vertical, meta-visible, and mountainous stature of reality.

*FIGHT . . . LOVE . . . LIVE:* The second stanza calls the reader forward to a braver, spiritually war-like way of being. Cf. "I have known many gods. He who denies them is as blind as he who trusts them too deeply. I seek not beyond death. It may be the blackness averred by the Nemedian skeptics, or Crom's realm of ice and cloud, or the snowy plains and vaulted halls of the Nordheimer's Valhalla. I know not, nor do I care. Let me live deep while I live; let me know the rich juices of red meat and stinging wine on my palate, the hot embrace of white arms, the mad exultation of battle when the blue blades flame and crimson, and I am content. Let teachers and priests and philosophers brood over questions of reality and illusion. I know this: if life is illusion, then I am no less an illusion, and being thus, the illusion is real to me. I live, I burn with life, I love, I slay, and am content" (Conan the Barbarian). That the lines take the imperative form of command means that they are, in the firmness of 'barbarian' stance, directed primarily to the *will* rather than to the intellect, for it is the will that *wields* understanding: "The intellect, as the will's mere tool, is as different from it as the hammer from the smith. So long, in a conversation, as the intellect alone is active, it remains *cold*. It is almost as if the person himself were not involved . . . Only when the will comes into play is the person actually involved: now he becomes *warm*" (Arthur Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Presentation*). So 'cold inversion' here signifies not intellectualization, but the profaning transposition of false warmth—the trans-valuation of values—around the icy polar truth of spiritual fire, a flame which by

definition and necessity is cold, hostile, inhuman towards the upside down world of illusory existence and identity. Likewise, the perpetually worried and self-haunted state of modern, capitalist man (*business*, from Old English *bisig*, ‘anxious, worried, occupied’) is ultimately a form of *mass self-annoyance*, a crowded sick addiction to fraudulently self-convincing forms of life that one’s heart is not really in: “Nothing is more annoying than when we are disputing with a person, giving grounds and arguments, and take all pains to convince him, under the impression that we are merely addressing his *understanding*—and then finally discover that he is not *willing* to understand . . . for *grounds and proofs applied against the will* are like blows of a phantom in a concave mirror against a solid body” (Arthur Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Presentation*).

*REMEMBERING EVERYTHING’S NOTHINGNESS TODAY*: The last line redirects memory to the present as the immanent truth of a transcendent nihilism. “Above all else, be content with your lot, rich or poor, happy or miserable . . . Remember the present in the frame of the past and the future. You eternally were and always *will* be” (MB, *Not We But One*).

## V. ABANDONED MINE



Omega Massif, "In Der Mine," *Geisterstadt* (Radar Swarm, 2007)



The silence unearthing from this shaft is stronger  
Than death and harder than the black it breathes is dark.  
Man's labor here is no matter, nothing longer  
Than a low sigh, a self-erasing question mark.

Delving so deep in pit that the world becomes one,  
We at last forget ourselves in a final way,  
Finding in the diamond light of this black sun  
That all stars are blind shadows in a timeless day.

*THE SILENCE UNEARTHING*: The stony depths of mined mountain earth emit unearthly silences—subtle forms of echo quietly porting voices from beyond and spatio-intensive intimate magnifications of unheard voidal screams. “Abandoned mine shafts are metal as fuck” (Lord Ghengis, *Metal Archives*). As the mountain-body occupies space so massively and absolutely as to presence itself in terms of cosmically durable vacuum, so deep openings into the mountain-body inversely provide real and imaginal airs of continual, breathless breathing. “The breath of the unmoved . . . Mighty is the silence in stone” (Georg Trakl, “Night Song”). Inside itself the mountain is an ocean of stone, a pressured expanse our very impossibility of being and breathing *in* opens the mind to occult sublevels of breath, spiritual flows that precede life and point to eternal deathlessness, inescapably immanent principles of being ultimately able of being *anywhere*. “Once my understanding was led down into the bottom of the sea, and there I saw green hills and valleys, with the appearance of moss strewn with seaweed and gravel. Then I understood in this way: that if a man or a woman were there under the wide waters, if he could see God, as God is continually with man, he would be safe in soul and body, and come to no harm. And furthermore, he would have more consolation and strength than all this world can tell” (Julian of Norwich, *Showings*). Whence the motif of the spiritually pure air of sacral mountain caves: “Now it only remains for me to explain one or two matters connected with the Presence Chamber, before we return, particularly the purity of the atmosphere in a cave in the heart of the mountain with no apparent communication with the outside air; and the secret of its illumination . . . the pure air we breathe here is a gift of nature, and is due in part, so far as I have been able to determine, to its large body, enabling it to purify

itself, in a manner, the same as the outer air; and to numerous rifts in the solid rocks, communicating with the external world through the porous material with which they are filled. In a word, *the mountain breathes!* While the walls of this vast cavern present the appearance of ledges of solid rock, numerous torturous pores evidently open into them on every side through the mountain breathes like a living thing, exhaling air during the heat of the day, and inhaling it during the cool night, thus taking one long breath every twenty-four hours. That is the whole mystery of the cool, dry, pure air you breathe here” (Thaddeus Warsaw Williams, *In Quest of Life, or, The Revelations of the Wiyatatao of Xipantl*). Closer to Omega Massif’s cultural topos, Novalis, whose “poetic project crystallized around a philosophy of mining” (Catherine E. Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred*), presents the miner as bathed in primal air and light: “Der Vorwelt heil’ge Lüfte / umwehn sein Angesicht, / und in die Nacht der Klüfte / strahlt ihm ein ew’ges Licht” (*Bergmannslied*) [The holy breath of ages past / Wafts about his face, / And in the night of the abyss / A light eternal shines upon him]. As silence is a positively negative or superessential sonic state and quality inseparable from the sense of spatial vastness and depth—“There is nothing like silence to suggest a sense of unlimited space” (Bachelard)—as silence is in essence the *voice of light* and *word of darkness* just as darkness and light are themselves unseverable from the concept of their own extensity, so Omega Massif’s ponderously advancing instru-metal doom, in whose process the felt absence of human voice communicates the relentless movement of laboring bodies, is musical bergwerk as *excavation of unearthly silence*—a negative cutting of sound from silence figured in the verbal reordering of this well-worn term (‘unearthly silence’) by the poem’s opening phrase, ‘silence unearthing’.

The term 'unearthly silence' is conspicuous in its pervasiveness and seems very likely to be a currency derived from Romantic sensibility, something bound up with the geologic sublimines and the modern experiential opening of inhuman time scales. The classic 'unearthly silence' in this context is the expansive aerial silence which hangs over spatially vast vistas of wilderness, as per Cliffe's translation of "sovrumani silenzi, e profondissima quiete" [superhuman silences and profoundest quiet] in Leopardi's *L'infinito*: "But as I sit and gaze, a never-ending / Space far beyond it and unearthly silence / And deepest quiet to my thought I picture, / And as with terror is my heart o'ercast / With wondrous awe." Cf. "This mountain-measured distance! This unearthly silence!" (George H. Calvert, *Scenes and Thoughts in Europe*); "I can only say that there is something almost unearthly in the sight of enormous spaces of hill and plain, apparently unsubstantial as a mountain mist, glimmering away to the indistinct horizon, and as it were spell-bound by an absolute and eternal silence" (Leslie Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*). Correlative to such upper, liminally celestial unearthliness, there is a gothic subterranean unearthliness which recasts the medieval infernality of the underworld, Dante's lower blind world [*cieco mondo*] and dolorous abyss [*abisso dolorosa*]. ". . . the mephitic vapour and unearthly stench always found in vast subterranean hollows. In the painful silence that pervaded the place . . ." (James Augustus St. John, *Tales of the Ramad'han*). In the paradoxically supremely literal unearthliness of the subterranean, unearthliness signifies not supra-mundanity or what is beyond world, but rather a too-proximate *other* world, a world horrifically not like this one, or *too much* like this one, an infernal fixing of the world to itself (which is what hell is—being yourself forever): "And then there was silence over



everything, silence so profound that it startled me, and I got up and looked out of the window. All was dark and silent, the black shadows thrown by the moonlight seeming full of a silent mystery of their own. Not a thing seemed to be stirring, but all to be grim and fixed as death or fate” (Bram Stoker, *Dracula*). The master of fusing and confusing these two modes of unearthliness is Lovecraft: “For a second we gaped in admiration of the scene’s unearthly cosmic beauty, and then a vague horror began to creep into our souls” (*At the Mountains of Madness*). Here we find an upper unearthliness which is otherworldly—“this whole unearthly continent of mountainous mystery” (*Ibid.*)—and a (sub)terranean sublime which is silently and apophatically *beyond* world: “there was in the air and in the rotting soil a sinister quality which chilled me to the very core . . . Perhaps I should not hope to convey in mere words the unutterable hideousness that can dwell in absolute silence and barren immensity. There was nothing in sight save a vast reach of black slime; yet the very completeness of the stillness and the homogeneity of the landscape oppressed me with a nauseating fear” (*Dagon*). Similarly, ‘silence unearthing’ points towards to the *excavated nature of the cosmos*, to mining as gnostic revelation of the celestial vastness as only the interior of a cave, as per Plato’s Allegory of the Cave and Kabbalistic concept of *tzimtzum*. The lesson of being ‘in der mine’ is that the entire singular universe visible within the path of one’s propriety, inside the immanence of the self-possessive *mine*, is a mine, a bergwerk whose shaft penetrates to the OUTSIDE: “‘Take my advice, Elis Froebom; be a miner.’ The old man’s words caused him a sort of fear. ‘What?’ he cried. ‘Would you have me leave the bright sunny sky that revives and refreshes me, and go down into that hell-like abyss, and dig and tunnel like a mole for metals and ores, merely

to gain a few wretched ducats? Oh, never!’ ‘The usual thing,’ said the old man. ‘People despise what they have had no chance of knowing anything about! As if all the constant wearing, petty anxieties inseparable from business up here on the surface, were nobler than the miner’s work. To his skill, knowledge, and untiring industry Nature lays bare her most secret treasures. You speak of gain with contempt, Elis Froebom. Well, there’s something infinitely higher in question here, perhaps: the mole tunnels the ground from blind instinct; but it may be, in the deepest depths, by the pale glimmer of the mine candle, men’s eyes get to see clearer, and at length, growing stronger and stronger, acquire power of reading in the stones, the gems, and the minerals, the mirroring of secrets which are hidden above the clouds. You know nothing about mining, Elis. Let me tell you a little . . . Elis listened intently. The old man’s strange way of speaking of all these subterranean marvels as if he were standing in the midst of them, impressed him deeply. His breast felt stifled; it seemed to him as if he were already down in these depths with the old man, and would never more look upon the friendly light of day. And yet it seemed as though the old man were opening to him a new and unknown world, to which he really properly belonged, and that he had somehow felt all the magic of that world, in mystic forebodings, since his boyhood. ‘Elis Froebom,’ said the old man at length, ‘I have laid before you all the glories of a calling for which Nature really destined you. Think the subject well over with yourself, and then act as your better judgment counsels you’ (E. T. Hoffman, *The Mines of Falun*). In other words, all real choice, the essential act of anyone not bent on fating themselves to laborious self-slavery, demands desire for truly buried treasure—“The most important requirement for the satisfactory resolution of conflict is motive power or

inspiration, which can only come from a burning longing for some comprehensive ideal. Analysis in itself may aid choice, *but choice will remain a barren and ineffective intellectual preference unless it is vitalised by zeal for some ideal appealing to the deepest and most significant strata of human personality*" (MB, *Discourses*)—and the commitment to *dive deep*: "*The deeper secrets of a spiritual life are unravelled to those who take risks and who make bold experiments with it. They are not meant for the idler who seeks guaranties for every step. He who speculates from the shore about the ocean shall know only its surface, but he who would know the depths of the ocean must be willing to plunge into it*" (MB, *Discourses*). "There is in his way of living and thinking a *refined heroism* which disdains to offer itself to the veneration of the great masses, as his coarser brother does, and tends to go silently through the world and out of the world. Whatever labyrinths he may stray through, among whatever rocks his stream may make its tortuous way—if he emerges into the open air he will travel his road bright, light and almost soundlessly and let the sunshine play down into his very depths" (Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*).

*MAN'S LABOR HERE IS NO MATTER*: This communicates both ephemerality of human labor and its immaterial depth, the sense in which the only thing that remains, in the negative space of the mine, is the spirit, the breath of the labor itself. Nostalgia for human labor, for all the energy spent and lives lost in the depths, has no real place here. *Dwarfed* in the spatio-temporally deeper life-death of the mountain itself, the spans of human achievement and suffering are restored to the ZERO that they are. "If you *dive deep* in the realm of thoughts and think seriously for just a few minutes, you will realise the emptiness of desires.

Think of what you have enjoyed all these years and what you have suffered. All that you have enjoyed through life is today nil. All that you have suffered through life is also nothing in the present. All was illusory" (MB, *Discourses*). As much as the mountain analogically indexes the absolutely durable and immovable status of Reality, so does it, in its own accelerated decay at the hands of puny man, point back to the immanent abyss of its own zeroness: if the mountain does not remain, how much more ephemeral is this life, how much more truly *zero* is it in relation to Reality: "The infinity of the Truth remains unaffected by any changes in the universe. All that happens in the universe is phenomenal, and as such amounts to zero from the viewpoint of the Truth. An earthquake, for example, is regarded as an appalling and disastrous calamity by the worldly-minded because of the immense destruction of life and property which it brings. However, even a calamity like this cannot in any way touch the infinite Truth which is at the heart of Reality" (MB, *Discourses*). The mine is a ghost town (*Geisterstadt*), precisely of an order one cannot get historically sappy over, whose lesson is always that this life and labor is no less ghost. "Then a new idea took possession of me, and I shifted my thoughts to a consideration of time rather than place" (Petrarch, *Ascent of Mt. Ventoux*). Thus the abandoned mine, no less than the summit whereon Petrarch modernly reinvents via Augustine the memorial depth of time as reverse index of the ignored alpine inner depth—"And men go about to wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide sweep of rivers, and the circuit of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but themselves they consider not" (*Ascent of Mt. Ventoux*, citing *Confessions* by *sortes*)—is a mirror, a reflection of the abyssal selfless self you have still to uncover yet

which is already present, right there and here as the (in)visible khoric container and acosmic cave of all that passes through the mind: "Great is the power of memory, a fearful thing, O my God, a deep and boundless manifoldness; and this thing is the mind, and this am I myself. What am I then, O my God? What nature am I? A life various and manifold, and exceeding immense. Behold in the plains, and caves, and caverns of my memory, innumerable and innumerably full of innumerable kinds of things, either through images, as all bodies; or by actual presence, as the arts; or by certain notions or impressions, as the affections of the mind, which, even when the mind doth not feel, the memory retaineth, while yet whatsoever is in the memory is also in the mind—over all these do I run, I fly; I dive on this side and on that, as far as I can, and there is no end" (Augustine, *Confessions*). Abandon mine! Abandon place! You want so badly for this to be a place, for *you* to be somewhere. I am telling you it does not exist—there is NO SUCH THING: "place exists in the mind alone" (Eriugena, *Periphyseon*). Cf. "We live in the description of a place and not in the place itself" (Wallace Stevens). The world is not a place: "For none of those who rightly consider and distinguish the natures of things confuses places and bodies in a single genus, but separates them by a rational distinction. For bodies are included in the category of quantity, but the category of quantity differs widely by nature from the category of place. Therefore body is not place since a locality is not a quantity; for, as we said before, quantity is nothing else but the definite measuring out of parts which are separated either by the reason alone or by natural differentiation, and the rational extension to definite limits of those things which extend in the dimensions of nature, I mean length, in breadth, and in depth; while place is nothing else but the boundary and en-

closure of things which are contained within a fixed limit. Therefore if this world is a body it necessarily follows that its parts are bodies too. But if they are bodies; therefore they are not place. Do you then see how it is concluded from the foregoing arguments that this world with its parts is not a place but is contained within place, that is, within the fixed limit of its definition?" (Eriugena, *Periphyseon*). So the romanticism of the mine is a modern reinvention of the medieval mysticism of place, a re-excitation of topos toward the eternal novelty of immanent, corporeally-nested bottomlessness, the fractally infinite hidden *minerality* of all things: "For descend as low as we may, even to the reputed regions of Tartarus and Pluto, we never find the course of our passage any one thing absolutely similar to another. We are always meeting something new, something different; and every new and different substance is only an indication of some different change. Look at the vegetable kingdom; how varied! how pleasing! how delightful! because of this variety! And why so varied, but in consequence of the variety prevailing in the mineral kingdom, which contains its origin, root, and essence?" (Emmanuel Swedenborg, cited from Lars Bergquist, *Swedenborg's Secret*).

*DELVING SO DEEP IN PIT THAT THE WORLD BECOMES ONE:* "What is outer is what is inner, raised to the level of a secret—Perhaps also vice versa" (Novalis). Deep delving restores the specular nature of the uni-verse, the mysterious transposability of inner and outer, within and without, above and below. The immanentization of world as pit discloses the non-Euclidean montane curvature of the ineradicably Unity: "Mind you, the area around Mount Analogue must offer no perceptible spatial anomaly, since beings like us must be able to subsist there. We are dealing with a large, impene-

trable *ring of curvature*, which surrounds the land at a certain distance with an invisible, intangible rampart—thanks to which, in short, *everything takes place as if Mount Analogue did not exist*” (René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*). Cf. “Su-meru is heard to be in the middle of the Earth, but is not seen there” (*Narpatijayacharyā*). Just as mining process phenomenally invisibilizes the alpine within its own immanent depth, delving is the inverse movement which knows the non-visibility of the ultimate mountain as its very apparenity: “What is properly divine is that the world does not reveal God” (Agamben, *Coming Community*). Mining mines the doubly-ecstatic subsurface ( )hole connecting immanence and transcendence: “the very cause of the universe . . . is also carried outside of himself . . . He is . . . beguiled by goodness, by love, and by yearning and is enticed away from his transcendent dwelling place and comes to abide within all things, and he does so by virtue of his supernatural and ecstatic capacity to remain, nevertheless, within himself” (Dionysius, *Divine Names*). In terms of consciousness, tunneling down the mountain pit means reversal of the *projective* trajectory of perception—“The process of perception runs parallel to the process of creation, and the reversing of the process of perception without obliterating consciousness amounts to realising the nothingness of the universe as a separate entity” (MB, *Discourses*)—and the reversal of time itself: “If . . . the Soul withdrew, sinking itself again into its primal unity, Time would disappear: the origin of Time . . . is to be traced to the first stir of the Soul’s tendency towards the production of the sensible Universe (Plotinus, *Enneads*).

*THE DIAMOND LIGHT OF THIS BLACK SUN*: “I knew that all sights and glories were at an end; for in that new realm was neither land nor sea, but only the white

void of unpeopled and illimitable space. So, happier than I had ever dared hope to be, I dissolved again into that native infinity of crystal oblivion from which the daemon Life had called me for one brief and desolate hour" (H. P. Lovecraft, *Ex Oblivione*). Lights and sight are for those who do not see the EYE: "No light has ever seen the black universe" (Francois Laruelle, *On Black Universe*). "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me" (Meister Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, Sermon 57).

*THAT ALL STARS ARE BLIND SHADOWS*: "Now, gross, subtle and mental bodies are nothing but the shadows of the soul. The gross, subtle and mental spheres (worlds) are nothing but the shadows of the Over-Soul . . . Therefore when the soul with its gross, subtle and mental bodies experiences the gross, subtle and mental worlds, the soul actually experiences in reality the shadows of the Over-Soul with the help of its own shadows. In other words, the soul with its finite and destructible form experiences falsity, zero, imagination and a vacant dream" (MB, *God Speaks*). Cf. "Truths are illusions whose true nature has been forgotten" (Nietzsche). This forgetting which hangs over everything, the blindness of the apparently luminous shadows, resolves back to the blindness of ultimate will: "This whole, including both [subject and matter], is the world as representation, or the phenomenon. After this is taken away, there remains only the purely metaphysical, the thing-in-itself . . . the will"; "for those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this our so very real world with all its suns and galaxies—is nothing" (Schopenhauer). The blind elemental drive of heavy metal is the sound whereby one must or cannot not keep digging, the musical noise of the universe as one own mine: "One's own self is well hidden from one's own self; of all mines of treasure,



one's own is the last to be dug up" (Nietzsche). As a worm eats itself through earth, body is instrumental food and excremental casting of a more hidden movement: "You eat food, and to keep yourselves healthy and fit, you pass out the residue as excrement. But do you ever shed tears for the waste you eliminate? Do you ever think about it, or feel regret over it? Not at all. Then, if someone dear dies, why do you weep for that discarded body, which is like food to the soul? You preserve and protect your body to feed your soul. The body is the medium for the soul's progress. When your excrement is eliminated, you eat fresh food. Similarly, with the disposal of the old body, you take a new body. So why worry and weep over that which is the law of nature and cannot be altered?" (MB). Cf. "Übermensch Undermined: Mine Proposal Threatens Nietzsche's Grave" (*Der Spiegel*). Do not be fooled, then, by the loud outward shows, the shiny metal scenes. This is not some poser circus; it is a ghost town and bergwerk, a dark place where miners see through the hollow world: "Most of the glories of the world are mere outward show, like the scenes on a stage: there is nothing real about them. Ships festooned and hung with pennants, firing of cannon, illuminations, beating of drums and blowing of trumpets, shouting and applauding—these are all the outward sign, the pretence and suggestion,—as it were the hieroglyphic,—of joy: but just there, joy is, as a rule, not to be found; it is the only guest who has declined to be present at the festival. Where this guest may really be found, he comes generally without invitation . . . Joy is like the gold in the Australian mines—found only now and then, as it were, by the caprice of chance, and according to no rule or law" (Schopenhauer, "Counsels and Maxims").

## VI. SCREAM OF STONE



Schrei aus Stein, "Dawn," *Cervin* (Crucial Blast, 2013)

△

Peak transmits to peak in this mourning astral light,  
Sings bleak aubade of fiery intel for the few.  
Fourfold decrees encompass, divide left and right,  
Fusing above below with isotopic dew.

Leave no hope in things, exhaust it all in quick sleep.  
We leave before tomorrow without faith or doubt  
For summit and return, trusting only this leap  
Into celestial earth, this abyss inside out.

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*PEAK TRANSMITS TO PEAK*: Mountains are networked communications nodes, with the higher peaks functioning as intelligence generation and organization centers via natural contact with subtle geo-celestial powers and fit service as meeting-sites for members of spiritual hierarchy. “The rocks and stones and mountains and earth are living camouflage, interlocking psychic webs formed by minute consciousnesses that you cannot perceive as such” (Seth). See also René Guénon on Shambala-Agartha, “a spiritual center existing in the terrestrial world by an organization charged with preserving intact the deposit of sacred tradition, which is of ‘non-human’ origin (*apaurusheya*), through which primordial Wisdom is handed down across the ages to those capable of receiving it” (*King of the World*). The status of mountains as points of occult transmission is reflected in the traditions of revelation at height (Sinai, Alverna, Kailash, et al.), the religio-political concept of the ‘summit meeting’—“I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north” (Isaiah 14:13); “On a mountain one day, I will explain who I am and how I created the universe” (MB)—and folk-poetic notions of mountains as discursive entities: “No doubt there were many things that watched me in the night . . . They must have been talking to each other. The stones talk to each other just as we do, and the trees too, the mountains talk to each other. You can hear them sometimes if you pay close attention, especially at night, outside” (Angulo, *Achumawi Life-Force*); “Henson’s idea [for *The Dark Crystal*] was for a world that had a life of its own, where plants could communicate and mountains talk to each other” (*Heavy Metal*, vol. 8). Peak to peak transmission is a transhuman seeing-through mediated paradoxically (at least to the blabbermouth human mind) by the intersection of silence and distance: “To speak quietly at such distance, to speak / And to be

heard is to be large in space, / That, like your own, is large, hence, to be part / Of sky, of sea, large earth, large air. It is / To perceive men without reference to their form" (Wallace Stevens, "Chocorua to its Neighbor"). That is, inter-mountain communication is a perfection of the participatory intimacy-at-a-distance that characterizes logos at height: "I am often astonished at the almost incredible distances at which people amongst these mountains talk to each other, and appear to be heard distinctly. They will frequently give the most minute directions across enormous glens and gorges, without one word being either lost or understood" (C. G. *A Fortnight's Tour amongst the Arabs on Mount Lebanon*). Cf. "The first characteristic [of persons who have the 'habit of the mountain'] is sparsity of words and reduced verbal communication. The mountain teaches silence . . . In an alpine environment, gestures and signals are more eloquent than long speeches. This is especially true when one is busy climbing, or making holes on the mountain's face, or crossing ravines; in these circumstances one instinctively adopts a military style and terseness in warning, giving instructions, or confirming" (Julius Evola, *Meditations on the Peaks*). Sparsity of words is not ponderous slowness to speech but belongs to the profounder and clearer continuum of self-communicative action at once theoretical and practical: "Another way to put it is to be simultaneously alone and with other people—a connection occurring essentially through action. Maybe only some forms of camaraderie, forged during wartime on the battlefield, may bring about, like the experience of the mountain, this special sense of active solidarity, which keeps distance between people and yet presupposes the full harmony of their forces of because of the precise assessment of and trust in each member's potential" (*Ibid.*). Real communication is alpine, proverbial; it is

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not a matter of for 'readers' and 'writers': "He who knows the reader will do nothing more for the reader . . . Whoever writes in blood and proverbs does not want to be read, but to be learned by heart. In the mountains *the shortest way is from peak to peak*, but for that one must have long legs. Proverbs should be peaks, and those who are addressed should be great and tall. The air thin and pure, danger near and the spirit full of cheerful spite: these fit together well" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).

Schrei aus Stein channel the loud silence of commanding peak-to-peak transmission via a minimalist atmospheric musical style which lets mountains speak for themselves across inter-alpine conceptual figurations, the first of which is the band's name itself, which translates the title of Werner Herzog's 1991 *bergfilm* into the topos of Rocky Mountain Black Metal. This ideology of this translation has a descent-ascent structure. As the film itself concerns the saga of European mountaineering in Patagonia and the generational drama of alpinism's twin degeneration or fall into gymnastic sport and brutal technologization ('the murder of the impossible'), so Schrei aus Stein spiritually invest in personal experience of American mountaineering as a local site where the European alpine sublime is reinvented and re-ascended in purer form, a purity which is evoked primarily in terms of terms of *bleakness* and *solitude* of an order no longer directly perceivable in the Old World, as per their artist's statement: "This project explores a meditative black metal style, inspired by the experience of climbing in bleak alpine terrain in Colorado and seeking to recapture the profound isolation amidst such an imposing and difficult landscape." The logic of peak-to-peak transmission is also evident in the processive trajectory of Schrei au Stein's discography, which conceptually 're-builds'



the European alp out of American earth. First, *Talus* (2009) establishes alpine sublimity on a culturally-neutral geological base, yet one whose very song names inescapably point back to the European, Latin-Germanic origins of geologic science: “Serac,” “Lenticulars,” “Couloir,” “Foehn,” “Crevasses.” Allegorically, the album title and cover image

herald conscious emergence of *bergmetal* as an artistic and cultural formation sited on the now obscure slopes and forgotten detritus of the Western alpine sublime. Nothing screams *bergmetal per se* that a title word like *talus*, which cannot be confused with merely metaphorical or lyrical invocation of mountain. Second, *Tsisnaasjini* (2010) moves backly forwards into the Navajo identity of the Spanish-named Blanca Peak in the Sierras, which marks the eastern boundary of the Navajo homeland Dinetah and whose name means ‘Dawn Mountain’ or ‘White Shell Mountain’. As Blanca is the highest mountain in the Sangre de Cristo Range, the cover image bathes the white peak in a bloody red which both



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signals the violence of European conquest and moves the mountain into a more Black Metal atmosphere of medieval alpine malevolence. Third, *Cervin* (2013), reflecting the eastern white dawn of Tsisnaasjini back to the dark whiteness of the iconic Cervin/Cervino/Matterhorn, refocuses the 'dark glow of the mountains' upon the fading light of a further eastern dawn—a movement accentuated by the fact that Whymper's first ascent of Cervin, the last of the highest peaks in the Alps to be climbed, marks the end of the 'Golden Age of Alpinism.' The temporal conjunction of the Matterhorn's first ascent, the death of the Civil War and Lincoln (and the consequent rise of U.S. as a proto-imperial power), the end of the Colorado War against the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, and the African geological origin of Cervin's peak accentuates the hidden self-communicative logic whereby Rocky Mountain bergmetal opens new occult lines of ascent into the globally haunted atmospheres of the alpine sublime, lines which call the listener forward and away from all forms of false conquest. In sum, Schrei

### MORE THAN CONQUERORS

BY ARIADNE GILBERT

THE MATTERHORN OF MEN	
	
<p>Photo by Underwood &amp; Underwood. THE MATTERHORN.</p>	<p>Statue by St. Gaudens. ABRAHAM LINCOLN.</p>
<p>(Conclusion) "That crazy peak among mountains—the Matterhorn, that crazy peak among men—Abraham Lincoln." By NICHOLAS for February, page 90.</p>	
<p>LINCOLN'S task, as President, required not only all his keen brain and responsive heart, but all his rugged endurance. That fine stock of health, won by outdoor training, would be needed as a brace for the long strain of the long days. As</p>	<p>farmer boy used to going to bed at dark could n't help it, I believe." With this half-excuse, Lincoln got up, went into the next room, and wrote for a moment in a careful hand. Then, folding the paper, his troubled, gray eyes</p>
<p>Emerson rightly said, "Here was place for no holiday magistrate, no fair-weather sailor; the new nilot was hurried to the helm in a tornado."</p>	<p>brimmed with glad light as he said, "Now you just telegraph that mother that her boy is safe, and I will go back to bed. There 's no harm</p>

aus Stein occupy the musico-cultural continuum of a peak-to-peak transmissiveness in which mountain solitude experiences not only intimations of absolute immanent transcendence but the high white reflectiveness of the material alp (*alp*, from *altus*, 'high' or *albus*, 'white) as a discursive entity in touch with its own self-otherness and the meanings or words of other mountains. As a climber characteristically finds the meanings of the mountain, the conceptual 'mountains of the mind,' to at once recede and intensify within the immediate chasmic experience of being on the mountain itself, Schrei aus Stein summon a scream of stone which is neither human nor inhuman, a voice that neither inordinately idealizes the man-mountain relation nor stupidly longs for an impossible nature-without-us. Evading the paths of both eco-progressive nostalgia and neo-fascist alpine pseudo-mysticism, Schrei aus Stein aim towards the uncompromising voice of an alpine, alter-humanity which is essentially apolitical (and for that reason not without authentic political truth), as articulated by Reinhold Messner: "Politics is the opposite of mountaineering. On a mountain you are on your own, in a world of anarchy, with a chance to experience what it was like a hundred thousand years ago when humans were wild animals and not dependent on the social world. The strongest figure of the climbing team decides what to do, how to go forward. As climbers, we are inventors of our own goals, and must decide on our own how to achieve them. There is nobody else there. Nobody to control. We do extreme, dangerous things, and nobody else can say what is right or wrong. There is no moral loathing. We have only our instincts about human behavior, and in the end we are our own judges. The art of politics is compromising, and if you are compromising every minute on a mountain, you won't go far" (*Rock & Ice*).



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*THIS MOURNING ASTRAL LIGHT*: The mourning/morning pun resonates with the 'bleak aubade' of the next line, recasting the medieval-Appennine lovers' dawn lament into extra-human cosmic terms and blending it with the topos of pre-dawn restlessness in which foreboding or pre-emptive mourning is combined with the strange joy of imminently-passing-away pre-operational anxiety, anticipating the dreamy electric moment of relief and free action when *you finally get to forget everything and go*. Cf. "Many a dawn-cold spear must be grasped, / Hefted on high" (*Beowulf*). Before the rising of the sun, the no-longer-nighttime stars, who are really secret agents of *amor fati*, offer a subtle mourning which laments the passing of night and lovingly opens the day to its own special or weird/fated brand of possibilistic pallor. Coleridge blackly covers this moment as follows: "Hast thou a charm to stay the morning-star / In his steep course? So long he seems to pause / On thy bald awful head, O sovran BLANC! / The Arve and Arveiron at thy base / Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form! / Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines, / How silently! Around thee and above / Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black, / An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it, / As with a wedge!" (Coleridge, "Hymn Before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni"). Whereas Wallace Stevens finds in the mountain morning a reverse veneration centered on the arrival of an alter-humanity: "At the end of the night last night a crystal star, / The crystal-pointed star of morning, rose / And lit the snow to a light congenial / To this prodigious shadow, who then came / In an elemental freedom, sharp and cold. / The feeling of him was the feel of day, / And of a day as yet unseen, in which / To see was to be. He was the figure in / A poem for Liadoff, the self of selves: / To think of him destroyed the body's form" ("Chocorua to its Neighbor").

*SINGS BLEAK AUBADE*: There is a syllabic knife here, the piercing sense of almost hearing 'blade' in the voicing of 'bleak aubade.' Uncannily, this sharply touches Wallace Stevens's representation of mountain logos as cutting (s)word, "acutest speech": "To say more than human things with human voice, / That cannot be; to say human things with more / Than human voice; that, also, cannot be; / To speak humanly from the height or from the depth / Of human things, that is acutest speech" ("Chocorua to its Neighbor"). True song cuts you to the quick and frees one from sympathy. "I no longer sympathize with you; this cloud beneath me, this black and heavy thing at which I laugh—precisely this is your thundercloud. You look upward when you long for elevation. And I look down because I am elevated" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).

*FOURFOLD DECREES ENCOMPASS*: Cervin's four faces address the four planetary directions. "He governs the world through itself" (Ibn Arabi). "The Matterhorn situated on the border between Switzerland and Italy with a height of 14,690 feet is said to be by some (?) to be the compass that the gods use to find their way around our planet." The 'fiery intel' understood only by the few yet encompasses all and can be glimpsed by the few more who practice sensing the inapparent 'drifts' of thinking, the slight atmospheric swerves wherein thoughts nearly betray their being-thought by something other than you, i.e. contain traces of the mental world in which all thoughts exist, the ideal realm in which earth-bound thinking blindly gropes. The directionality of the peak is aesthetically enhanced by its pyramidal form: "those firm grey bastions of the Cervin,—overhanging, smooth, flawless, unconquerable! For, unlike the Chamouni aiguilles, there is no aspect of destruction about the

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Matterhorn cliffs. They are not torn remnants of separating spires, yielding flake by flake, and band by band, to the continual process of decay. They are, on the contrary, an unaltered monument, seemingly sculptured long ago, the huge walls retaining yet the forms into which they were first engraven, and standing like an Egyptian temple,—delicate-fronted, softly colored, the suns of uncounted ages rising and falling upon it continually, but still casting the same line of shadows from east to west, still, century after century, touching the same purple stains on the lotus pillars; while the desert sand ebbs and flows about their feet, as those autumn leaves of rock lie heaped and weak about the base of the Cervin” (Ruskin, *Of Mountain Beauty*, XVI.16).

*ISOTOPIC DEW*: The phrase builds on the fact that *isotope* literally means ‘the same place’. Dew fuses above and below, adding an almost nothing that makes all the difference. Like the presence of extra neutrons which do not alter elemental identity but do effect reaction and make the same different, the influence of mountains on life, the “generosity, or instruction of the hills” (Ruskin) is a *mass effect*, a processually hidden-open influence which alters everything by apparently doing nothing. Cf. “My first sight of the Matterhorn . . . ! When I think of it I seem to grow young again; a host of memories crowd into my mind and strive to free themselves as if each one desired to be the first to find an issue, and I must needs throw the door wide open and let them force their way out *en masse*” (Guido Rey, *The Matterhorn*). Mountains are simply there, and in simply being there, do nothing, yet do nothing in a massive manner that alters everything, as shown in the historical conjunction of mountainous regions and civilization: “There is not a single spot of land in either of these countries [Greece

and Italy] from which mountains are not discernable” (Ruskin, *Of Mountain Beauty*, XX.11). See also Geoffrey Winthrop Young, *Influence of Mountains upon Development of Human Intelligence* (1956). Mountain influence is about how mountains inhabit consciousness in a dewy, subtly seminal way, speaking to consciousness in the language of the habit process itself, whose tiny-massive syllable is the water drop: “The importance of the results thus obtained by the slightest change of direction in the infant streamlets, furnishes an interesting type of the formation of human characters by habit. Every one of those notable ravines and crags is the expression, not of any sudden violence done to the mountain, but of its little *habits*, persisted in continually. It was created with one ruling instinct; but its destiny depended nevertheless, for effective result, on the direction of the small and all but invisible tricklings of water, in which the first shower of rain found its way down its sides. The feeblest, most insensible oozings of the drops of dew among its dust were in reality arbiters of its eternal form; commissioned, with a touch more tender than that of a child’s finger,—as silent and slight as the fall of a half-checked tear on a maiden’s cheek,—to fix for ever the forms of peak and precipice, and hew those leagues of lifted granite into the shapes that were to divide the earth and its kingdoms. Once the little stone evaded,—once the dim furrow traced,—and the peak was for ever invested with its majesty, the ravine for ever doomed to its degradation. Thenceforward, day by day, the subtle habit gained in power; the evaded stone was left with wider basement; the chosen furrow deepened with swifter-sliding wave; repentance and arrest were alike impossible, and hour after hour saw written in larger and rockier characters upon the sky, the history of the choice that had been directed by a drop of rain, and of the balance that had

been turned by a grain of sand” (Ruskin, *Of Mountain Beauty*, XV.23).

. . . *THIS ABYSS INSIDE OUT*. The stanza alludes to an ‘alpine start,’ which Leslie Stephen describes as follows: “You are cold, miserable, breakfastless; have risen shivering from a warm bed, and in your heart long only to creep into bed again. To the mountaineer all this has changed. He is beginning a day full of the anticipation of a pleasant excitement. He has, perhaps, been waiting anxiously for fine weather, to try conclusions with some huge giant not yet scaled. He moves out with something of the feeling with which a soldier goes to the assault of a fortress, but without the same probability of coming home in fragment; the danger is trifling enough to be merely exhilaratory, and to give a pleasant tension to the nerves; his muscles feel firm and springy, and his stomach—no small advantage to the enjoyment of scenery—is in excellent order. He looks at the sparkling stars with keen satisfaction, prepared to enjoy a fine sunrise with all his faculties at their best, and with the added pleasure of a good omen for his day's work. Then a huge dark mass begins to mould itself slowly out of the darkness, the sky begins to form a background of deep purple, against which the outlook becomes gradually more definite; one by one, the peaks catch the exquisite Alpine glow, lighting up in rapid succession, like a vast illumination; and when at last the steady sunlight settles upon them, and shows every rock and glacier, without even a delicate film of mist to obscure them, he feels his heart bound, and steps out gaily to the assault” (*Play-ground of Europe*). There is a certain kind of sober intoxication that occurs in the pre-morning hours and which resonates in a special way with the leap into imminent challenging tasks. This intoxication is structured around a unique combination of, on the one

hand, purposiveness, promise, having the whole world before oneself, etc., and, on the other hand, an intimate and certain feeling of the transience of all things, knowledge of everything as passing show. Here is found the rush of returning to reality as a risky adventurous game, one that frees the given itself from fixity, so that even if you do die today, your whole life will already have been unaccountably different. This ecstatic knowledge of the astral morning is connected to how the mountain spiritually stabilizes human consciousness by destabilizing it, by exposing its precarity and lack of self-possession in a manner that reorients and renews self-reliance and ontological freedom. Mountain, as 'abyss inside out'—a formulation which compares to Dante's design of the mountain of Purgatory as the positive negative of Hell, the portion of earth punched out when Satan fell to earth—offers a kind of surplus habitation of uninhabitability, a zone for spiritual dwelling that provides a real place (physical, imaginal, and intellectual) for advancingly being in the world but not of it. Hell is the chthonic-abyssal world where one *stays*, where one dwells without movement in change without becoming and in sick self-repetition. Everyone is at home in Hell, eternally themselves, which is precisely what makes Hell fundamentally uninhabitable. Purgatory is the habitable, superior positively negative 'hell' of the world as bridge, a steep testing ground between Pit and Paradise, where one is purified by passing through. Dialectically, habitation needs the uninhabitable, dwelling needs the mountain. So the spiritual and material habitability of the earth is predicated on the positively negative presence of these inside out abysses, the positive voids and massive silences of the mountain peaks: "The whole earth is not prepared for the habitation of man; only certain small portions are prepared for him,—the houses, as it were, of the hu-

man race, from which they are to look abroad upon the rest of the world, not to wonder or complain that it is not all house, but to be grateful for the kindness of the admirable building, in the house itself, as compared with the rest. It would be as absurd to think it an evil that all the world is not fit for us to inhabit, as to think it an evil that the globe is no larger than it is. As much as we shall ever need is evidently assigned to us for our dwelling-place; the rest, covered with rolling waves or drifting sands, fretted with ice or crested with fire, is set before us for contemplation in an uninhabitable magnificence; and that part which we are enabled to inhabit owes its fitness for human life chiefly to its mountain ranges, which, throwing the superfluous rain off as it falls, collect it in streams or lakes, and guide it into given places, and in given directions; so that men can build their cities in the midst of fields which they know will be always fertile, and establish the lines of their commerce upon streams which will not fail" (Ruskin, *Of Mountain Beauty*, VII.6).

## VII. Never to Descend



Sapthuran, “Astigan Se Beorg (Journey Up the Mountain),” *The Wanderer* (Wraith Productions, 2008).

△

To step now into the freedom of pure ascent,  
I walk through no matter what—forest-maze my guide.  
With blind confusion left behind, all that was lent  
To life lies dead in a death that long ago died.

The dark heart trapped in my brain starts to weep faster  
As cold blood of morning flows at last to its goal.  
Icy truth-silence that I AM my own master  
Fills everything and nothing with new forms of soul.



## VII. NEVER TO DESCEND

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*TO STEP*: ‘Astigan se beorg’ means ‘to ascend the mountain,’ so that the infinitive opening captures the sense of immediate beginning, the irrevocable *towards* of starting up the mountain. And as the provided gloss in the title suggests, this is a one-way, full-day (journey) upward movement that ends in never descending: “And he stepped out upon its apex / Looking over the forests below / He stood atop the highest mountain / And, finally, he was alone / Here he learned true peace / And he vowed never to descend” (Sapthuran, “Astigan Se Beorg,” *The Wanderer*). The decision never to descend does not prevent returning *from* the summit, but only returning *to* the world, a return that would equal ‘descent’ or reversal of the ascent. Even in conventional experiential terms, people speak of leaving part of themselves on mountain peaks and of spiritually remaining up there after coming down. So the unidirectionality of the journey traced in this song signifies the durable, non-contingent, and thus always ascending independence of freedom, of the absolute life which is its own principle and remains forever above and unaffected by what it transcends. “Only that which is without principle properly lives” (Meister Eckhart). “The just person is in service neither to God nor creatures, for such a person is free, and the closer they are they are to justice, the more they become freedom itself and the more they *are* freedom” (Meister Eckhart). This is what it means to remain on the apex, to live seated on the mountain. “Now I will tell you who it is who is seated on the mountain above the winds and the rain. They are those who, on earth, have neither shame nor honor, nor fear on account of something which might happen. Such folk . . . are secure, and so their doors are open, and yet nothing can disturb them, and no work of charity dares to penetrate. Such folk are seated on the mountain, and none other than these are seated there” (Marguerite Porete,

*Mirror of Simple Souls*). Thus freedom is (semantically) found already and fully in *to step*, in the stepping itself before whatever stepping steps into. In this sense the stepping of ascent is both what liberates walking from horizontality, what turns walking into climbing, and also what brings verticality back into walking itself, so that one may also ascend without climbing, which is part of the desire within climbing itself, to climb climbing, to climb out of climbing. Indeed *astigan* may mean ‘to go, come, step, proceed, climb, rise, ascend’ and also *descend*, a sense which typically requires a correlative preposition, as in the Anglo-Saxon translation of “ascendunt montes et descendunt campi in locum” (Psalms 103:8): “Astígaþ múntas, and niðer astígaþ feldas on stówe.” Just as climbing moves up and down (down-climbing), so one may *ascend* down or step downwards without descending. The continuity of ascending and stepping thus captured in the song title’s *astigan* may be compared to Reinhold Messner’s [and Herzog’s] dream of climbing transformed into walking at the end of *Dark Glow of the Mountains*: “Herzog: Can you imagine not climbing anymore and doing something else? Messner: I occasionally have the desire to stop mountain climbing and imagine that I just keep walking, for decades, maybe forever, just walking, with pack animals, or a few porters, from one Himalayan valley to the next, across deserts, through forests, without ever getting anywhere, without looking back, without looking ahead, just keep on walking until the world stops. Herzog: That’s strange because I have exactly the same fantasy . . . just keep walking until I have gone everywhere and there is nothing left. Messner: Yes it’s very interesting, and I keep imagining . . . that sooner or later in my life I don’t look back anymore, I don’t need anything behind me and I don’t go anywhere in particular, I have no destination, I just keep going and going until the world just stops. And I

don't think of the world as round or flat, to me the world is never-ending and at some point in time it just *stops*, that is, either my life or the world stops, presumably it will be that as my life ends so will the world. We could follow in each other's footsteps! Mountain climbing isn't that important to me anymore, not the climbing part. What counts is just to keep on going and going and going."

*NOW*: The accentuated presentness of the stepping implies the power to begin life 'all over again' in each moment. The stepping of ascent is continuous *starting*, unending initiation. Knowing life is *over* now, start it over. To step now is to be *new*, as fresh as when one was *not*: "'Virgin' is as much as to say a person who is void of alien images, as empty as he was when he did not exist . . . If I were possessed of sufficient understanding so as to comprehend within my own mind all the images ever conceived by all men, as well as those that exist in God Himself—if I had these without attachment, whether in doing or in leaving undone, without before and after but rather standing free in this present Now ready to receive God's most beloved will and to do it continually, then in truth I would be a virgin, untrammelled by any images, just as I was when I was not" (Meister Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, Sermon 8).

*THE FREEDOM OF PURE ASCENT*: As the mundane, worldly concept of race concerns the descent of the individual from others, the spiritual concept of race concerns the ascent of the individual above others and himself: "Nothing is created out of nothing; thus, the present considerations do not apply to the completely bastardized modern man who has been reduced to a work and sporting animal. These considerations apply instead to those in whom the sense of race (race in a

spiritual, higher sense) still means something and, rather, represents the main departing point for a will oriented toward liberation and awakening. In this people, the mountainous milieu awakens a primordial legacy and possibly contributes to the gradual emergence of a transcendent sense of freedom—which does not signify escapism, but is instead a principle of pure strength. This sense of freedom finds its most perfect expression within one’s limited self, in concentration, in a deliberate action, in the complete, lucid domination of the irrational part of the human being, and finally, in the readiness to be freely transformed into an element of solid action, in which the goal is located above everybody and everything else” (Julius Evola, *Meditations on the Peaks*). Cf. “I am not from here” (Cioran). Modern culture and society, despite the general rejection of racist ideologies, remains thoroughly and more profoundly racist in its insistence on the individual’s belonging to or being a ‘member’ of the human race. “Identity is the primal form of all ideology” (Adorno). This is simply an invisible form of slavery, the enforcement of self-slavery upon the individual, who generally accepts it though conscious and unconscious expectation of rewards, as if to say, ‘I serve humanity by serving myself, by serving myself I accomplish things, by accomplishing things, I become someone, by being someone, I serve humanity’—all of which is sheer lunacy and lowest selfishness: “For when one is a servant of oneself, one wills that God accomplish His will to one’s own honor. The one who wills this only wills that the will of God be accomplished in him and in another. To such a one, says Love, God refuses His kingdom” (Marguerite Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*). If anyone truly and actually wants to ‘belong’ to the human race and serve it in some fashion, the first thing to do is to *not* be the so-and-so limited self. The height of egoism: to believe

that you owe the world something (and that your own good lies in your fulfillment of the obligation!). The only thing you owe is your own sanity, precisely what 'you' cannot give yourself. Only in *not* being a slave is it possible to serve, for something higher to find expression through the lower, for the "lucid domination" of freedom to descend. The limited does not become unlimited, slavery does not become free, by cooperating with and relating to itself. Freedom is achieved when limitation is opened to its already being the spiritually sportive instrument and testing ground of the unlimited: "Evolution . . . is a divine sport, in which the Undonditioned tests the infinitude of His absolute knowledge, power and bliss in the midst of all conditions" (MB, *Discourses*). Hence Evola's critique of the reduction of mountaineering to mere sport ("The Mountain, Sport, and Contemplation"). Freedom is not the absence of slavery, but a matter of what is done *despite* slavery, of the power that ascends in the gravitational midst of fear and moves forward without guarantee or attachment to results. Such is the meaning of 'pure ascent,' the ascent that ascends *anyway*. "Well, I can admit now, even while asking myself these rather disagreeable questions, that deep down, in spite of everything, I felt *that some part of me firmly believed in the material reality of Mount Analogue*" (René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*).

*I WALK THROUGH NO MATTER WHAT—FOREST-MAZE MY GUIDE*: "I am the one who walks your dreams / the wanderer who leaves no trails behind" (Sapthuran). As per the above articulation of freedom as movement *despite*, this line expresses the sylvan situation of ascent toward the peak in which the woods that impede and disorient the path upwards simultaneously cloak, shelter, and even direct it by subtle signs. As ascent is

a stepping *through*, there is no imperative that it follow a particular path. Indeed following a path is a sure way *not* to pass through. “By many a trail and manner I came to my truth; not on one ladder did I climb to my height, where my eye roams out into my distance. And I never liked asking the way—that always offended by taste! I preferred to question and try the ways myself . . . ‘This—it turns out—is *my* way—where is yours?’—That is how I answered those who asked me ‘the way.’ *The way* after all—it does not exist!” (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). Sonically, the song communicates this idea of ascending individual waywardness with a fast and thick texture which paradoxically pushes the listener forward into upward directional striving by pushing against listening, like an ice-wind blowing into your face that only makes you burn with more strength: “The warm breeze turned to ice / Its bite invigorated his spirit / As he walked onward / The pain turned steeply upward” (“Astigan Se Beorg”). The four musical changes in the song mark four stages of ascent: 1) Continuing—“He continued his journey . . .” 2) Difficulty—“The winds began to blow . . .” 3) Ascendance—“The pain turned steeply upward . . .” 4) Peace—“Here he learned true peace.” Overall, Saphthuran express a solitary, woodsy, Appalachian alpinity, a truly blackened bergmetal in which ancient glorious altitudes of the Central Pan-gaan peaks are occulted in the unknown wanderings of free unconquerable intoxicated spirits who have nothing to do with your so-called society and history.

*ALL THAT WAS LENT*: In the context of the Anglo-Saxon title, *lent* resonates with *læne*, ‘transitory, fleeting’ (i.e. ephemeral is what is *loaned*). “Her bið feoh læne / her bið freond læne / her bið mon læne / her bið mæg læne / eal þis eorþan gesteal / idel weorþeð” [ Here money is fleeting, / here friend is fleeting, / here man

is fleeting, / here kinsman is fleeting, / all the foundation of this world / turns to waste!]. The elegiac tone of the tracklist—"Write My Words Upon the Winds," "Wailing Blackwinds," "The Weave and Will of Fate and Time, "Forever a Wandering Spirit"—confirms Saphuran's inspiration by the Old English poem *The Wanderer*.

*THE DARK HEART TRAPPED IN MY BRAIN*: Signified here is some species of awakening spiritual organ occupying the degree of elevation of *affectus* over *intellectus*, feeling over understanding. This hidden heart of the mind is dark both in the sense of being obscure to understanding and in the sense of being mysteriously, inexplicably in touch with what is beyond mind itself. "Just as a stone pulled by its own weight is naturally drawn down to its own center, so the apex of the *affectus* by its own weight is carried up to God directly and unmediatedly, without any oblique tangentiality" (Hugh of Balma). This hidden apex is the summit of the soul, that secret, acosmically capacious point of you that weeps while you are sleeping, outflies all demons and angels, and knows more than you ever will: "There is something that transcends the created being of the soul, not in contact with created things, which are nothing; not even an angel has it, though he has a clear being that is pure and extensive: even that does not touch it. It is akin to the nature of deity, it is one in itself, and has naught in common with anything. It is a stumbling block to many a learned cleric. It is a strange and desert place, and is rather nameless than possessed of a name, and is more unknown than it is known. If you could naught yourself for an instant, indeed I say less than an instant, you would possess all that this is in itself. But as long as you mind yourself or any thing at all, you know no more of God than my mouth knows of color or my eye

of taste: so little do you know or discern what God is” (Meister Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, Sermon 17). The mountain is not knowable, but it is loveable: “the scientific mind goes on up the mountain until its heart freezes and dies. But this mind is becoming so staggered by the vastness still beyond it that it will be forced to admit the hopelessness of its quest and turn to God, the Reality” (MB, *Everything and the Nothing*). The dark heart is trapped, which also means that it can be *let out*. As the wanderer ascends, something *unheard of* in him awakens. Real Black Metal, such as Saphuran wills, is the musical channeling of this *unheard of*.

*ICY TRUTH-SILENCE THAT I AM*: ‘Truth-silence’ implies a hyper-ontological mode of discourse in which the sanity of not-speaking makes *total* superessential sense, absolute sense of everything. This may be construed in terms of an absolutely bewildered ‘alpine’ logic which stays in touch with a key it cannot hold: “What do those do who are in being above their thoughts? They are amazed by what is from the top of their mountain, and they are amazed by the same thing which is in the depth of their valley—by a thinking nothing which is shut away and sealed in the secret closure of the highest purity of such an excellent Soul. No one can open the closure, nor break the seal, nor close it when it is open, if the gentle Farness from very far and from very near does not close it and open it, who alone has the keys to it, for no one else carries them, no one else could carry them” (Marguerite Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*). Bergmetal is like the resounding of the key, carved into a horn: “It is during this journey, and in alpine wanderings, that the Stormcrow soul and music has been forged and shaped, become powerful as hundreds of rockfalls, penetrating as the sinister creak of



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an ice sheet, melancholic as a horn that resounds its calling from the lonely summit, waiting to be replied" (Stormcrow, *Disposition to Tyranny*).

*WITH NEW FORMS OF SOUL:* This world—as if it even exists—sickens and saddens itself in *expectation* of what it will not seize, of what it refuses to be. Be not so. Plant the flag of your NO on the highest peak. "The spiritual Path is like climbing up to the mountain-top through hills and dales and thorny woods, and along steep and dangerous precipices. But on this Path *THERE CAN BE NO GOING BACK OR HALTING*. Everyone must get to the top, which is the direct realisation of the supreme Godhead. All hesitation or sidetracking or resting in the halfway houses is but postponement of the day of true and final fulfillment. You cannot be too alert on this path. *EVEN THE SLIGHTEST OF LINGERING IN THE FALSE WORLD* of shadows is necessarily an invitation to some suffering which could have been avoided if the eyes had been steadily fixed on the supreme goal of life. If there is one thing which is most necessary for safe and sure arrival at the top, it is love. All other qualifications which are essential for the aspirants of the highest can and must come to them if they faithfully follow the whispers of the unerring guide of love, who speaks from within their own hearts and sheds light on the Path. If you lose hold of the mantle of this guide, *THERE IS ONLY DESPAIR IN STORE FOR YOU*. The heart without love is *ENTOMBED IN UNENDING DARKNESS* and suffering. But the heart which is restless with love is on the way to realisation of the unfading light and the unfathomable sweetness of life divine" (MB, *Mes-sages*). Is there anything more wonderful than walking away into the heights? More thrilling than freely paying the price you are always already paying the price for not paying, that you are unfreely paying for anyway, the price of yourself? Is anything more

worthwhile than becoming lighter with each step? “GORAATH: It’s really hard to point a singular theme in our music, but, especially regarding ‘Disposition to Tyranny,’ the world of the mountains is certainly one that most inspired us. When you climb a mountain or just wander into alpine environments, your body and your mind are exposed to enormous pressures, you are forced to reconsider the concepts of greatness, of life, death, of what is necessary rather not. Every journey channels towards the perception of what the human being is, and is not, every step towards the summit frees the man from the burdens under which the humanity is sinking. Maybe those are the reasons that brought authors such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Renè Daumal, both great inspires for us, to consider the life among mountains as a chance to surpass the human being, to regain the purity of the lost and dusted instincts. We never had the will to instruct or teach anybody, and besides we’re quiet jealous of the knowledge we gained in our lives. This is why many of the concepts we express are set into strongly metaphoric lyrics, accessible to whom has yet made a certain evolutionary path. Paraphrasing Daumal: ‘Nothing I want to know which I have not paid for . . . ‘And you, have you paid yet?’” (“Stormcrow Interview,” *Core of Brutality*). “Questa montagna è tale, / che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave; / e quant' om più va sù, e men fa male. / Però, quand' ella ti parrà soave / tanto, che sù andar ti fia leggero / com' a seconda giù andar per nave, / allor sarai al fin d'esto sentiero; / quivi di riposar l'affanno aspetta. / Più non rispondo, e questo so per vero” (Dante, *Purgatorio*, IV.88-96) [This mountain is such that ever at the beginning below it is toilsome, but the higher one goes the less it wearies. Therefore, when it shall seem to you so pleasant that the going up is as easy for you as going downstream in a boat, then will you be at the

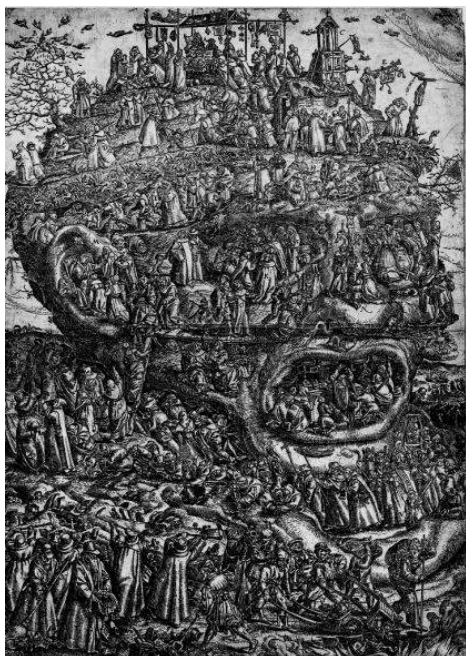
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end of this path: hope there to rest your weariness; no more I answer, and this I know for true]. Or at least do yourself and everyone a favor and quickly *fall into a crevasse*: “In the bottom of an abyss oppressed with haze—myself in this pit confusing myself with the horror of things, humble and sad crevasse cracking the planet, my presence here is like a cry, without hope, the cry of a blind beast calling a beloved . . . shattered by desire for the ungraspable” (Georges Bataille, *Guilty*).







**being neither  
oneself  $\emptyset$  nor  
someone else –**

HWORDE is a book imprint openly burying and consecrating authorial identity within inauthentic compositional processes of exhumatory reformation ordered towards positive disintegration of discourse and transformation of its practice into logical deeds of textual SELF-DEFIANCE. We have had enough

of words, enough of the courted decadences of literary delivery and the celebrated hype-o-crises of intellectual analysis. Observe how the worldly orb sickly intoxicates itself with grossly individualized associations and influences of thought. We will take a steeper and salutary way, a profound ciphered path where there is silence to hear yourself think, where deep inside the inverted and corridorred pillars of the crowded misauthorial *mine*, it is not you thinking at all, but something else ... undeniable unanthropic entity. Here is the time for a new breed of word, a swarmic re-verb sprung from the diamantine unground occluded in the self-inaugurating triune shell games of religion-science-philosophy and ignored by their ingrown polyamorous offspring, the humanities. Our luminous blackened scriptorium—never 'ours' at all—is both cavern and summit, tower and cell, the site and dwelling of depersonal styli simultaneously piercing abyss and empyrean with divine schisms of pure doctrine, coldly immanent milieus, and occult quantum liturgies. Past and future have little bearing on the nightly stirgine labor of this writing, this heretical hunt exhausting the word of self and world. Now is the place for HWORDE.

*Bergmetal* is a collaborative exploratory tract on the trisonic intersections of MOUNTAINS, MYSTICISM, and HEAVY METAL. Mixing theoretical reflection and studious redaction into ascending gestures of alpine musical thought, the book proceeds via seven poetic emblems plus commentary addressing works by Bathory, Darkthrone, Sleep, Aluk Todolo, Omega Massif, Schrei aus Stein, and Saphuran. Opening essays by the authors on the ideals and history of the bergmetal genre provide a logistical starting point and contextual basecamp.



"A casual email...a voidal exposure...! In this slim volume, metal, lyrics, and philosophy combine - "with spirit deathless, endless, infinite" - to launch a ferocious assault on the imagination!"

- Manabrata Guha, Prize Fellow, Univ. of Bath

"A strange creature I am now, burnt by the sun and yet frozen, clung onto my will to take just another step"

- Stormcrow

"Metal! Mysticism! Mountains! Whoever loves one will be interested in this book. Whoever loves two will like it. Whoever loves all three might be in paradise."

- Nicola Masciandaro, Brooklyn College

"An ascent into the wilderness of alpine aesthetics and heavy metallurgies, with poetry, mysticism, and esoteric philosophy illuminating the peaks and abysses of sublime human experience alongside the indifferent expanse of geological time."

- RH, Schrei aus Stein

**HWORDE**