

## **APTRGANGR – THE EARTH IS POPULATED WITH A GREY MASS OF CREATURES INSTINCTIVELY RUNNING ON THE TREADMILL OF LIFE**

Many tales and myths of old testify of the Devil's hand in the realms of man. Drawing upon the wellspring of old folklore from an era when the hole in the heart of men was filled by a deeper sensitivity to the otherworldly and spiritual, Aptrgangr channels Black Metal with an old soul in veneration of the Horned One. Addergebroed spoke with E (vocals & lyrics) and J (guitars & song writing).



***“The Horns of Sabbath Bray”* has been out for a couple of weeks now. How has the feedback been so far?**

E: I have not crawled the corners of the web for reviews, so bar your favorable one I’ve not seen much mention. I get the impression it has been overall favorable though.

J: We haven’t seen a lot of reviews popping up indeed but considering the huge amount of releases there currently are, and based upon the sales of the tape, we can’t complain. It didn’t drown in the mass.

**For now, *“The Horns of Sabbath Bray”* has only been released on tape format by Haunted by Ill Angels. Are there plans for a release on other physical formats?**

E: I’d like to see more physical editions, for sure.

J: There are no specific plans for other formats yet, but we are on the lookout for a label that’s willing to release the demo on vinyl and/or CD. However, we know we mustn’t delude ourselves in times where supply isn’t able to meet the demand, when we’re talking about vinyl manufacturing of course. Patience is a virtue.

**Why did you specifically choose to release on tape? Is this the ideal format for Aptrgangr’s music?**

E: I’m personally a big fan of putting out demos on physical formats rather than letting them stay on digital only, and tapes are a good format for a demo.

J: For me tape has always been the ideal format for a demo. I also really like the warm sound of a type I cassette and in my opinion, this fits our music very well. Besides that, it completely made sense since I myself am part of Haunted by Ill Angels.

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Many of the bands releasing on Haunted by Ill Angels seem to belong to a small circle of musicians, mostly based in Belgium. Aptrgangr, however, is a collaboration between two Belgian musicians and Swedish vocalist E. How did E. end up doing vocals for Aptrgangr?

E: I'd been ordering some tapes from the label in the past, the Ish Kerioth, Paulus and Todesreigen tapes if memory serves, so I kept tabs on the label itself. Later I started an exchange with M from the label about literature, and it was mentioned that J & P were working on something and were looking for a vocalist. Eventually it was suggested that I'd give it a shot, so I got in touch with them after hearing the recordings and we started talking about concepts. The rest is history.



J: We are indeed a rather small group of musicians, but it has never been the intention to limit the parties involved. We are willing to collaborate with like-minded people, no matter where they're from. For Aptrgangr, P and I had a clear vision musically and conceptually. We more or less had an idea what the vocals should sound like and started looking for the right vocalist. Initially we thought about possible candidates nearby, but none seemed fitting. In the end it was M who suggested we'd ask E. I've been following several of his bands quite closely for years and was already familiar with his style. After a first tryout we were immediately convinced, both on a musical and on a personal level.

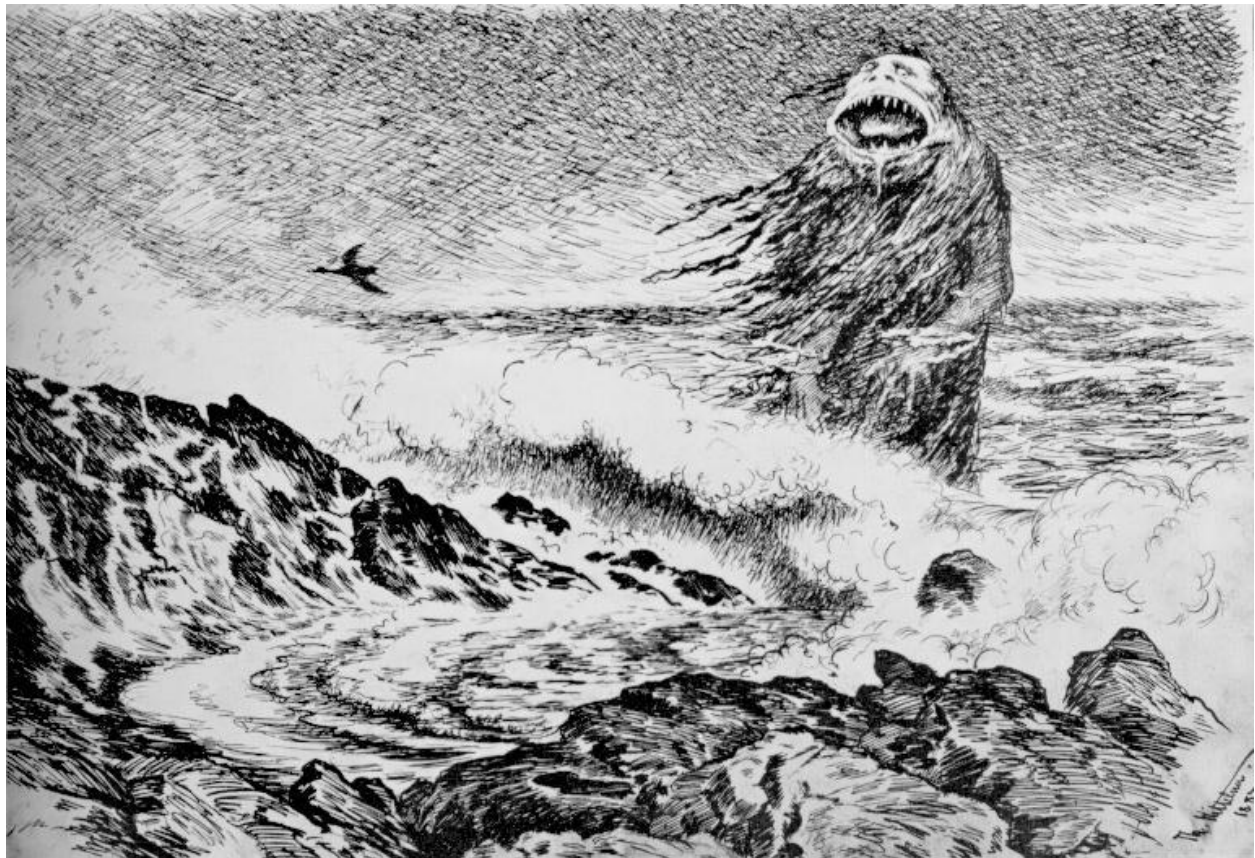
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Aptrgangr refers to the 'draugr' or 'draug', an undead creature from the Scandinavian saga literature and folktale that is some kind of 'aptrganga', literally "again-walker". Was it E. who suggested the band name and lyrical context, given the link with Scandinavian folklore?

E: The lyrical concepts were discussed between the three of us – I think J & P might have already had an inkling of where they thought the concepts were going. The name was brainstormed, and I can't recall which of us brought it forth.

J: If I remember correctly, it was one of E's suggestions. The initial idea was to base the lyrics on folk tales we're familiar with, on motifs that can be found in Belgium and adjoining Western European cultures. Had E not agreed to work with us, we certainly wouldn't have chosen a Scandinavian band name.

"Aptrgangr" actually refers to the haunting, the walking again itself rather than the revenant responsible for it. It's an Old Norse term, of course, but it doesn't necessarily refer to a phenomenon that's unique to Scandinavian folklore. Revenants in one form or another are common in a myriad of stories from different cultures all over the world.



*Example of a draugen by Theodor Kittelsen - Sjøtrollet, 1887 (The Sea Troll)*

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The 'draugr' often appeared in Icelandic folk literature. Why did you specifically choose to name the band after this creature and not one that is more common in Swedish or Belgian folk tales?

E: Draug/Draugr isn't unique to the Icelandic folklore but originates from Old Norse (which of course is related and perhaps most closely akin to modern Icelandic) – so to me it makes sense.

J: It does indeed. There are more Icelandic than other Scandinavian manuscripts – most of the latter have not been preserved – but considering that Scandinavian settlers arrived in Iceland only around 1200 years ago while folk tales are usually much older, it's a given that they all had (and still have) a lot in common. Motifs may have evolved in different directions during the centuries to follow, but in their core, they are a shared Scandinavian heritage and not limited to only Sweden or Iceland.

Besides that – like stated earlier – the concept of a draugr or revenant is not limited to Scandinavian folklore. A lot of traditional local folk tales talk about the deceased roaming the earth looking for redemption and trying to make their way to the afterlife or, in more contemporary tales, haunting the physical plane and often even wanting to do harm.

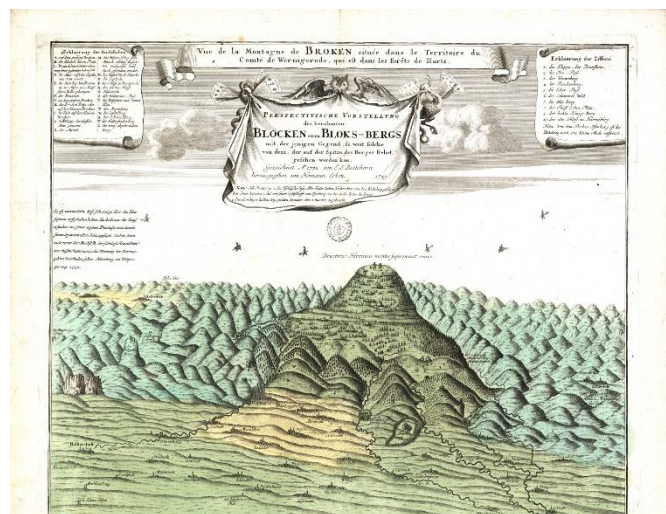
**Do the 'draugr' still live on in modern day life, music, art, literature, ...?**

E: I would say the literal meaning is nothing more than stories of old. The idea of revenants in the spiritual plane is another far more interesting one. You could say however that the world is full of living dead, husks of flesh that wander aimlessly with no soul or greater connection to the Other. The glory of the digital age.

J: I agree, the earth is populated with a grey mass of creatures instinctively running on the treadmill of life. However, the difference with the revenants of the old tales is that the modern ones have no real purpose but a hopeless pursuit of the modern society's acknowledgment. A rather empty non-existence if you may.

**I have absolutely no clue what the album title is referring to, so please enlighten me!**

E: The title is lifted from a line in the title track that speaks of the witch flight to Brocken peak, to celebrate the Sabbath with the Master and His hellish host. The track deals with the concept of the Wild Hunt as a precursor to the travel to the Sabbath, and as such the horns of the Hunt sound to signal the start of the hunt, but at the Sabbath they sound to signal the feast and veneration of the Devil and his court.



*Representation of Brocken witches flying to Blocksberg on an illustration by LS Bestehorn (1732)*



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**How is the album title related to the beautiful painting that was used for the album cover?**

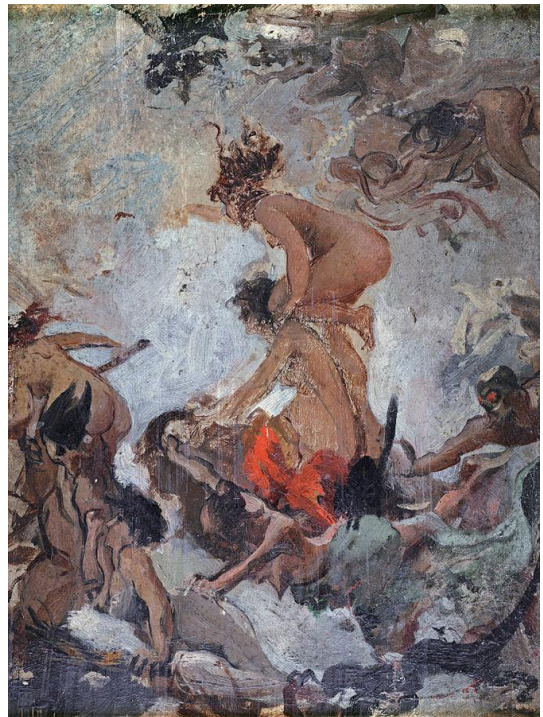
**J:** The painting we decided on is a study Luis Ricardo Falero did for his *“Witches going to the Sabbath”*, so it kind of picks up where the title track left off. While the final painting is very detailed, well-executed and beautiful, we thought the raw energy of the study was more fitting in the context of our music. Its crudeness also goes better with the idea of medieval devilry which is, of course, reflected in the lyrics, but also in the calligraphy (based on old manuscripts) we used for both our logo and the demo’s title and track list.

**The lyrics draw upon the wellspring of old folklore from an era when the hole in the heart of men was not filled by screens but by a deeper sensitivity to the otherworldly and spiritual. Do you consider yourselves spiritual beings? If so, in what way(s) does spirituality have a place in your everyday life and this rat-race called life?**

**E:** I can’t speak for the others, but yes, I consider myself a spiritual person. Obviously that tag has a wide interpretation, so I’m not sure we even have the same definition, but I accept and believe in something beyond the physical realm and that some of these things may have an impact on the physical realm as well. In everyday life I think as with anything it is present, but its intensity certainly varies depending on a lot of factors. Has it altered my life in any way? I can’t say for certain, but I believe so.

Also, to me at least the practice of art is an almost spiritual act. Channelling whatever impulses that your mind picks up and forming these into something – whether that be painting, poetry, music, lyrical content, performance art or other expressions that seek to assail the senses of others – I consider this a very spiritual act that may impact others.

**J:** It is most definitely a very personal thing. I don’t think of myself as a spiritual person in terms of religion but perhaps more in relation to nature and some personal form of self-transcendence. I am not looking nor striving to achieve a greater purpose as an indispensable actor in the greater scheme of things. Because, in my opinion, there is none really. On the other hand, who am I to dispose of such ideas? I am, however, definitely and constantly striving for self-enrichment in a non-materialistic way. One might consider this or at least parts of it to be a spiritual act. And like E stated earlier, it’s hard to deny or look past the spirituality in the practice of art.



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In the Western Christian and Jewish tradition, the Devil has entered popular folklore, particularly in his role as a trickster figure. He is found as a character in many traditional folktales and legends where he often attempts to trick or outwit other characters. What are some of your favourite local folk tales (both Belgian and Swedish) wherein the devil – in one way or another – plays a significant role?

E: So Swedish folk tales are often quite short, and there's several of them that are variations on other cultures' folklore which I guess is a natural thing. "*Prins Hatt Under Jorden*" is one of those that has a narrative close to some of the Greek myths about Orpheus. One other that I recall from my childhood is the one about a boy who competes with a giant in eating and cheats to not end up being food himself. We had a book in my home called just "*Folk Tales*" which was one of a series of seven books in total that gathered folk tales from all over the world. One of these has fantastic illustrations by Hans Arnold and some of those are great as well – "*The Troll on the Island by the Sea*" from Iceland, which is a very Hansel & Gretel-like tale. The seventh book is more themed and contains several very short tales relating to various beings from folklore and this has a specific one with the Devil as the antagonist – one good one is where the Devil appears to punish a noblewoman, "*Pintorparfrun*". Otherwise it is also easy to see a lot of these other beings as manifestations of the Devil – trolls, sirens, hobgoblins and others were very much viewed as servants of the Horned One back then.

J: There are a lot of local folk tales in which the devil is mentioned. Most of these are also variations on other classic Western European tales. The local devil tales often have a very rural character, which I enjoy quite a bit. For instance, the devil's barn, where the devil is outwitted by the supplicant. Or the stories about the shepherds/exorcists, like the shepherd from Arbrefontaine (Liège), who dabbled in (black) magic and was in possession of magical grimoires. The stories about the German shepherds, common in West Flanders, of whom is believed that they possessed magic powers granted by the devil. In the southern part of Belgium there are also lot of classic



*The Devil's Barn*

tales in which a poor farmer calls upon the devil for help, quite often it's the farmer's wife who prevents the devil from succeeding. One of my favourite tales for sure is the story of the soldier and the devil, taking place in Aalst. In this one a falsely accused soldier is eventually acquitted through intervention of the devil.

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Every lyric starts with singing 3 times the same word (*"Toll, toll toll", "Come, come, come" and "Howl, howl, howl"*). Is there a deeper (numerological) meaning behind this way of starting each lyric?

E: There wasn't a particular intent behind it, the first lyric was written as an attempt to see if the vocal arrangements would fit, so an audition of sorts. As three is usually a magic number occurring in folklore, it felt like a very natural thing to use this. Later when the other two lyrics were being written, I found myself with the same start for all three tracks. So, three tracks that begin with a three. I can't really say what drew me towards this.

**Do you use the number 13 in *"A Faustian Pact"* for its connotation to bad luck?**

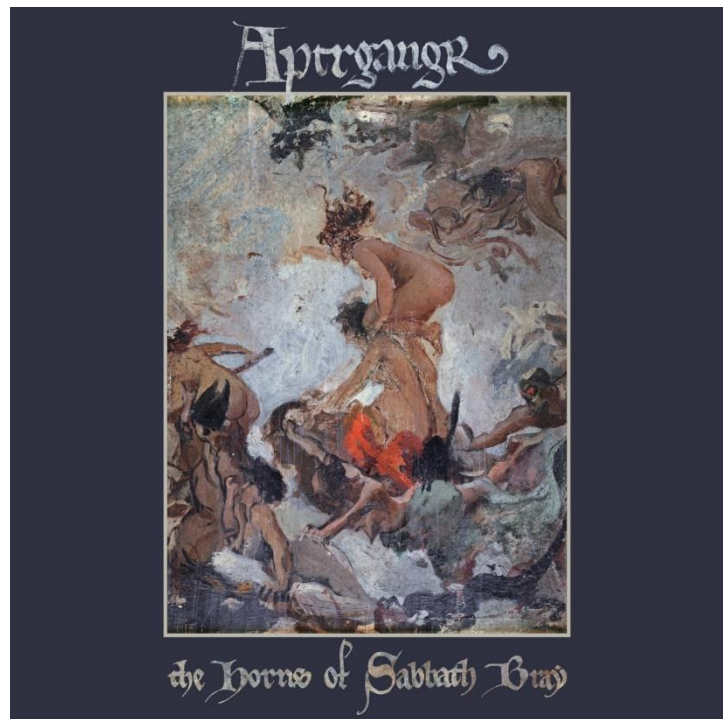
E: Yes, like a bad omen as it announces the arrival of the Devil. The lyric is loosely based on an old practice where a supplicant would appear at the local church with a pact signed, then place it in the keyhole of the church and walk around the church widdershins to sell their soul to the Devil. Usually, these bargains end poorly for the supplicant.

**Aptrgangr's Black Metal is spiced up with a lot of folk elements. Are all these folky interludes and different instruments played by yourself or did you also use samples?**

J: All the instruments and most of the sounds you hear on the demo are played and recorded by ourselves. We did not use a lot of pre-existing samples, we've mainly created our own. The nature sounds for instance are field recordings P and I made. Every bell and chime you hear is also recorded by ourselves. The only things sampled are the choirs, the timpani and the organ sound.

**Which different folk instruments did you use on *"The Horns of Sabbath Bray"*?**

We didn't use a lot of uncommon folk instruments. We've used an acoustic guitar, singing bowls, different types of bells and chimes, some other percussive instruments, a mouth harp, ... We didn't really decide on the use of these instruments upfront, but we just started using what came natural to us.



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**Which folk artists serve as an inspiration?**

I can't really say that any specific artist served as a direct inspiration for Aptrgangr's music. I do often listen to folk music, traditional folk tunes as well as contemporary dark folk, ambient and neoclassical music. It is most probable that the years of actively listening to this kind of music subconsciously shaped my image of what these folk elements should sound like.

**In some of the more shimmering parts, it looks like you used some brass instruments or keyboards. Is that correct or are all these parts played on guitar?**

**J:** That is correct indeed. We have incorporated some keyboards in most of the tracks, but in a rather subtle way. I've found them to really enrich the compositions without distracting from the main idea. We never intended for the keyboard to be a lead instrument in any way, it is there to serve the purpose of the music as a whole, nothing more and nothing less.

**Was Aptrgangr a one-time musical experiment between all 3 musicians or are there plans for follow-up releases?**

**E:** We never discussed if this would be a one-time thing, but I think the consensus is that if inspiration should strike again, we will answer our Master's call.

**J:** When I started writing music for what was to become Aptrgangr it was never my intention for it to be a one-time endeavour. I wouldn't be as dedicated to it knowing the project would only have a short insignificant lifespan. But indeed, no plans for the future were made yet. As long as the inspirational fires keep burning, we'll worship at its flame.

**Do you consider Aptrgangr a studio-only project or are there plans to take the music to the stage?**

**J:** Never say never, but at this point playing live doesn't seem very realistic. There is of course the issue of logistics when a member of the band is located 2.000 km away from the others. Besides that, we would need to find a fitting live line-up to be able to present the music the way we did on recording. I wouldn't want a live performance to be a watered-down version of what we intended it to sound like. I don't think we'll be able to find a suitable live line-up that easy, so for now we'll keep focussing on writing and recording music, and we'll see what the future might bring.

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