

**ELEND**  
**'The Umbersun / Au tréfonds des Ténèbres'**  
**[Troisièmes Leçons de Ténèbres]**  
**[Office des Ténèbres: Dernière Messe]**

- track by track p.1 -

ELEND's trilogy refers to the Christian tradition of the "officium tenebrarum". In Roman Catholic liturgy, the "Office des Ténèbres" or "officium tenebrarum" (office of darkness) was a group of three masses celebrated in the nights (at a time called "Matins", i.e. between midnight and four in the morning) of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday preceding Easter Sunday. Each mass bore the name of "leçons de ténèbres" (lectures of darkness), completed by the name of the day on which it had to be held.

ELEND transformed the Catholic officium's movement towards light and life into a descent into utter darkness and death. Whereas the first album was marked by despair and the second by rebellion and violence, the last one stands under the sign of death.

*The Umbersun / Au tréfonds des Ténèbres* corresponds to the "Leçons de ténèbres du Vendredi Saint" (the lectures of Holy Friday), which were originally held in the night from Friday to Saturday. This third mass, which closes the officium, is the darkest and most desperate, since it commemorates the death of Christ. Its ceremony involved the extinguishing of all lights, with the exception of one single candle left alight and concealed behind the altar by the officiant. At the end of the office the music was answered by the crowd with screams and tumult, thus representing the disorder and confusion that appeared at the death of Christ (Mt 27: 51). Then the last candle was shown as evidence of the saviour's resurrection. This manifestation of light at the end of the officium had several functions: on the one hand, it was a symbol for the resurrection of Christ and a sign of hope, on the other hand, a symbol for the uniqueness of light: it is said in the "exultet" of the liturgy on Holy Saturday that light must receive light; Christ resurrected is Lucifer, and only light can welcome him. "Lucifer the morning star" must find the Easter candle alight; "this bearer of light, who does not know decline and who has returned from Hell, has made shine on man his light so pure".

This is the essence of the album's lyrics: Lucifer the fallen angel disappears, his name is taken away from him, and Christ becomes the bearer of light. What is celebrated in the Catholic officium, in fact, is the "baptism" of Christ-Lucifer, whereas ELEND continue following the angel into the heart of darkness (i.e. the outer darkness, "les ténèbres du dehors", a term from Christian cosmography describing the place for those creatures that either have no name anymore or have never had any). At the end of ELEND's officium there is only silence, death and darkness.

The structure of the album functions on several levels, but the general movement is one from cataclysm towards silence, with a gradual decrease of orchestral density after the piece of music *The Umbersun*, which is the climax of the album. The album is structured like the original "leçons de ténèbres": it consists of three groups each of which comprises a "leçon" followed by a "répons" and a "nocturne".

The choir was divided into two sections: the high and mezzo sopranos incarnating the angelic choir sing in Latin (and Hebrew, for the name of God), the altos and the male basses, incarnating the infernal choir, sing in English. The soloist (Nathalie Barbary, soprano) incarnates Luvadea. The three "leçons" have a structural leitmotif in the form of a Byzantine choir (basso continuo sung by the basses and long melismas sung by the soloist). The lyrics are a succession of narrative and symbolic moments, more characterised by a poetic and metaphorical than purely dramatic expression.

It should be clear that all this is a personal interpretation of one of the founding myths of occidental imagination. ELEND fuse many literary and philosophical references and take liberties with biblical or theological texts. One could even speak of dreamt mythology.

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**Overture**

*Prélude*

Bonus track unavailable so far; it was to appear on a limited edition. Introduction of the album. The Latin verses give the plot of the album and place it under the influence of Melpomene, the muse of tragedy: "Incipit lamentatio musae Melpomenes".

The original "leçons de ténèbres" started with an invitation recalling the origins of the text: "Here begins the lamentation (or: prayer) of the prophet Jeremiah" after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Musically, the track is structured like a prelude, and the main musical themes of the album are being introduced.

First Movement: the Reconquest of Paradise:

**Du tréfonds des ténèbres**

*Premier Nocturne*

An epic piece of music. The major musical themes refer to Richard Wagner (the first part of the track), and to Richard Strauss (the second part).

The text is narrative. It describes the reconquest of Paradise.

Temporary victory of the first eye of God (Lucifer). In gnosticism (allegorical and esoteric interpretation of the Bible, often condemned as heretic by the Church; based on apocryphal books or gospels, the gnosis is the knowledge of the spiritual mysteries of religion) the eyes of God represented deities symbolising several eras.

God's name changes from Yhvh to Ialdabaoth, the impotent demiurge of Ophitic and Naassenian gnosis: "I unname thee, Ialdabaoth".

Paradise is reconquered by the Luciferian legions. Supremacy of the first eye of God (Lucifer). This second war ends with a final defeat, however: the "second death"; this is why the assertion of victory is clouded by a final "deploratio" (interpreted by Nathalie Barbary incarnating Luvadea).

**Melpomene**

*Première Leçon*

Pause in narration. A metaphorical moment. First encounter with Luvadea ("Love of death" or "Love and death", a way of denomination through association, pun and syllabic writing commonly used by William Blake, e.g. "Urizen" or "Luvah" in *Vala or the Four Zoas*) bearing the mask of tragedy ("She came to me disguised as Melpomene"). She symbolises the desire for death.

Image of the serpent ("I looked into the eyes of the Basilisk"). The Basilisk gave death by mere glance. In the middle-ages it was also the symbol of demoniac women. In this context, the Basilisk is but another face of Luvadea.

**Moon of Amber**

*Premier Répons*

Continuation of the previous text. Love song. Hymn of praise to the shadows.

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Second Movement: the Seven Seals:

The second movement is based on the *Revelation to John*. Its leitmotif is an atonal choir, sung by the angelic choir, on the four Hebrew consonants that form the name of God (the tetragrammaton). As it was too sacred to be pronounced (Ex 3: 13-14 and 20: 7), its vowels were omitted (Hebrew could be written without vowels), in order to make the name really unpronounceable.

Most of the metaphors and imagery refer to the *Revelation to John*.

**Apocalypse**

***Second Nocturne***

Second narrative moment of the album: war; the infernal legions are assaulted by the angelic legions. Inversion of the first movement (Rev 20: 7 ff.).

The fallen angel appears only as an observer ("We hide from the face of God") and does not act any longer.

Opening of the seventh seal.

The angelic choir's first invocation of the name of God (atonal YHVH-choir, pronouncing the Hebrew letters Yod, Hé, Vaw, Hé).

**Umbra**

***Seconde Leçon***

"Umbra", an astronomic term describing the shadow cone of an eclipse, the darkest region of the shadow produced by the superposition of two planets.

The central piece of the album was conceived as its "heart of darkness". Image of the eclipse, which has been used repeatedly since the first album. The statue reappears (the image of permanence), the metaphor that structured *Les Ténèbres du Dehors*.

The seventh angel pours his bowl into the air (Rev 16: 17).

Second invocation of the angelic choir.

Second encounter with Luvadea.

**The Umbersun**

***Second Répons***

Third invocation; appearance of Yahveh (Hebrew text: "I am the one that is (Ex 3: 14), Lucifer, son of the morning"). Supremacy of the angelic choir. The age (and victory) of the seventh eye of God (Jesus).

The Umbersun is the "shadow sun"; the image of total darkness and eclipse, as well as of sunlight having become so bright it turns into its antithesis.

The darkest and most violent piece of music ELEND have ever written. Extremely dense orchestration and often atonal harmonies.

The final defeat, the "second death" and the lake of fire after the final judgement (Rev 20: 14): "Est mors secunda This is the second death"

The piece of music closes with screams, the last ones of the album. The Hebrew verses take over Christ's cry on the cross before his death: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me)" (Mt 27: 46). Christ's words pronounced by the fallen angel are perceived as a sort of challenge. The second filicide. Death is the only way to attain liberty and to escape patriarchal law.

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Third Movement: Time Suspended, Death:

**In the Embrasure of Heaven**

*Troisième Leçon*

The text takes over the metaphors of the last verses of the Revelation and the Bible (Rev 22: 13-16). The title refers to the image of the door of Heaven appearing at the end of the Revelation.

Christ becomes Lucifer, "The bearer of Light" (Rev 22: 16), through a symbolic usurpation of name.

Third encounter with Luvadea.

**The Wake of the Angel**

*Troisième Répons*

The serpent appears again ("I am the eyes of the Basilisk", i.e. death itself); amorous approach of death. Death is eternity offered. Death is the end of death itself: "Kill the dying in my soul, my love, for Death once dead bears no more dying then, and you'll be dead to strike the dead."

**Au tréfonds des ténèbres**

*Dernier Nocturne*

Death of the angel, the without-name, symbolically transformed in death desired, the supreme act of freedom. Encounter with the third of the three Parcae, Atropos ("La troisième sœur adombre la lumière"). The words of the text are not pronounced: they are expressed by mere melody.

Musically, the piece refers to the first track, just like its title. The first four chords, without dissonance this time, are those of *Du tréfonds des ténèbres*. The second theme of strings is a variation on one of the leitmotifs of the first track - the accompaniment of the final "deploratio" at the end of *Du tréfonds des ténèbres* (soprano vocals: "Miserere").

The track closes with the phrase "Circumdede runt me gemitus mortis" ("Ils m'entourent les gémissements de la mort"), taken over from Catholic liturgy.

Silence.