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THE ROMANTIC HERITAGE AND THE CONCEPT
OF THE POST-ROMANTIC IN LITERATURE AND MUSIC

"Kubla Khan" – on the poet' s alienation from his own vision

Traditionally, Romanticism has been inextricably associated with emotionality and its exaltation of the natural as well as the supernatural manifested in its celebration of folklore and the medieval. However grounded such a view is, it only serves as an indicator conducive to our understanding of the most typical features of the period. At the same time, as any simplification of a problem, it illuminates it as a whole, but also neglects a subtle interplay of contradictions constituting the phenomenon. In this case, Wordsworth's self-regenerative introspection, Coleridge's professed philosophy of reconciliation, Keats' ultimate delight in sensuous experience or Shelley's empathy with inanimate objects proved to be solutions that, when tested to the full, testified to their authors' collapse as instinctual artists.[1]

To illustrate, Coleridge rejects potential alternatives to the philosophy of reconciliation:[2] materialism, subjective idealism and dualism. Having explained

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[1] The term "instinctual artists" is a deliberate reference to T. S. Eliot's words of criticism of Romantic poets' tenets. According to his critical evaluation "the bad poet" is personal and, conversely, good poetry "is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (Eliot 1953, 30). More specifically, T. S. Eliot refers to S. T. Coleridge as "a ruined man" (Eliot 1953, 173). Hence the author of the present article coins the phrase "collapse as instinctual artists" to signify what, all in all, has come to be one of the prevalent accusations of Romanticism in modern literary criticism. Significantly, however, the author does not share the aforementioned view and he believes that all the artists including poets such as T. S. Eliot are to a lesser or greater degree "instinctual", that is driven by their emotions. Still, it is interesting to see how the theory put forward by T. S. Eliot works when applied to Coleridge's work, which the author does having chosen "Kubla Khan".

[2] The author uses the term "the philosophy of reconciliation" to denote Coleridge's emphasis laid on the Imagination as "linking man to the inanimate external world through perception" (Prickett 38). This is not, however, a mere application of man's interior to the

the popularity of materialism by human predilection for outward pheno-
mena that can be easily detected by senses, he strongly criticises placing
the solution in the object for its taking for granted the unknown and the
unintelligible (Coleridge 1957, 3156). Coleridge downgrades this obsessive
preoccupation with outward presences with equal fervour as he finds
fault, particularly in his later work, with subjective idealism – a seemingly
attractive alternative to materialism. This tendency to place reality in the
subject, or mind, is dismissed by the poet as an absurd account of
human "experience or the external world on the basis of a denial of it"
(Wheeler 33).

Moreover, David Hume's degradation of causality into a mere succes-
sion of ideas linked by association leads, in Coleridge's view, to a corres-
ponding diminution in value of ethics and theology (Willey 191–192).
Finally, the third alternative to be disapproved of in *Biographia Literaria*
was the philosophy maintaining an absolute duality of mind and matter.
This is clearly expressed by Descartes in the conclusion of his Sixth
Meditation where he claims that for any minds and bodies which are
united, it is counterfactually possible that they be separated (Wilson
186–188).

Admittedly, concentrating on Descartes' ontological argument and
modal metaphysics, Coleridge addresses him as "the first philosopher, who
introduced the absolute and essential heterogeneity of the soul as intelligence,
and the body as matter" (Coleridge 1907, 88). At the same time, Coleridge
argues that such a distinction does not have to effect in a division, so that
the two qualities might progress to some position which does not allow
them to maintain their absolute difference and he adds that "the law of
causality holds only between homogeneous things, i.e. things having some
common property; and cannot extend from one world into another, its
opposite" (Coleridge 1907, 89).

Having spurned the three aforementioned philosophical theories and
making a distinction between subjective idealism and idealism that is not
prone to subjectivism, Coleridge appears to follow Kant and his concept
that the imagination is a powerful creative force moulding "a second nature
out of the material supplied to it by actual nature" (Kant 47). The
resultant representations of the imagination are termed by Kant "ideas",
transparently contrasted with the Cartesian "innate ideas" explaining the

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external world; it rather results in the typically Romantic process of "internalisation". Thus
the external is to be magnificently united with the "still more wonderful world within"
(Coleridge 1949, 168). In view of this, it should not be surprising that Coleridge dismisses
materialism, subjective idealism or dualism as unsatisfactory because simplistic solutions. Thus,
they concentrate either only on one aspect of reality (materialism and subjective idealism) or
on the conflict between "the soul as intelligence, and the body as matter" (Coleridge 1907, 88).

interaction of vital mind and lifeless matter.[3] Thus, being as certain of the world's existence as of his own, Coleridge, in his retreat from materialism, does not facilely fall into solipsism or subjective idealism.

Still, as a poet, he appears to epitomise a martyr suffering from a self-inflicted pain grounded on the outgrown myth of failure, the failure of his life as well as of his creed, which is most conspicuously epitomised by his "Kubla Khan." In this context, the philosophy of reconciliation he professes, reflected in an attempt to unify his self-consciousness with the consciousness of the being of beings, ironically enough, results in a fragmentary internal reality created by the imagery of the poem.

Furthermore, referring to the whole as a mere fantasy or poetic reverie, Coleridge diminishes the potential of his achievement of the metaphorical mode in which the poem is conceived. In this way, he represses his metaphysical desire for the otherness of the Other by rationalising and translating it into self-knowledge. This implied process of comprehension, in turn, activates a reduction of the alien to the familiar, of the Other to the self. In consequence, the trace of the Other or that of the Third, identifiable with the Abyssinian maid,[4] is reified as intrinsic to the self's psyche, facilely dismissed as a trivial manifestation of the poet's capricious mood.

A fundamental question is whether the major obstacle preventing the speaker from contacting the other reality is the fragmentary nature of the reality conceived by him in "Kubla Khan." At this point, any biographical notes, some of which were given by the poet himself, should be relegated to the role of secondary importance, as these circumstances are in conflict with

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[3] One of the famous consequences of Cartesian dualism is the necessity of positing innate ideas. In accordance with the argument found at the end of Meditation 2 (Descartes http://www.btinternet.com/), if external objects are knowable with any clarity at all, then there must be innate ideas. Such ideas come not from the senses or the imagination, but from the operation of the mind alone. Only such ideas have the features of necessity or universality which are marks of such a science; experiential ideas are, rather, contingent. Furthermore, ideas do not resemble the objects they claim to represent. Because of this, we know that mind is essentially a thinking substance and body essentially an extended substance; that is, they are essentially different. Therefore, no idea of extension can be formed in the mind by the senses.

[4] Evidently, the Abyssinian maid is not to be identified with the speaker himself, but rather with his wishful thinking with reference of the ideal artifice standing for the absolute and thus being an analogue of immortality. Since the figure of the Abyssinian maid is extraneous to the speaker's self, she is much more like the Other or the Third signifying an enigma of the supernatural, the mystery of God. However, the author of the present article is aware of quite a different possible interpretation, emphasizing the fact that the Abyssinian maid's song the speaker wishes to revive has occurred in his vision before. In view of this, she can be seen as "intermediary for the speaker himself" (Wheeler 153). Yet even then she represents the idea that has not only been externalised, but has also alienated from the speaker, belonging now to the Other.

the standpoint of the organic nature of the creative process, also postulated by him.[5] If we assume that the latter criterion of evaluation is valid, in spite numerous arguments to the contrary (most of them concentrating on the obvious, i.e. on the circumstances under which the poem was conceived) (Jackson 213–247), the structure of "Kubla Khan" is coherent enough as it is controlled by the internal logic of the piece. Thus the leading image of the artefact-like Paradise Lost reinforced by its Abyssinian analogue denotes a virtual impossibility of forming this image in the speaker's interior. Although an impression of incongruity can be caused by the speaker's ambivalent attitude to this paradise, the price of which, incidentally, may be damnation, T. S. Eliot's distinction between Classicism and Romanticism in terms of "the difference between the complete and the fragmentary" (Eliot 1972, 79) does not seem to be entirely unobjectionable. All in all, in "The Waste Land," T. S. Eliot himself creates a fragmentary vision of the world, since it is grounded upon the snatches of other writers' words. Admittedly, Eliot's method differs from that of the Romantics, as subordinating the imagery of his poem to the principle of complexity, he achieves the effect of the oneness of all experience and of the simultaneity of the past and present. On the other hand, this technique is not completely unlike that used in "Kubla Khan," where the primary image employed in *Purchas's Pilgrimage* is imaginatively transmuted to be thoroughly deconstructed. On the whole, the fragmentary quality of Coleridge's poem reinforced by a sense of ambiguity is not that much a testimony to the work's formal defects, as it conveys the fidelity to the complexity of experience. In other words, it becomes a structural analogue of the speaker's alienation from his own vision.

Thus the poem's fragmentariness is only a reflection of the speaker's psychological dilemma resulting from the philosophy of reconciliation the poet professes. For Coleridge, as for Kant, the world can be appearance without destroying the independence of objects and the commonness of our experiences. As a result, however, the distinction between subjective and objective becomes blurred (Wheeler 33), thus making the objective partly depend on our perception. Paraphrasing T. S. Eliot's words, Coleridge as well as other Romantics believes he can dispense with allegiance to

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[5] Coleridge advances the reading of a literary work "connectedly " as "the organic Whole" (Coleridge 1907, 162). In this context, the distinction between "mechanical" and "organic" corresponds to the authoritative, arbitrary interpretation and one showing "how a work can be unified but nevertheless changing, growing, and incomplete in being open-ended" (Wheeler 153). In Coleridge's work, this sense of indeterminacy is facilitated by the poet himself, who introduces the preface to "Kubla Khan" and the gloss to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." However, these devices have been usually interpreted by readers and critics literally, concentrating on their historical-biographical ("Kubla Khan") or factual-geographical ("The Ancient Mariner") accuracy.

something outside himself, acting according to the Inner Voice rather than external principles (Eliot 1972, 79–81). Since his knowledge is limited to the interior, instead of encountering the Other, he becomes confronted with his alter ego as this kind of knowledge is a mere equation of one's thought with reality. In this way, he enhances his own identity to fill in the void left by his failure to experience what emerges against his powers of comprehension. To use Levinas' utterance, Coleridge does not follow the example of "Abraham who leaves his fatherland forever for a yet unknown land" (Levinas 348) but he enacts the myth of Ulysses returning to his homeland. In practice, however, Coleridge's return is not quite reminiscent of Ulysses' as instead of being welcomed by a faithful Penelope, he will again be surrounded by indifferent or grudging friends and relatives and by uncomprehending, petty-minded and largely hostile critics.[6] The more so his delusion that he might be acquainted with the sphere of the other world becomes traumatic; he does not recognize the face of the Other in the mirror of the poem – what he sees is only his own countenance. Ironically, i.e. despite T. S. Eliot's dislike of "Kubla Khan," one of the controlling concepts in "The Waste Land" is the same, namely the inability to look the Other straight in the face, which motif is reflected by the passage referring to the journey to Emmaus.

Accordingly, it would be far-fetched to follow in this respect some of the most critical assessments of the Romantics, like those by T. S. Eliot who, paradoxically enough, made exactly the same mistake as the one committed in his view by Coleridge, Wordsworth or Shelley, when he took the ruin of their lives inherent in the incompatibility between discordant ideas in their poems for the visible decline of their work.

Romanticism: "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" in music and literature

This division of the Romantics against themselves is inextricably connected with their spontaneity and individualism, their search for the natural and the mysterious. In one of the most seminal Romantic writings, "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads of the 1800 edition, William Wordsworth states:

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[6] Coleridge was perfectly aware of critics' possible reaction to his poem. That he remained sensitive to unjust criticism is evident while reading his Shakespearean Criticism, where he states: "The crying sin of modern criticism is that it is overloaded with personality. If an author commit an error, there is no wish to set him right not for the sake of the truth, but for the sake of triumph – that the reviewer may show how much wiser, or how much abler he is than the writer.... This is an age of personality and political gossip.... This style of criticism is at the present moment one of the chief pillars of the Scotch professorial court" (Coleridge 1930, 34).

The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect... (935)

This Romantic manifesto emphasized the importance of recording ideas in the manner in which we normally associate them, "in a state of excitement" (Wordsworth 935). In view of this a poem is to attain the condition of a feelingful, imaginative meditation; and if it can frequently be inspired by nature, it should be mainly concerned with human problems, where this natural phenomenon becomes a counterpoint, completion or stimulation of a human psyche. The terms "spontaneity" and "folklore" seem to overlap thus implying the precedence of the natural over the artifice, if not the artificial. In this respect, the indebtedness of Wordsworth's "We Are Seven" to the communal tradition with its simplicity is comparable with Franz Schubert's quintet for piano, violin, viola, cello and double-bass *The Trout*. Evidently, despite the fact that the composition is reminiscent of folk music, it is an ingenious extension of a four-movement sonata structure by the addition of an extra theme, which manipulation results in the form of five brilliant variations. Admittedly, then, the substantial stylisation has very little to do with genuine artlessness of the original material, i.e. folklore; and music is no different from literature in this respect, being suspended between the artifice and the simulation of the natural. To pursue the argument, the little Maid's persistent statement "we are seven" testifying to the child's awareness of the transcendental phenomena forming the bridge between the visible and the invisible is representative of Wordsworth's own interest in the relationship between man and nature in the context of the act of perception. This very act, individualized and not merely social in its nature, is what forms a discrepancy between Neoclassicism and Romanticism: whereas the former recorded in verse the technical developments in modern science, the latter attempted "to explore the new *relationships* that these suggested" (Prickett 11).

In music, the great Romantics regarded their creation as a fluid, fantastic and almost magical way of expressing emotions and moods. At the same time, like Romantic poets, Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt or Richard Wagner realized not only the power, but also the potential imperfections of this idealizing attitude to art. Hence they wrote comparatively a lot about music, attempting to theorize their stance. Thus to prevent their music from being excessively fluid and volatile, they stressed its close relation to other arts, like poetry, drama, painting or dance. This tendency on the part of music to coalesce with texts is literally reflected in Liszt's symphonic poem *Dante Symphony*

whose formal disposition pointing plainly in the direction of symphonic poems is reinforced by literary interpolations, as the composer "sought to suggest the links with his source by printing striking passages from Dante's poem [*Divina Commedia*] at relevant points in the score" (Jost 3). Interestingly, this can be considered an anticipation of modernist tendencies to illuminate these interrelations, stressed so forcefully in such works as James Joyce's or Ezra Pound's. If this modernist trend is somewhat intrinsic and elitist in the sense of being confined to textural experimentation within great literary and musical masterpieces, it was to achieve a contrastingly egalitarian status in postmodern dialectics translatable into the definition of cultural studies as it was postulated by Raymond Williams who insisted on the need for seeing the cultural process as a whole.[7]

Reverting to Romanticism in music, the boundary between this stylistic manifestation and what is classified as the Baroque or Classicism is analogous to the distinction between Romantic and Neoclassical literature (to use the term related to the division into literary periods relevant to English history). Thus the concept of romantic symphony, for example, stands for the music that is no longer intended as entertainment, the music that consciously refers beyond itself to regions of irrational passion, of mystery and fantasy, awakening in the listener a wistful longing, which has customarily become to denote the essence of Romanticism, whose unbridled outbursts of feeling have been likewise traditionally contrasted with the classical formal restraint.

Symphonic poem as the search for a narrative foundation

Many composers, who appreciated the power of the word and verbal expression, referred to works of some of the most notable poets of the time, like Goethe, Heine or Byron. Besides, the programmatic multimovement suite and the symphonic poem are two of the most popular genres of the time. The former comprises a number of discrete movements and the latter a few interlocking sections and they both epitomize the Romantic idea of programme music, i.e. instrumental music that conveys an idea or story, or renders a visual image as a succession of musical motifs. It was Franz Liszt who in the 1850s invented the concept of the symphonic poem (also known as the tone poem), a form in which a literary or other non-musical

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[7] Postmodernism in the 1960s is more often than not seen as "a revolt against the normalising function of modernism" (Storey 155) with its metanarratives and "official status as the high culture." Contrarily, in postmodernism, "there are no longer any agreed and inviolable criteria which can serve to differentiate art from popular culture" (Strinati 225).

source provides a narrative foundation for a single-movement orchestral work. Being different from a symphony, the symphonic poem can be attributed the following characteristics:

● Being called a poem, it emphasizes the fact that it is made up like a piece of fiction, which in this case additionally signifies that it is based on an external, usually literary source.

● It is more often than not easy to see what a given tone poem is about – because composers, applying the associative property, commonly named it after the thing it was written about.

● It is programmatic, i.e. it has its roots in the real world. Program music is written to sound like something, or give the impression of something in the external world. There may be, for example, a light flute passage to signify birds, or a drum interlude meant to sound like clockwork, or droning trombones to sound like a funeral march. It is also possible to get across concepts programmatically, like dying, fighting, suffering or rejoicing.

● A narrative foundation is provided for a single-movement orchestral work.

● The symphonic poem is generally believed to have been cultivated from the 1850s to the 1950s and some of its most significant composers were: Liszt, Smetana, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Debussy or Strauss (Stankiewicz 694).

In order to illustrate the structure of this musical genre, let us concentrate on "Inferno – the first part of the aforementioned tone poem *Dante Symphony* by Franz Liszt. The opening section is dominated from the outset by a sombre motif on the trombones which is followed by a two-part section that occupies the position of the traditional slow movement and is meant to conjure up "association love of Paolo and Francesca da Rimini" (Jost 2). The function of the successive scherzo-like section is, according to List, "to sound like blasphemous mocking laughter" (Jost 2). The finale is conceived like a large-scale thematic recapitulation of the first part and culminates in a thundering restatement of the main motif.

Richard Wagner's concept of leitmotif and *Gesamkunstwerk*

All in all, instrumental or vocal, Romantic compositions stand for the merging of music and a text, no matter whether we take the word 'text' quite verbatim or if we are ready to accept the term consistently with the 20th century cultural studies' concept. Characteristically, Mendelssohn, Schumann or Schubert treated their instrumental work as a text, or at least its expression and thus perfect analogue. To illustrate, Felix Mendelssohn's tribute to William Shakespeare is embodied by his substantial suite of

incidental music to the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The very term 'incidental' indicates a programmatic function of the composition subservient to the comedy's fantasy. Mendelssohn, though standing in stark contrast to the personal *Sturm und Drang* familiar to his peers, united multifarious artistic interests in a truly Romantic fashion: he was not only a refined connoisseur of literature and philosophy, but also a talented visual artist. The illustrative function of the Romantic music was so emblematic that, for example, "although Brahms himself claimed that he had no specific story in mind when writing the *Tragic Overture*, some scholars believe that both this work and the middle movements of the Third Symphony had their origin in an abortive project to stage both parts of Goethe's *Faust* with music" (Osmond-Smith 2).

It was Richard Wagner, however, one of the most revolutionary figures in music, who visibly dominated the development of programmatic music from the 1850s to the 1870s. Even a most cursory look at his work reveals its inherent contradiction; although it is symphonic in nature, his more mature work consists of operas mainly, but these, in turn, approximate far more closely to the status of the symphony which makes them virtually impossible to perform at vocal recitals. His advances in harmonic thinking unalterably changed the language of classical music, and his quest for an operatic form as a boundless drama integrating music with literature changed the way in which composers have faced the task of composing opera since then. He is also one of the most controversial figures in musical history, whose written tracts are full of philosophical meandering. Let us concentrate on Wagner's tetralogy *The Nibelung's Ring*, the epic based on Teutonic and Norse mythology. The whole comprises four operas: *The Rhinegold, The Valkyries, Siegfried* and *Twilight of the Gods*. To tie this immense drama together, Wagner conceived the notion of the leading motif or leitmotif. These were short, pregnant musical ideas which could be developed in the same way similar motifs are developed in symphonies. These would stand for particular persons, places, things, actions, or ideas. As the action of the drama developed new situations and brought in related events, the motives themselves would be metamorphosed into new forms standing for new areas of reference. Supported by this flowing web of musical ideas, the immense musical structures could unfold organically, with no need to break the opera into separate numbered forms as in earlier operas. While there might be differences between more lyrical moments and more recitative-like dramatic or expository passages, the flow of supporting melody could continue seamlessly. Wagner called this 'endless melody' and theorized that with this method and other advanced ideas he would create a *Gesamkunstwerk*, i.e. a work of total arts in which everything (drama, acting, music, scenery, and direction) worked together in equal measure (Biegański 933).

The Wagnerian influence on musical developments

The Wagnerian grand scale composing influenced Anton Bruckner, an Austrian composer of orchestral, chamber, keyboard, sacred vocal music, and several symphonies, Gustav Mahler, known for the length, depth, and painful emotions of his works, or Richard Strauss with his symphonic poems and early operas. Although evidently influenced by the Wagnerian huge time scale as well as monumental, vast and slow momentum, Anton Bruckner can only partly be said to have been a Romantic composer, as "his patient spirit has nothing in common with the self-dramatising ideal of the nineteenth century Romantic" (Simpson 2). Richard Strauss, on the other hand, appears to have been more affected by Wagner's concept of uniting music with literary sources: his opera *Salome* was composed to the libretto by Oscar Wilde; while his orchestral tone poem *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which title comes from the famous book by Nietzsche, whose alter ego Zarathustra declares that God is dead and preaches the necessity of man's self-overcoming in order to become an *Übermensch* – the self-determining super-individualist who climbs above and beyond the common and the average. Incidentally, Mahler was also intrigued by Nietzsche's work,[8] and set the poetry of Zarathustra's midnight song in his Third Symphony. In his symphonies, Mahler was undoubtedly influenced by Wagner's tendency to compose extensive pieces grounded on grand themes. Some other features of Mahler's symphonies indebted to the influence of Wagner are the extended length of the overall structure, the application of a leitmotif and a monumental development of slower movements. This tendency is virtually present in all his symphonies, including his Ninth (and his last finished), in which the syncopated trumpet motif "permeates the whole movement, and seems to work almost like a Wagnerian leitmotif representing the forces of evil and despair" (Zander 4). On the other hand, his orchestral music is clear, complex, and full of musical imagery, from the heavenly to the banal. This kaleidoscopic diversity of conventions and moods on the verge of collage, departed quite far away from the Wagnerian homogenous gravity of tone. In this respect, Mahler rather predicted more modern tendencies in music, including popular music (thus also postmodernist

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[8] Nietzsche's suspension between traditional philosophy and a new philosophy overthrowing God, metaphysics with their canonical values and inviolable metanarratives makes him a counterpart of Mahler and his position in music. Mahler was similarly suspended between the tradition of the Great Romantics and a prophecy of modernist chromatic scales. Unsurprisingly, the composer was intrigued by Nietzsche who overtly advanced a sense of doubt and relativism. His critical revision of the past is epitomised by his comment on the nature of truth: "truths are illusions about which one has forgotten what they really are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power" (Nietzsche 219).

trends) from the 1970s onwards. This is perfectly exemplified by his Fifth Symphony, progressing from tragedy to joy: it begins with a funeral march, then it passes to a wild outburst of anguish accented with sinister syncopated chords on trombones and horns. Next the Scherzo introduces a joyful, playful rhythm like a rondo theme which is followed by a slower, more reflexive motif to be finally converted into a quick tempo accompanying a fugal, triumphant episode.

Various manifestations of Post-Romanticism in literature

The Romantic heritage proved equally inspiring in literature, although its influences are sometimes discernible in the canons of the writers who can hardly be reckoned as the proper exponents of the Post-Romantic trend. To illustrate, in the early creative period, Alfred Tennyson, the epitome of the Victorianism in poetry, revived the Keatsian theme of the interrelation between art and life, which theme was conveyed with the Coleridgean distrust of the unlimited autonomy that could be bestowed on an artist. The major representative of the Pre-Raphaelites, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, merged the natural with the visionary which resulted in the artifice of nature, the seemingly irreconcilable combination anticipating the ideal that constituted an analogue of the speaker's search for other reality in "Sailing to Byzantium" by W. B. Yeats fifty years later. Algernon Charles Swinburne was likewise steeped in the Romantic tradition, which manifested itself especially in his Shelleyan tendency to reveal an emotional intensity in a rich texture of adjective-abundant verse against which the recurrent theme of assault on Christianity and accepted moral codes was set. More importantly, his critical writings proved conducive to Walter Pater's aesthetic theory referring to "all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind" (Pater 47). Whereas John Ruskin had made England art-conscious calling artists to display their morality by fidelity to nature and by restraining their nature, Pater recommended burning "with this gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy" (Pater 85). Thus faith, conscience and disciplined constraint advocated by Ruskin were replaced by the Paterian cult of mysticism, pleasurable excess and self-indulgent drift. The latter's philosophy, in turn, affected Oscar Wilde and his contemplative ideal of life accompanying his hedonistic concept of the moment. This resulted in the Wildean aesthetic individualism opposing the Victorians' middle-class devotion to the useful and the edifying.

A still different form of Post-Romanticism was revealed by Georgian poems, which contrary to what they were believed to become – a rebellion against Victorian romanticism – constituted a further stage of the long deterioration; if we agree to consider the works of the proper Romantics as the culmination of the process. Admittedly, despite the Georgians' parochial and out-of-date output, the simplicity of their utterance, the idyllic atmosphere, and the cult of the Englishness they promoted had not only a wide appeal to contemporary readers, but also were translatable into tendencies in other artistic disciplines, to illustrate the classical music of the first half of the twentieth century represented by Vaughan Williams and Edward Elgar as well as the progressive rock of the 1970s. This influence was the more perceptible as the Georgians combined what might appear incompatible: folk elements with grand style, the latter of which they ostensibly opposed in theory. When applied in practice, however, the solemn tone matched perfectly the elevated national subjects they used for their poems, e.g. Rupert Brooke's war pieces.

A completely dissimilar romantic manifestation occurred in America in the 1950s. A group of American writers, referred to as representatives of the beat generation, stood for anti-hierarchical and anti-middle-class ideas conveyed in an unconventional style, as subversive as the expression. Allen Ginsberg's words, "Your own heart is the Guru" (Ginsberg 1974, 1), which phrase, as time passes, becomes more and more relevant to the consecutive works by Jack Kerouac, is reminiscent of the romantic emotional attitude with its idealistic subjectivity. What is particularly palpable in terms of romantic influences upon the Beatniks, apart from certain not quite romantic sources of inspiration such as Henry Miller's eroticism or William Burroughs' frank treatment of addiction being a metaphor of cultural illusions stealing our dreams and confusing our lives, is Walt Whitman's poesy. This idiosyncratic style – based on a cataloguing technique, descriptive, comparable with that of reports – gives the impression that everything is being created at the moment. The form as well as the resultant accumulative imagery were taken over by the Beatniks, especially Allen Ginsberg. Needless to say, the Beatniks with their truly romantic, transcendental flight into imagination, in spite of being dismissed by the establishment critics as nihilistic, reckless and undisciplined, were soon to acquire the cult status that affected with a distinctive force the hippies a decade later.

Post-Romanticism in the age of postmodernism

On the whole, the Romantic heritage, more often than not has been somewhat simplistically associated with high rhetoric and excessive embellishments employed largely for their own sake. Looked upon patronizingly,

unpopular today in the context of the prevailing minimalist or, contrarily, wildly uncontrollable postmodern flows of signifiers clashing with one another, the concept of the Post-Romantic appears outmoded and out of place. Still, its influence is not only palpable, but even overwhelming, and, what is perhaps peculiarly paradoxical, this powerful impact is the most visible in popular culture, where the postmodernist frame of reference is pervaded with the Post-Romantic aesthetics.

The overall process of destabilising the formerly professed values and the canonised position of high culture largely constituted by the modernist legacy was initiated by the confluence of such diverse movements as deconstructive theories in cultural and literary analyses; post-Marxist concepts put forward by Adorno and other exponents of the Frankfurt School, as well as by Althusser or Gramsci; the feminist attempts at revising the cultural canon of the past; and the aforementioned postmodernism with its postulate to abandon the boundary between high culture and popular culture. This joint impact, however, would have never been so accumulative in its force if it had not been for the breakthrough in the 1960s, when the hippie counterculture affected by the Beatniks of the former decade conveyed the Post-Romantic idealism inherited from their Transcendentalist great-grandparents. Another trace of the Romantic legacy – its aesthetic offshoot – was to become the immanent feature of the 1970s progressive rock, incidentally, by analogy to the great Romantic poets grudgingly recognized by literary critics, derided by pop theorists and reviewers who, as sociologists rather than musicologists by profession, dismissed it as a pretentious, self-indulgent, excessively decorative, introvert and thus incommunicative musical genre (Macan 170–171).

The 1960s and 1970s progressive rock as a vehicle for Post-Romantic ideas in popular culture

Progressive rock began to emerge out of the British psychedelic scene in 1967, specifically a strain of classical/symphonic rock led by Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd, the Nice, Procol Harum, and the Moody Blues. King Crimson's 1969 debut *In the Court of the Crimson King* firmly established the concept of progressive rock, and a quirky, eclectic scene was taking shape in Canterbury, led by the jazzy psychedelia of the Soft Machine, Egg and Caravan. Prog-rock became a commercial force in the early 1970s, with Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Yes, Jethro Tull, Genesis, and Pink Floyd leading the way.

One of the most striking examples of this musical genre is the afore-mentioned *In the Court of the Crimson King* by King Crimson. On the textual level of the album, fear of destructive acts of the impersonal mob created by civilization, the lack of faith in the survival of Western culture paralyse the speaking voice – a weak alien, who, despite his plight, struggles to preserve his individuality and integrity. This type of romantic irony, where the hero is beaten up, defeated, and, as a result of this, exalted, finds its reflection in Peter Sinfield's enchanting and fairy tale-like lyrics as well as in the instrumental pattern performed by the band. On both levels, the atmosphere seems to be dignified and almost bombastic, reminiscent of a peculiar fusion constituted by a romantic metaphor in the context of classical music. However, this spiritual impulse that lays the foundation of *In the Court of the Crimson King's* song-words is the disbelief that Western civilisation's spirituality is increasing in direct pro-portion to its technological progress: "The wall on which the prophets wrote/Is cracking at the seams" (Sinfield 2). This vision of Western culture's spiritual bankruptcy is reminiscent of the counterculture of the late 1960s and the early 1970s, which is, in turn, largely indebted to the American beatniks. Thus, to counteract the simplified because one-sided interpretation of the phrase "beat generation" i.e. "beaten completely" or "loser" which meaning often appeared in the media, Kerouac articulated its completely different connotation, namely that of "beatific" or "beatitu-de" to signify "the necessary beatness or darkness that precedes opening up to light, egolessness, giving room for religious illumination" (Ginsberg 1999, xiv).

At the same time, the lofty and sublime orchestration of the album as a whole is effectively contrasted with the cacophony of "21st Century Schizoid Man" or with the contrapuntal improvisation of "Moonchild". The other three compositions, however, including the most famous "Epitaph", are marked by slowly unfolding, monumental style, visibly affected by Wagner's or Mahler's compositions. The musical convention the King Crimson chose for their fairly complex song structures was the symphonic poem one of the two (the other being programmatic multimovement suite) most popular genres in Romanticism and Post-Romanticism. Accordingly, all the five tracks on *In the Court of the Crimson King* comprise a few interlocking sections. At the same time, on a deeper level, it is not difficult to discern traces of neurosis manifested by dissonances or unexpected interruptions of melodic structures. In consequence, the logical structure of the album, with its content and texture reflecting the chaos of the external world, is a modern analogue to the Romantic idea of programme music, i.e. instrumental music that conveys an idea or story.

Neil Peart's "Xanadu": Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" revisited

It has to be admitted that in Post-Romantic-fashioned rock music meta-physical or quasi-metaphysical contemplation occurs fairly often, but hardly ever does it accompany an actual search for the Supreme Being. Much more frequently it signifies looking for one's self believed to be tantamount to the synthesis of all the other beings, including supernatural powers. There are two possible versions of the further development of this meditation: one is the state of bliss which is a straightforward consequence of one's union with nature, where nature is paradoxically a mirror of one's self; and the other is a failure springing from a sense of emotional void left by the confrontation with one's own ego that, in principle, has nothing to offer: as a transcendental state and self-contemplation appear to form a contradiction in terms. The album *A Farewell to Kings* issued by the Canadian rock band Rush in 1977 perfectly exemplifies the above thesis. The lyrics of the main composition called "Xanadu" is, as the very title suggests, inspired by the poem of Coleridge's. The history has turned full circle and the text by Neil Peart, the group's lyricist, is an evident extension of the original.

> To stand within the Pleasure Dome
> Decreed by Kubla Khan
> To taste anew the fruits of life
> The last immortal man
> To find the sacred river Alph
> To walk the caves of ice
> Oh, I will dine on honey dew
> And drink the milk of Paradise...
> Held within the Pleasure Dome
> Decreed by Kubla Khan
> To taste my bitter triumph
> As a mad immortal man
> Nevermore shall I return
> Escape these caves of ice
> For I have dined on honey dew
> And drunk the milk of Paradise. (Peart 2)

The speaker seems to have implemented his predecessor's (the speaker of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan") dream to reconstruct the pleasure dome in his mind, which is symbolised here by the former dwelling in Xanadu, where he becomes the last immortal man. However, the magical place is turned into the eternal prison, and thus the speaker's achievement automatically becomes his failure. Accordingly, Coleridge's fear of damnation is materialised: it is not, as a matter of fact, preceded by social ostracism only to assume an even more extreme condition – that of everlasting isolation. In this way, the

vision of immortal existence in Xanadu is the epitome of the curse of mankind and the last immortal man appears to be "condemned... to a perpetual continuance" (Swift 221). Obviously, the above quotation from *Gulliver's Travels*, does not testify to an outstanding analogy between the two visions of immortality; however, what they do have in common is a pessimistic connotation attached to these images. Nevertheless, it is not Swift's satire on physical infirmities of man that lurks in the background of "Kubla Khan" as well as in "Xanadu," it is rather the spiritual defect symbolized by archetypal egotistic search of the pleasure dome, the adventurous seeking a blissful state the achievement of which implies a painful self-sufficiency and self-consciousness preventing "an experience of the absolutely exterior" (Levinas 348).

Conclusion

In conclusion, ironically, however severely criticised it was by some exponents of the successive literary periods, Romanticism managed to leave a deep imprint on their thinking. To illustrate, in spite of T. S. Eliot's attempts to withdraw his poetic idiom from the talkative, overemotional cadences of the Romantics by coining the term "objective correlative" standing for "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of... emotion" (Eliot 1932, 145), his allegiance to the French Symbolists and the concept of aestheticism suffused by the theory of impersonal art is, of necessity, partly indebted to Keats' and Poe's outlook on art. Similarly, in music, Schöenberg strived to cut his links off from the Wagnerian Neo-Romanticism with his atonal compositions. At the same time, however, he united modernism with a late-Romantic sensibility, which combination was additionally influenced by the earlier, Classical forms.

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