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INTRODUCTION

REMANENT ROMANTICISM IN MODERN POETRY

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Romantic is a word that only a few tour operators still dare to use without dreading the mixture of immediate boredom and polite condescension it is bound to be met with. That conventional response, however widespread today, is the symptom of a strange cultural amnesia, which accompanies the self-assuredness of a modernity whose belief in progress endows it with the implicit impression that the modern man in the street is necessarily more advanced or knows better, if perhaps not “more,” than any genius of the past. That this very belief is always preferably accompanied by its ironical denial, though, because it is in fact a typically Romantic attitude, may be taken as a hint that the issue is a little more complicated than the daily news has it. For it may be that the past haunts the present all the more powerfully because it has been defaced. Romanticism has been misrepresented in various ways over two centuries of literary and critical productions, and it has been either caricatured or recuperated to the point of being generally perceived today as the reverse of what it has been. But what has it been? Again, the general opinion is that it goes without saying. Yet it will go in different ways as soon as one starts trying to say, and in ways that vary considerably according to who is speaking, when and where. A brief international outing is enough to realise that Romanticism is understood differently, and conjures up different names and various ideas, as we cross the Channel, the Rhine, the Alps, or the Atlantic. The concept, incidentally, will hardly survive a voyage across the Mediterranean, unless the voyager is a Westerner whose romanticism resides in precisely this orientalist tourism.

Romanticism belongs to the History of the Western world. Yet *reading* the Romantics today, reading them as if for the first time, skipping prefaces and other framing critical discourses, with the eyes of a scholar trying honestly to make his own mind about these works of the past: such an experience is bound to come as a surprise. For the dominant impression, soon building up into a conviction, is that what one is reading is different from what one had expected. It is obviously more complex, and truly much more problematic. These poets are still alive and questioning, and their works offer compelling fields of research. It seems that they have acquired a new *lisibilité* in the second half of the twentieth century, as if what had seemed for a time a stale and has-been period of literature had now started literally making sense again. The wind may in fact have started turning with

The Romantic Agony (1956), when Mario Praz made the innovative critical demonstration that “there is no opposite pole to ‘romantic’,” and that “classicism, then, is by no means alien to the romantic spirit” [14]. This amounted to the realisation that Romanticism is neither a style nor a set of ideas or preferences, but the artistic expression of the openness of intellectual process, the exaltation of “the artist who does not give a material form to his dream.” The Romantic Agony is this essential Angst generated by the fact that Romantic art is a self-conscious illusion, realising itself as illusion. Praz’s discovery was Romantic precisely in as much as it was a liberation from binary thinking. This critical shift was confirmed and exemplified in the days of Deconstruction, with studies like those written by Paul de Man from the 1950s on, that were later gathered in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1984), which contradicted the approach of so-called New Criticism that tended to see the great romantic texts as eternal monuments that reached to a canonical Empyrean above the historical contingences of their production. Under the pens of these Modern Frankensteins, the texts lived again, sometimes in rather shocking and apparently unnatural ways. Then, while Deconstruction had striven to shake the Romantic poems loose from internal closure, New Historicism restored them to their historical context, yet no longer merely to read them as reflectors of their times, but in ways that showed how they too cast a new light on their historical epochs and perhaps even proved them to have played no negligible part in shaping the History of ideas. One exemplary work among many others in this vein is no doubt Jerome McGann’s *The Romantic Ideology* (1983), which demonstrates how much twentieth-century academic and critical responses to Romantic poetry is still dominated, more or less consciously, by ideas and beliefs that are the produce or the inheritance of Romanticism. One case in point, in this respect, is Harold Bloom’s deservedly successful Romantic critical reading of the Romantics.

This new readability of the Romantics, in its various guises, amounts to the realisation that their key preoccupations had surprising correspondences with those of modern and post-modern times. Naturally, this may be the result of an optical illusion, easily explained away as a projection of the critic’s ideas onto the studied object. After all, this is the romantic vice of empathy, which Keats had been guilty of with Spencer, or Hazlitt with Shakespeare. But another way of looking at the same phenomenon would consist in saying that this shows the virtue of the ancestors, as John Joughin does in *The New Aestheticism* (2003), considering that the greatness of a literary text of the past is measurable to its capacity to resist critical interpretation and to keep generating new readings. This generative remainder would then testify to the remanence of a literary work. But the remanence of Romanticism is of another order, for it cannot be convincingly put down to the individual genius of one or several authors, be it only because there was indeed a plethora of Romantic poets of unequal merits, who were, in fact, very far from sharing any clearly discernible common set of opinions or values. Remanent Romanticism may be accounted for by the realisation that the Romantic period is a chapter in a long-lasting epistemological narrative. Romanticism cannot satisfactorily be envisaged as a transitory moment of rupture in the supposedly linear continuum of literary history, any more than Modernism or the Renaissance

can. The concept of Revolution, if it was not so heavily fraught with political resonances, would perhaps provide a useful conceptual tool because of the recurrence it implies. For indeed Romanticism has been seen as the literary form of the eighteenth-century Revolutions in America and in Europe. And so it is possible to view the Romantic moment as the climax—or merely the *peripeteia*, the instant of reversal—in a huge tragic plot that would have its exposition in the days of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and reach its dénouement in the Modernist and Postmodernist age. It is certainly no coincidence that the other moment of literary history, apart from the Romantic period, and indeed the first to have been revisited by New Historicist criticism is the “early-modern” period, thus reconceptualised in the wake of Stephen Greenblatt’s work.

This diachronic perspective is not new, and it would tend to corroborate T.S. Eliot’s theory of a “dissociation of sensibility,” that he situated “in the seventeenth century” and from which, he said, “we have never recovered.” This vision of literary history is most famously broached in T.S. Eliot’s 1921 essay on “The Metaphysical Poets” but would later be resumed in his 1936 essays on Milton, in which he acknowledged being indebted for this phrase to E.M.W. Tillyard. In the same occasion, he confessed that “to lay the burden on the shoulders of Milton and Dryden was a mistake,” adding that “it is a consequence of the same causes that brought about the Civil War,” and “that we must seek the causes in Europe, not in England alone” [266]. This ideological and epistemological problem would then concern the Mind of Europe rather than simply the “mind of England,” and it would be closely related indeed to the English Revolutions. In his earlier essay, however, T.S. Eliot remarked that a first tremor towards the beginning of a solution might be felt in two of the very last great poems of the High Romantic period: “In one or two passages of Shelley’s *Triumph of Life*, in the second *Hyperion* there are traces of a struggle toward unification of sensibility.” The process, however, was then brutally interrupted because, he added, “Keats and Shelley died, and Tennyson and Browning ruminated” [65]. It is tempting to deduce from this the hypothesis that T.S. Eliot’s poetical agenda may be tentatively defined in terms of this “unification of sensibility.” And this would entail that there is no radical solution of continuity between the Modernism of Eliot and the Romanticism of Shelley and Keats, but that both movements inscribe themselves in one and the same teleological aspiration. It should also be noted in passing that this project of a reconciliation, or an overcoming, of the divorce between “thought” and “feeling” is very similar to the invention by the Jena Romantics of Literature as a hybrid of Philosophy and Poetry. The dream of a Socrates having “learnt the art” and become a musician-philosopher would be dear to Nietzsche, whose apophthegmatic thinking, like much of Modernist “difficulty” or “raid on the inarticulate,” and for example Eliot’s *Waste land* once composed from a longer text of his by Pound, have for precursors the many-authored Romantic fragments of the *Athenaeum* and the *Lyceum*, brothers in incomplete openness to Shelley’s *Triumph of Life* and Keat’s *Hyperion* and *Fall of Hyperion*.

An endorsement and continuation of the same principle, as if it were a matter of fact never to be questioned, may be witnessed in Pound, when he compliments Keats for having “got so far as to see” that poetry “need not be

the pack-mule of philosophy" [292]. But one is allowed to wonder whether Pound himself went that much further than carrying out to an exacerbated form of expression an idea of literature, beyond both poetry and philosophy, that had in fact already been invented more than a century before in Germany. It is difficult not to perceive Pound's calculated insolence, histrionic bravadoes and impressive obscurities as a spectral case of revisited Byronism. George Gordon had his "little pagoda" and scandalously worshipped a statuette of Buonaparte in Harrow, although *he* would later trample even this idol underfoot to stand alone, incestuous, nearly Sadian, and as Lady Caroline Lamb would eagerly say: "mad, bad and dangerous to know." In very comparable manner, Pound's obstinate fascism operates for a large part like Byron's Satanism; it is the guarantee of an unforgettably bad character, in voluntary exile from his own nation deemed unworthy of him. True, Pound will vituperate pell-mell "bad Keats; the romantics, Swinburne, Browningese, neo-celticism" [287]. But this often reiterated kind of intoxicated imprecation has the main function of conjuring up a nebula of contraries against whom to define his own persona by defect. Thus Byron proclaimed himself a radical anti-romantic, in much the same tone, writing "Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey; / Because the first is crazed beyond all hope, / The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy" [*Don Juan* I. ccv]. For it is striking how anti-Romanticism is one of the chief characteristics of the English Romantics themselves. Byron refused to read Wordsworth until very late, or so he said, and merely to humour his good friend "Shiloh" and then only with much professed disgust. Mary Shelley, having read a few stanzas of Wordsworth's poem "The Excursion" with her husband, allegedly dropped the book and sadly exclaimed: "He is a slave!" As for "Jack Keats or Ketch, or whatever his names are," Byron wrote to his publisher Murray from Ravenna, "such writing is a sort of mental masturbation-f-gg-g his *Imagination*" [4 November 1820]. Mawkish Romantic language, indeed.

Wordsworth famously refused to drink Keats's toast at Haydon's "Immortal Dinner," when the younger poet proposed "Confusion to the memory of Newton." Apart from sheer incompatibility of temperament, the anecdote was symptomatic of a much deeper disagreement between these two Romantic poets, which Keats expressed elsewhere no less famously by radically distinguishing "the poetical Character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member" from "the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime." And by this mere assertion, made in a letter to R. Woodhouse of 27 October 1818, Keats did more than voice antipathy for an older poet, but hit upon a discovery that is essential to any genuine understanding of English Romantic poetry, and which would only come to be fully understood more than a century later. Keats's symbolic indictment of Newton, "because he destroyed the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to a prism," is an idea that he inherited from Blake, but which is a precursor of Eliot's early putting the blame of the dissociation of sensibility on Milton and Dryden. For reasons that would require a much longer study to fully demonstrate, this radical rejection of empiricism and its subject/object dichotomy is coterminous with T.S. Eliot's "impersonal theory of poetry," and his plea for "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" is a rediscovery of Keats's principle that "A Poet is the most

unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no identity." Eliot's "catalyst" is a revision of Keats's "cameleon Poet." The choice of a chemical metaphor operates *de facto* as an implicit tribute to the apothecary poet, who considered that "Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect—but they have not any individuality" [Letter to Bailey 22 November 1817].

Keats's major poetic efforts were attempts to come to terms with this essentially Modern problem of the Self. The misunderstood, and scarcely ever read *Endymion* was already a mythopoetic journey beyond the "thoughts of self." *Hyperion* was an allegorical effort to express an irreversible historical change in the human Mind, abruptly given up because "there were too many Miltonic inversions in it" [Letter to Reynolds 21 September 1819]. *The Fall of Hyperion* was the second try of the same endeavor, in which T.S. Eliot would later perceive "traces of a struggle toward unification of sensibility." Keats's achievement, misread or altogether ignored though it has always been except by Shelley, was the fulgurating anticipated intuition of the "decentering of the self" and "demise of the subject" that would only much later be considered an essential characteristic of Modernism. But Keats lived in unripe times that were unable to understand him properly and he died much too young. His Victorian successors, chief among whom Tennyson, cultivated a blue-stocking admiration for superficial side-aspects of his poetry, his quaint medievalism, sublimated sexuality and conservative infatuation with the English language. This indebtedness of Modernist poetry to the brave pioneering work of Keats has almost never been acknowledged, except by the American poets of the so-called "Black Mountain" group, namely Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, and chiefly Charles Olson who believed that with his "Negative Capability" Keats had "put across the century the inch of steel to wreck Hegel." Olson recognized Keats as the inventor of what he called "Projective Verse," defined as the continuation of "the work of Pound & Williams" [239], that is to say exactly the contrary of "the Egotistical Sublime."

These preoccupations of Keats's naturally did not come out of the blue, but were in the air of the radical literary and artistic milieu he more than mixed with, around William Hazlitt or Leigh Hunt and the "Cockneys." They were part of what Pound would later call the *Paideuma*, the "gristly roots of ideas" that were incipiently in action in his own time. Further research might demonstrate their close theoretical relation to the philosophical grounds of the 1810 quarrel between Wordsworth and Coleridge. The private reasons are well-known enough, but there may have been a deeper rift, which is in fact the dynamic apple of discord that actuated the whole English Romantic movement, and which may be considered for short as being potentially contained in one sentence from a 1815 letter to Wordsworth: "Life begins in detachment from Nature and ends in union with God." It was already more than intimated as early as 1802 by one line from "Dejection, An Ode": "And in our life alone does nature live." Very shortly after *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge in fact stopped being what the twentieth-century would soon call a "Nature poet," and perhaps never really was. This was a crucial departure. After Göttingen, where Wordsworth had followed him to write his Rousseauist, egotistical

masterpiece *The Prelude*—that he would never publish in its original 1805 version, but only thirty years later after a total revision—Coleridge's Kantian and post-Kantian meditations would make him one of the foremost Romantic literary figures in the Europe of his own time, if certainly not one of the most prolix poets. There is in his philosophy and poetry a resolute departure from the Wordsworthian fascination for "the sum of all that is merely Objective," and which Coleridge will equate to "Nature," thus "confining the term to its passive and material sense" [I 174]. This enabled him to define "the Self or Intelligence" as being "in necessary antithesis" to Nature. The difficulty of Coleridge's thought resides in the fact that he is not speaking of the old, pre-Kantian and pre-Romantic empirical subject, but of a transcendental self that he envisions as the seat of Imagination, "an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive" [I 124-25].

How this innovative concept relates to Keats's "Negative Capability," for instance, is not too difficult to perceive, neither is its relation to the twin notions of Romantic Irony and Romantic Agony. In each of those various forms of expression, Coleridge's Imagination is the principle of Newness, this radical, anguishing, potentially self-destructive power of solo avant-garde creation that defines the essence of pure Genius. It is, however, much less straightforwardly realised that Coleridge's Imagination is the prototype of Pound's Vortex, which is the image reconsidered, no longer as idea, but as "a radiant node or cluster [...] from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing" (1914). There is in fact no difference of nature between these concepts, but merely a different degree of "concentration" or hardness. When Pound incriminates "a dough-like state of reception" and "a fashion of passivity that has held since the romantic movement" [433-34], he is simply not up to Coleridge's intellectual standard, for he is writing rather in the manner of the ideologist than in that of the philosopher. In this case his small-R epithet "romantic" incidentally happens to refer chiefly to Impressionism and the various artistic fashions "since" the romantic movement. Pound is here striving to define Vorticism as against Impressionism, and, more loosely speaking, modernism as against romanticism, while more or less deliberately posing as the inventor of ideas that he was reanimating from a forgotten past. However, the quarrel that he is here engaging into with his immediate Impressionist predecessors bears great similarities to Coleridge's disagreement with Wordsworth. It pertains to the same effort, albeit stronger and more successful, to wrench free from idealism. The imprecatory style so characteristic of Pound, as well as of Nietzsche, is the symptom that, in the Christian civilisation of the Western world, this cannot be done without breaking a taboo, which Coleridge was still strongly brow-beaten by.

Pound's critical discourse, together with Eliot's, is responsible for much of the subsequent critical dereliction of Romanticism, thus assimilated with its post-romantic misreadings and variants. In terms of poetic discourse and in the history of literary criticism, Modernism has upstaged Romanticism, at a time when America was vying for cultural leadership, in the wake of its then recently acquired economical and military hegemony. In an American context, however, and for American Modernists faced with the necessity of emerging from the background of their own literary tradition, the great "Romantic" Father figures were Whitman and Emerson. After the event, in

the unavoidable simplification that accompanies any stock taking, these names respectively epitomise the two key issues of the Self and Transcendence. Modernism, supposedly reaching its most accomplished destiny in Post-modernism, is most often characterised by a “de-centring” of the Self and a departure from metaphysical Transcendence. Eliot’s Anglicanism, Royalism and Classicism would then have to be passed off as a symptom of incomplete development. But his denigration of Shelley as immature which, he confessed, was a reaction against “an invasion of his adolescent self by Shelley,” is also the expression of a radical ideological opposition to Shelley’s left-wing activism and atheism. For the author of *The Necessity of Atheism* was just as much the grandson of Voltaire as Eliot was the spiritual heir to the author of *The Genius of Christianity*. The authors of “The Mask of Anarchy,” “Peter Bell the Third,” or “Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition” are just as ‘reactionary’ as the leading modernist figures were ‘progressive’: hardly so at all.

Indeed, there is a strange contradiction between Romanticism and some Modernist and Post-modernist representations of Romanticism, not least when it comes to the issue of metaphysics. T.E. Hulme once famously declared that Romanticism was “spilt religion,” thus contributing to the convenient simplification that amounts to considering Romanticism, on the whole, as a transitory and hopeless reactionary attempt to reassert the metaphysical, at a historical moment when the Enlightenment came to grief. In this respect, Romanticism is an early interpretation of the epistemological shift inaugurated by Kant, amounting to an effort to promote poetry to the societal and cultural function of a kind of surrogate for religion. This is undeniably true, but only partly true. Wordsworth and his pantheistic “presence” is the archetype of the metaphysical Romantic, later relayed from Tennyson to Hopkins, and from Dylan Thomas to Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth century. In so far as Coleridge tended to reduce his intuition of Imagination to “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” [I, 183], he fell in the category of what Deconstructionists would call “logocentrism,” defined by Derrida as the “metaphysics of presence” and the belief in, or the desire for, a “transcendental signifier.” But this other epistemological shift, however, cannot be considered as a sure shibboleth to tell Romanticism from Modernism, for it took place already *within* the Romantic movement. For, reciprocally, in equating human Imagination to “the infinite I AM,” Coleridge implicitly intuited the constructed nature of transcendence.

The same questioning of the metaphysics of presence is also the central topic of one of the texts that Eliot singled out as forerunners of his “unification of sensibility,” Shelley’s *Triumph of Life*, where the Wordsworthian type of the Romantics of presence is represented by the character called Rousseau, a parody of Dante’s Virgil, who pathetically confesses that his vision of Nature was a mistake. The spirit of Rousseau met in Hades explains to Shelley that when he died he was made to undergo what he had preached and to drink from the cup of Nature, like Socrates hemlock—“Touched with faint lips the cup she raised, / And suddenly my brain became as sand” [405]. Shelley, and Keats, committed the capital sin of dying in their youth, and suffered the retribution of being read in the light of their early Platonic idealism. Yet the later parts of their works show signs of

considerable striving towards a new horizon, and the fragmentary quality of Shelley's *Triumph of Life* as well as of Keats's *Hyperion* and *Fall of Hyperion* is the ancestor of Modernist collage and montage; their self-destructive silence is the cipher of Modernist difficulty. Shelley's Demogorgon, the spirit that slays Jupiter in *Prometheus Unbound*, or Keats's Moneta, the Monetary Goddess in *The Fall of Hyperion*, are allegories of Necessity and the unavoidability of change, that render possible early poetic dramatisations of the Modernist process without a subject. This anti-Romantic Romanticism that makes them turn their backs on the Lakists of the first generation is a re-enactment and a confirmation of Blake's rejection of Swedenborg. For these sons of Blake, the "transcendental signifier" is already irremediably hypostasised in History and the transitory Mind of mankind: "God only Acts & Is in existing beings of Men." Moreover, the reiterated abruptness that characterises their unfinished poems seems to dramatise the conviction expressed by Hegel in his *Aesthetics* that art has an "after" as well as a "before," and to be the announcement of a time "when art points beyond itself" [103].

Coming by definition after what Hegel foresaw as "the end of the romantic form of art" and existing therefore supposedly "above ideas and consecrated forms," literary Modernism seems nevertheless predominantly an American and an English phenomenon. It may be that it is perceived as having universal relevance perhaps only because the English language has been that of the dominant culture in the twentieth century. Much in the same way, Romanticism appears to have found its first and clearest expression in German and English letters. America and France, the most conspicuous homelands of the eighteenth-century revolutions, had only afforded second-hand and therefore historically provincial expressions of Romanticism; Whitman and Hugo no doubt count among the greatest of poets, but they are post-romantic poets and belong to an altogether different historical context. In France, to this day, the reception of Romanticism has been conditioned by what Marx and Engels called the "French Ideology," the anti-religious, socialist rationalism inherited from the Enlightenment. Chateaubriand, Lamartine and Vigny having done their best to serve as brilliant examples to consolidate the popular opinion that *Romantique* always more or less refers to those reactionary "Royalists," this "band of Emigrants in Arms / Upon the borders of the Rhine, [and] leagued / With foreign Foes mustered for instant war" that Wordsworth, in his *Prelude* [IX 185], confessed to having consorted with.

Because of these peculiar historical circumstances, the essential aesthetic and ideological issues of 'high' Romanticism—as opposed to its downstream, postromantic rumination—have erupted on the French literary and artistic stage in the manner of a long-fused time bomb, under the species of Surrealism. It is no mere coincidence that, on the one hand, the Surrealist Revolution was the exact contemporary of Modernism, while, on the other hand, it paralleled the October Revolution and entertained with Communism a lasting love-hate relationship. A professed successor of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and Sade, but also of Hugo ("*quand il n'est pas bête*") along with Chateaubriand ("*dans l'exotisme*") [38-39] to quote but a few in a very severely selected list of names, Breton solemnly declared Surrealism to be "historically" the "tail" of Romanticism, and more precisely

its “prehensile tail” [110]. He considered that the true essence of Romanticism “resided entirely in the negation” of what so-called romanticism the French authorities were celebrating the centennial anniversary of in 1930, adding on top of the bargain that Surrealism was still but the youth and infancy of Romanticism. Remarkably, however, beyond the sheer preposterous exuberance of a style that was part and parcel of the *Zeitgeist*, several of the key grounds on which Surrealism may be defined as a recurrence or Romanticism are indeed the same as those on which it coincides with Modernism. Pound’s invention of Imagist Vortex as a liberation of the image from the idea is very much the same thing as the Surrealistic “spark,” destined to “do away with idealism proper” and to literally destroy the idea—“*torpiller l’idée*” [117]. Automatic writing, being the methodical main road to “distraction,” in application of the “soluble fish” principle according to which “man is soluble in his own thinking” [55], is nothing but a creative acting out of the demise of the subject. Yet this new approach to art is explicitly perceived as the possibility for “the imagination of man to take a blatant revenge on everything” after “centuries of domestication of the spirit and mad resignation” [135]. Surrealism reasserts and revisits Coleridge’s Imagination, Hegel’s *Einbildungskraft*. Surreality, defined as the “resolution of these two states, apparently so contradictory, of dream and reality,” may easily be understood as an avatar of Eliot’s “unification of sensibility,” which is also a revision of the Jena Romantics’ project of a marriage of philosophy and poetry, or, as Breton would say, the wish that Philosophy be superseded—“*que la philosophie soit surclassée*” [97].

Modernists and Surrealists, however, have carefully ignored one another, and in spite of the effort of poor David Gascoyne the Surrealist Revolution never made its way across the Channel. Unlike Buonaparte, though, it never even bothered to try its luck. This is perhaps due to an English version of what Marx called the “German Ideology,” this almost natural inclination to sympathise with the “romantic enemies of reason,” as Adorno and Horkeimer would say to characterise an agenda which precisely was also theirs. In the English context, therefore, Surrealism was simply bringing some untranslatable water to an already well-powered mill. But it has found an important echo on the other side of the Atlantic, for historical reasons that are most likely to have absolutely nothing to do with Breton’s short stay in the United States of America and in Haiti during the second World War. The often recognised affinity that can be seen between the intellectual heritage of Surrealism and Postmodern American poets as various as John Ashbery, “deep image” poet Robert Bly or the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E and so-called Innovative poets is the result of Pound’s influence, but also came indirectly via the Fine Arts.

Yet, whereas the intellectual lineage of this tradition requires some amount of demonstration, at least one direct Romantic remanence in twentieth-century American poetry may be witnessed in the new-style lyricism and orientalism of the Beats, and especially in Ginsberg’s overt adoption of Whitman as a role model. In such a case, however, the Romanticism is at once more patent and much more independent of intellectualistic, theoretical preoccupations. Robert Lowell may almost too easily be called Romantic for both his early political commitment and his later confessional style. A similar remark could be made concerning the

indebtedness of “eco-poets” to Wordsworthian Romanticism, and the crypto-Byronism of Rock’n Roll singers. But these domains, of which examples can be found world-wide, seem to call for research that belongs to the field of cultural studies even more than to literary criticism *stricto sensu*. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy once declared that “The Romantics have no predecessors” [42]. While this remains to be discussed, it seems beyond doubt that they do have successors, not least obviously among those who repudiate them or refuse to acknowledge the debt. What is more, these modern continuators of the Romantics need not necessarily be considered as reactionary anti-modernists. But quite the contrary, although it had been argued before, it seemed necessary to recall that Modernism itself may to a large extent be interpreted as a continuation of the Romantic agenda by other means.

* * *

In “We are All German Romantics,” Jacques Darras begins by returning to Dante, thus broadening the angle of vision to perceive the Romantic moment, which originated in the German Romantic movement of Jena, as situated midway, “*nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,*” in the history of modern Europe. The most desirable future for Europe, he argues, a future that would turn it back on the barbarity of the twentieth century, lies in the direction pointed out by Romanticism. Such a statement, however, cannot be the object of a debate, in which Jacques Darras finds himself in polite disagreement with French modernist poet Michel Deguy, for instance, although it is in fact the effect of as yet imperfect mutual understanding. Darras writes as a man of letters, and his essay, by echoing the preoccupations of contemporary philosophers like Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, testifies to the persistent relevance of a debate on the reception of Romanticism.

“Romanticism and Postromanticism; from Wordsworth to Pater,” by René Gallet, explores and maps the long intermediary period of Victorian poetry, that stretches between the Romantic and the Modernist moments, which are traditionally perceived as two historically distinct periods. But Gallet’s wide-ranging culture goes far into revealing the philosophical and theological intricacies of a time that is a long pondering over the consequences of the epistemological shift tolled by Kant in the twilight of the Enlightenment. While operating a salutary critical revisiting of a period that the Modernist ideology had made to appear rather like a loose, baggy parenthesis, Gallet also demonstrates how this particular debate cannot be convincingly conducted without paying due attention to the Reformation, in which it has its roots.

In “Also F.H. Bradley: An Hegelian Reading of T.S. Eliot’s Negativity,” Brian Glaser starts by paying special attention to the conclusions of T.S. Eliot’s doctoral dissertation on English philosopher F.H. Bradley, who was both a leading figure of English idealism and a detractor of Hegel’s philosophy, to which Eliot was introduced when he was a student of George Santayana’s. Glaser applies to Eliot a critical method inspired from Hegel’s

commentary of Diderot's *Nephew of Rameau*, to argue that the alleged newness of modernist poetry is in fact less an epochal rupture than a second generation of attempts at thinking the self in terms of cultural construction.

In "Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams's Romantic Dilemmas: from Obliteration to Remanence," Hélène Aji reconsiders Pound's repudiation of Romanticism, especially in the person of Whitman, in the light of his more ambiguous relation to the poetry of Browning. For all the apparent rejection of the Romantic, the dream of founding Modernism on a historical *tabula rasa* soon proves a re-enactment of Romantic agony. In a comparable way, but without the same categorical claim to rejection, Williams's attitude to Keats is one of liberation through appropriation and adaptation. Aji thus shows how, in spite of proclaimed rejection, the Romantic projects can be seen to be actualised in Modernist poetics, precisely in terms of this force of rupture that characterises Modernist writing.

Sara Greaves, in "A poetics of dwelling in Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts*," turns to the case in point of Bunting, a British poet who managed the tour de force of reconciling Poundian Modernism with Wordsworthian Romanticism. Greaves reads Bunting as an early example of what critics like Johnathan Bate or Leonard Scigaj have called "ecopoetry," which marries modernist techniques with a Romantic discourse that favours the connectedness of man with nature. American poets like Gary Snyder or M.S. Merwin, English poets like Ted Hughes or Ruth Fainlight, are examples of a branch of post-modern literary expression of Green sensibility, which is often related to Beat or New Age ideology. Far from being only a case of sheer instrumentalisation, it is also the development and exploration of post-empirical, non-Cartesian modes of subjectivity. At the same time, it testifies to a belief in the transformational power of poetry which the Modernists shared with the Romantics.

In "Romanticism and Animism in Roy Fisher's *A Furnace*," William Wootten reads Fisher's poetry in the light of John Cowper Powys's concept of "fetish," which is not the same as Freud's, but designates an image or icon that facilitates quasi epiphanic moments of entry into nature. These fetishes operate like means of escaping the symbolic order and may be related to Kristeva's notion of "the semiotic," of the concept of *chora* that she borrows from Plato. Yet Wootten engages in a critical argument with Andrew Crozier, whose "post-structuralist sensibilities" he antagonizes, thus giving an illustration of a lasting debate, of which what is sometimes called the theory war has recently offered a rich series of examples. The bone of contention is really the metaphysical issue—often regarded as the fault-line between Romanticism and Modernism, but which, we have argued, may rather be analysed as already inherent to the Romantic ideology—of which this article demonstrates the lasting relevance to this day.

With "The Ballad Revisited: Elizabeth Bishop's 'The Burglar of Babylon'," Axel Nesme affords a sturdy if indirect post-structuralist response. Yet the divergence of analyses is only apparent, and more a matter of method than of meaning. The radically close text analysis, and the seemingly shallow pretext of working on a ballad composed by a poet who once playfully called herself "a minor female Wordsworth," should not

mask the fact that Nesme is here working in depth on the crucial problem of mimesis, and has subtly chosen a poet whose canonical *raison d'être* is precisely her constant toeing of the line of departure from Transcendentalism. He shows what may well be Bishop's greatest literary worth: that her distanced meditation on the gaze of the observer in the act of perception—but this for the very perceptive reader's eyes only—is an intellectualised revisiting of Romantic Irony or, in other words, of Coleridge's decisive step ahead of Wordsworth. The way Nesme makes use of the theoretical tools of Lacan and Žižek will demonstrate, if need be, that there is no unbridgeable gap between post-structuralism and the inchoative Romantic departure from idealism, but merely some historical distance and increased degree.

In "Ted Hughes & Romanticism: A Poetry of Desolation & Difference," Janne Stigen-Drangsholt brings to contribution Heidegger, whose philosophy simply could not be dispensed with on such a topic, and especially his *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. She very convincingly argues that it would be wrong to read Ted Hughes simply as a neo-Romantic, although he is one of the most eminent continuators of the Romantic endeavour. Stigen-Drangsholt argues that myth, in Hughes's poetry, is in no way exterior to the poetic expression, but that it is essentially an openness, an opening of a "between" within which there can be a "relation" of subject to "object," or a space where what Heidegger would term Being is brought to language. In agreement with Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, she further adds that this is also Schelling's conception of myth as non-mimetic and transcending the binary mode of our perception of the world.

These essays on Remanent Romanticism concur to a project in literary criticism that calls for a kind of diachronical comparative criticism, of which they offer various tentative examples. They call for further research in philosophy and the history of ideas and of art, that reach beyond the mere scope of what is traditionally the limited provinces and prescribed behaviours of literary studies. By doing so, they take the risk of cross-country walks onto the forbidden lawns and into the thickets that stretch appealingly between the well-trodden academic paths. They do not amount to any sort of exhaustive statement but mean to raise questions, and rather aim at providing a short, open-ended series of other critical directions.

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