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TRANSFORMATION OF ROMANTIC MOTIFS IN J. SCHUMACHER'S MUSICAL FILM THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

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The article analyses how J. Schumacher's musical film The Phantom of the Opera (2004), based on A. L. Webber's musical, revises some elements of the artistic and aesthetic system of Romanticism. Since the musical was based on the novel of the same name (1910) by a French Romantic writer Gaston Leroux, this multi-step reinterpretation allows one to observe a special perspective of the "end of a century" – to track how the postmodern film adaptation reflects the artistic and aesthetic shifts of the late 18th – early 19th century (when Romanticism emerged) and late 19th – early 20th century (Neo-Romanticism). At the same time, in J. Schumacher's musical film, the forms of art associated with special artistic and aesthetic aspirations (theatre at the beginning of the 19th century, cinema at the beginning of the 20th century) define certain stylistic dominants and become markers of time, its revolutionary and catastrophic changes, as well as moral and aesthetic constants.

While the Romantic concept of the man and art is subject to reduction and profanation in G. Leroux's epigonic novel, the context of postmodern film narration makes it possible both to enrich it with the artistic achievements of a two-century artistic evolution and simplify it to a universal formula. The artistic whole of the musical film The Phantom of the Opera reproduces the motifs peculiar to the brilliant authors of European and American Romanticism (G. G. Byron, E. T. A. Hoffman, V. Hugo, E. A. Poe) and epitomizes the ideals of humanism that reach their maximum in Christianity-inspired Classical Realism of the 19th century. The film neutralizes such traditionally associated with Romanticism oppositions as those of the ideal and reality or the artist and the general public. Art and life interact, creating a prerequisite for mutual understanding, harmonization, and escaping the tragic contradictions of being. This interaction enables reality to open up new opportunities, and art turns out to be the place of salvation and restoration of love-based relationships among people.

Keywords: Romanticism, Realism, postmodernism, reinterpretation, the transformation of motifs, the concept of art.

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ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ РОМАНТИЧНИХ МОТИВІВ У МУЗИЧНОМУ ФІЛЬМІ ДЖ. ШУМАХЕРА "ПРИВИД ОПЕРИ"

Астрахан Н. І.

У статті проаналізовано особливості актуалізації елементів художньо-естетичної системи романтизму в музичному фільмі Дж. Шумахера "Привид Опери" (2004), знятому на основі мюзиклу Е. А. Веббера. Оскільки в основу мюзикла був покладений однойменний роман французького письменника-романтика Гастона Леру, написаний у 1910 році, багатоступенева реінтерпретація дає змогу побачити своєрідну перспективу "кінця століття" – відстежити, як у постмодерній екранізації віддзеркалюються художньо-естетичні зрушення межі XVIII–XIX (становлення романтизму) та XIX–XX століття (неоромантизм). При цьому ті види мистецтва, з якими пов'язували особливі художньо-естетичні сподівання (театр на початку XIX століття, кіно на початку XX століття) у музичному фільмі Дж. Шумахера визначають певні стилістичні домінанти, стають маркерами часу, його революційно-катастрофічних змін і морально-естетичних констант.

Якщо в епігонському романі Г. Леру романтична концепція людини й мистецтва зазнає редукації та профанації, у контексті постмодерністського кінонарративу виникає можливість збагатити її художніми напрацюваннями двох століть мистецької еволюції й водночас спростити до універсальної формули. У художньому цілому музичного фільму "Привид Опери" відтворено характерні мотиви геніальних авторів європейського й американського романтизму Дж. Г. Байрона, Е. Т. Гофмана, В. Гюго, Е. А. По. І водночас втілюються ідеали гуманізму, що досягають максимуму в християнській наснаженості класичного реалізму XIX століття. Характерне для романтизму протиставлення ідеалу й дійсності, миття й загалу у фільмі знімається. Мистецтво та життя взаємодіють, створюючи передумову для взаєморозуміння й гармонізації, виходу за межі трагічних суперечностей буття. Завдяки означеній взаємодії реальність відкриває нові можливості, а мистецтво постає як простір порятунку, відновлення побудованих на любові взаємин між людьми.

Ключові слова: романтизм, реалізм, постмодернізм, реінтерпретація, трансформація мотивів, концепція мистецтва.

Defining the problem. Over time, the study of literature changes approaches to the scholarly understanding of significant phenomena in the history of literature. As it was noted by T. S. Elliot, a new phenomenon in the existing order requires a readjustment of the whole order. Romanticism is traditionally associated with a specific period. Western literary studies define it as a 100-year period from 1750 to 1850. Ukrainian literary studies primarily localize the Romantic era in the first half of the 19th century, while the romantically coloured tendencies in the literature of the late 18th century are considered the so-called *Pre-Romanticism* [5]. Although Romanticism has long ago become a matter of literary history, it continues to influence contemporary artistic consciousness, introducing certain romantic elements newly reconsidered in the context of contemporary artistic discourse.

Unexpectedly, this modernization opens a whole new side of European and American Romanticism, making it possible to view the development of the Western literature and art from a more precise perspective of the interaction between the past and the present.

Analysis of previous research. The period of Romanticism and Romantic artistic and aesthetic system in its relation to the artistic practices of the previous and subsequent literary epochs remain a focus of interest of literary studies in the context of Ukrainian and foreign literature (the works of D. Nalyvaiko [4], B. Shalaginov [9; 10], M. Kalinichenko [1], Y. Nakhlik [6]) and contemporary coverage of theoretical literary problems (N. Kopystianska [3], B. Shalaginov [8; 10]). Latest addressing of Romanticism and Romantic literature and art in general, especially that representing postmodernist (or

metamodernist [12]) artistic practice, requires special attention.

Released in 2004, *The Phantom of the Opera*, J. Schumacher's musical film, based on A. L. Webber's musical of the same name (1986), may serve an illustrative example of this "reanimation" of Romantic artistic thinking. The very nature of the double re-interpretational transformation of the original work, a novel by French writer Gaston Leroux [13; 14], published in 1909–1910, is eloquent and symptomatic. J. Schumacher creates a bright postmodern parable about the essence of human and art, introducing virtually every Romantic artistic motif of the late 18th – first half of the 19th century into his work. Due to this synthesis of motifs, classical Romanticism takes on a different perspective and fully reveals its epistemological potential.

The article aims to research the manifestations of Romantic poetics in their postmodernist reinterpretation in J. Schumacher's musical film *The Phantom of the Opera*.

The methods of the research include cultural, historical, formal, and hermeneutic methods, as well as the elements of intertextual and intermedial analysis.

Results and Discussion. A synthesis of arts was the dream of Romantic artists. They considered music the most romantic art form, "the first language," the Sanskrit of nature itself. In the late 18th – early 19th century, artistic synthesis was carried out at the theatre. It was *Romantische Oper* that marked a rapid spread of new artistic and aesthetic thinking in European culture [11]. By definition, theatre is an intermedial art. A theatre building filled with beautiful music became the symbol of a harmonious world where artists and art reign, where *musica universalis*, which even the Pythagoreans mentioned and which gained new meaning for the Romantics, manifests itself. In *The Phantom of the Opera*, the theatre (Palais Garnier) appears on the cusp of the 19th and 20th centuries against the background of the modernist aesthetic

revolution and changes in the aesthetic paradigm that accompanied revolutionary changes in the development of science, society, and civilization. At the same time, the musical film becomes a cultural event at the turn of the 21st century, creating a three-century perspective for artistic *fin de siècle*.

The film opens with an auction in the theatre. What is left of the past wealth of theatrical life is being sold; the golden age of the theatre has given way to decline. The variety of colours is restored by the artistic retrospective (it is 1870 in the film and 1881 in the novel and musical) and restoration of theatrical stylistics, strikingly bright against the background of a new style of the early 20th century, the times of World War I. This is the style of black-and-white silent films, laconic and concise (individual lines of the characters in the auction scene are associated with captions). The Romantic contrast principle is applied within the stylistic harmony of the film at the level of generalization: the change of particular historical epochs correlates with the change of artistic eras and aesthetic paradigms. The movement from the theatrical synthesis to the cinematic one in the early 20th century was perceived as impoverishment, as a movement from art to reality, from fiction to documentary evidence, which is where cinematography began. It is significant here how one of the Lumière brothers' first films demonstrated the arrival of a train at La Ciotat (1896). A modern viewer might perceive its onrushing movement as a symbol of time passing through space, pointing at the risks of civilizational innovations that bring acceleration and set humanity aside. Needless to say, the development of cinema art was from the beginning to the present accompanied by new enormous possibilities, including intersemiotic translation of the works of any (without limitation) existing branches of art into the cinematographic language. However, the "documentary" component remains an essential element of the aesthetics of a feature film and a significant factor of

its conventionality. It manifests itself even when the "evidence" provides more information about technological possibilities of creating an illusion (so-called "special effects") than about people, buildings, and landscapes.

The cinema aesthetics that replaced the theatrical one and the car in the shot are the markers of World War I. It was the time of disillusionment when the decadent doubt about the value of art, a great artistic illusion, was replaced by the aesthetic "revolution" of modernity. Thus, in the context of the current postmodern situation, the authors of the film actualize the problem of art, its essence and purpose, which gains a special meaning in the early 21st century. It is no coincidence that the film culminates with the destruction of the theatre as a space of art, with a fire in the theatre building, which in some shots resembles a giant ship with portholes. According to the scriptwriters' idea, a large theatre chandelier, specially designed for the shooting, falls and goes out in the climactic scene, like the sun, without which this artistic world is doomed to die. But in another artistic space, the space of J. Schumacher's musical film, the chandelier finds itself in its place again, glowing brightly in the theatrical sky of the artificial, human-made world revived by a new artistic effort.

The decline (destruction) and revival of art, a complex multilevel problem of the artistic relay race, is reflected in one of the central motifs of the work. The mystery of art as one of the central themes of Romanticism is solved here by the reconstruction of Romantic mythological thinking. Romanticism can be defined as one of the global mythological systems, one of the influential, ideology-based mythologies of the modern era, a specific interpretative system that sets the vectors for understanding life and artistic phenomena. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, a myth is based on a special mode of thought, the so-called "logic of bricolage". It implies combining opposites, replacing one pair of opposite

notions or images with another, which leads to the gradual exhaustion of epistemological impulse.

The images of the Phantom of the Opera and the theatre as the space of his existence develop according to this logic. The lower and upper parts of the theatre correspond to the vertical Romantic opposition of the inferior and sublime [2]. The Phantom's home, the territory of his creative existence, is the deep dungeons of the theatre, where he hides from prying eyes and tries to bring Christine. The roof of the theatre is put in contrast with the bottom. It is where Christine and Raoul talk about love, and the Phantom realizes his love failure for the first time. The horizontal plane of the theatre is also divided according to the "logic of bricolage". The boundary is a mirror, the door opened by the Phantom to lead Christine into his world behind the looking glass. The Romantic image of the Phantom corresponds to this spatial layout of oppositions. He is frightening like an unfathomable abyss of evil he falls into after committing a murder. At the same time, he can reach the heights of the spirit through his creative work as a composer, musician, architect, and constructor; the theatre is the creation of his genius. On the one hand, the Phantom is isolated from human society, contrasted with it. On the other hand, he constantly and in various ways attempts to interact with other people, crossing the boundary between "the world behind the looking glass" and "reality," between the world of art and life. The essence of the image of the Phantom shows itself through contrasting making with destruction, creative work with crime, genius with insanity. The Phantom of the Opera is extremely ugly and beautiful at the same time; the evil and divine meet in him to start a fight.

Constructing the image of the central character in this manner is based on the experience of Romantic art. All of the Phantom's main features have roots in the significant images of Romantic literature. For example, E. T. A. Hoffmann's favourite characters are enthusiasts, musicians, and

composers, sensitive artists of genius who are misunderstood by society and suffer from the fear of madness. It was Hoffmann who created a Romantic interpretation of the image of Don Juan as a fortunate man, richly endowed with vitality, unable to accept public morals and marriage, which clips the wings of love.

The Byronic hero opens another aspect of the Romantic personality. It is not only a disillusioned man who has lost faith in the possibility of happy love and grieves for the unachievable harmonious existence but also a rebel against the authority of God and society who feels guilty and painfully realizes his involvement in evil. It is not only pilgrim Childe Harold and noble Prometheus but also Cain and Manfred, culprits responsible for the losses of human lives, criminals trapped by their destructive passions.

The Phantom appears to be a mystery to solve, similarly to the characters from Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, whose mysterious appearance and behaviour are strikingly irrational and whose actions defy common sense. Poe was the first to research into the emotion of fear of death and the very phenomenon of death, the meaning of which hides the meaning of life.

The very principle of grotesquely combining the uncombinable in one image is also inherited from Romantic literature and is associated, in particular, with Victor Hugo's aesthetics. The connection between Quasimodo and Notre-Dame de Paris is reflected in the connection between the Phantom and the Opera House. For Hugo, who named his novel after an architectural monument, the thought that the arts evolve through the alternating predominance of one of them over the others was of utmost importance. In this regard, architecture was supposed to be replaced by literature that expresses certain ideals capable of making the general public and every particular person better. This is another thought essential for the creators of the film *The Phantom of the Opera*. Architecture was

replaced by literature; the theatre was likewise replaced by cinematography, which is now being overshadowed by the aesthetics of a clip, a peculiar quintessence of performance, a modern variant of the synthesis of arts, subordinate to the needs of today's popular art. Hugo conceptualized man as the combination of an angel and a beast and developed the plot of a demonic creature's transformation under the influence of love for a heavenly, sublime woman's soul.

Depicting a demonic character in love, genetically related to the Byronic hero, is one of the central themes in Mikhail Lermontov's oeuvre.

Therefore, the image of the Phantom of the Opera synthesizes virtually all the features of the classical Romantic characters. This synthesis is based on the deep understanding of Romanticism from a particular perspective created by the further development of literature and art. The creators of the musical film carry out a fundamental rethinking of the motifs of the novel *The Phantom of the Opera* by the French writer Gaston Leroux, published in the early 20th century. The novel not so much developed the traditions of Romanticism as replicated Romantic clichés using the stereotypes of Romantic artistic thinking in order to affect the readers emotionally: to strike with the central character's mysteriousness, fascinate with the ominous atmosphere of the dungeons under the theatre, thrill with the main characters' romantic feelings, and engage the reader in solving a detective case.

The musical and the musical film based on it simplify the literary material to the succinctness of a mathematical formula, bringing the novel's composition to the just proportions of poetry and harmony of music. There remains only one instead of the two de Vigny brothers, the numerousness of female images has been reduced to the most essential four (Christine, Carlotta, Madame Girya, and her daughter Meg), excessive details have been removed, the space has been narrowed and filled with symbols, the time has been compressed, and

accentuated retrospective composition has been introduced. Plot motifs are reorganized so that each episode can gain particular significance. The music, which serves as a means of both narration and depiction, is consistent with Leroux's description: on the one hand, it is simple and easily understandable; on the other hand, it is amazingly charming, sublime, and sophisticated, able to unite extremes into one inspirational flow. This is how the poetic formula of Romantic art comes into existence. It is not just a postmodern game with Romantic aesthetic rules and poetic features; it is how the Romantic artistic experience is entering our present, how it can be modernized in accordance with topics relevant nowadays and current challenges that serious art must address.

The questions about the essence of a human and art are in accordance with the central character's image. Gaston Leroux's novel featured the opposition of the angelic and bestial, divine and demonic as well. Ugly Erik appears as a combination of two extremes: he is at the same time a musician, talented and admirable, and a criminal, frightening and repulsive; an unfortunate sufferer, a victim of circumstances one cannot but sympathize with, and an insane tyrant who makes other people suffer. These contrasts in Leroux's novel appear to be excessive. Romantic techniques are not only turned into stereotypes here – they are carried to the point of an almost caricature exaggeration, even absurdity.

There is no such hypertrophy of extremes in Joel Schumacher's musical film; there are lifelike characters and feelings developing in dynamics. It is clear why the Phantom found himself in the space of evil and then had to confine his existence to the boundaries of the theatre, and it is understandable that Christine believed in the Angel of Music her deceased father, a violinist, had sent to her. The heroes find themselves in the sphere of the highly productive intersection of art and life. Art proves able to turn ugliness into beauty, and life

allows good to neutralize evil with mercy, love, and faith. Creative work and love, which are inseparable from each other, develop at the crossing of life and art. The musical film sets all axiological emphases without a single false note. The three main characters move towards each other, forming not a "love triangle" but a circle of sympathy and understanding.

Accumulated by Realism, the experience of artistic cognition of the nature of evil, its spiritual and social roots and consequences allows the authors of the musical film to place moral emphases accurately. Firstly, a person becomes evil under the influence of other people's attitudes and the necessity to act in the paradigm predetermined by already existing evil – to repay evil with evil (the first murder committed by the young Phantom in response to cruel treatment). Secondly, materialized evil that reaches its maximum in murder isolates the murderer from human society, condemns him to tragic loneliness, and initiates personal self-destruction (the Phantom's lonely, gloomy, almost afterlife existence in the theatre catacombs). Thirdly, if repentance does not come immediately after the crime, the latter is repeated; evil is neutralized by repentance, which is always encouraged by other people who restore the relationship with the criminal one way or another (the attempt of self-sustaining revival is interrupted because of Christine and Raoul but then restored due to them).

The ways of addressing the problem of the correlation between crime and brilliance are also suggested by Realist art. From the perspective of Romantic consciousness, greatness and genius can be inherent in a villain since the Romantic personality does not adhere to the rules or respect the laws, goes beyond the possibilities given by life, breaks into the space of death. Instead, Realist art states that "villainy and genius sit ill together." Evil is incompatible with creating: it ruins everything, including the villain himself.

On the other hand, creative work, which reaches its full potential in art, creates – a work of art, the artist himself, new horizons, and the possibility of harmonizing everything that exists.

When the body of Joseph Buquet, killed by the Phantom, appears above the theatre stage, the performance stops, the boundary between life and art disappears, and reality takes over the conventionally separated space of a work of fiction, proclaiming the rule of universal laws. The coordinate system the Phantom is depicted in is changing; these changes predetermine the internal drama of J. Schumacher's musical film. The antithesis *Phantom of the Opera – Angel of Music*, which highlights the incompatibility of eternal subordination to death with eternal life, gives way to the antithesis *genius – insane*, which is related to the contrast between creation and destruction, a person's corresponding to the notions of the divine or diabolic. Ultimately, the above-mentioned antitheses come down to the pair *creator – monster (beast)*. It leads to identifying the Phantom as a human being who, similarly to any other person, above all, needs compassion and love with which endless possibilities of divine creation, including spiritual resurrection, rebirth after spiritual death, and liberation from evil, are connected.

The image of the Phantom is central both for Gaston Leroux's novel and its artistic interpretations, A. L. Weber's musical and its musical film adaptation by J. Schumacher. In the rather epigonic novel by the French Romantic writer, the Phantom of the Opera – the Angel of Music – the Voice – Erik, the architect of the theatre building and an opera composer, are different masks of a man disadvantaged by his ugliness. They help him keep other people under his control by intimidating, tempting, and deceiving them. This character, who is in his element with evil and repeated murders, is unambiguously ruthless and cruel. As for Erik's creative talent, it is also questionable since there is some dichotomy here. Leroux mentions that Erik's music and singing bring harmony

and salvation; they do not deceive those who believe them. However, Erik's "architecture" is tricky: its traps lead to a torture chamber.

The torture chamber, a mirror room that creates an illusion by repeating and reflecting the same image, also turns into a symbol. The malignant illusion creates misconceptions, disorients to time and place, drives into the dead end of unjustified hopes, and ultimately leads to the death of the soul and suicide of the victim, just as was intended. The mirror room is a maze in which one loses an adequate vision of the world and themselves, suffering unnecessarily. Today it can be perceived as a symbol of modern art or, more precisely, a simulacrum that pretends to be art, even though it is not. It is no coincidence that Raoul and the Persian, once in the torture chamber, experience thirst that remains unslaked. An illusion created on the basis of repetition and replication, designed to disrupt the natural settings of perception and understanding, cannot slake the thirst by providing the person with pure water of truth. The mirror room does not presuppose the emotional solidarity of the "author" with the victim of the illusion. The author watches the victim suffer and die from the sidelines as if it were a show.

When he was working on his film *Solaris*, film director A. Tarkovsky is known to have intended to create a mirror room. It was supposed to symbolize the heroes' meeting with themselves and their conscience, finding their true selves. The necessary scenery was designed at the director's request. It was a room of an ordinary shape that reflected only those inside it. However, the actors involved in the filming were so uncomfortable being in the room that the director abandoned his idea. True art cannot be cruel since it is inspired by compassion, the ability to empathize with another person's suffering and to look at the world through their eyes. Cruelty destroys art, turning salvation into crime.

Expectedly, the room in Erik's secret house where Christine is staying and the

torture chamber in the opera house dungeons are adjacent. Erik's despair and hope that he can be loved as he is cannot but provoke compassion. However, horror is the main emotion that Gaston Leroux tried to evoke in the readers, concentrating the flavour of the Gothic novel in his work as much as possible. Erik attempts to force Christine to stay with him, tries to profit from her feelings, luring her into the dead end of the dungeons and threatening her with a disaster in which many people will die. His purpose is to live like everyone else, hide his ugliness under a mask, marry Christine at the Church of the Madeleine (it is where the wedding of Georges Duroy, a hero of the famous novel by G. de Maupassant, takes place), and make a comfortable living from his art.

Conclusions and directions for future research. Transformation of motifs and images and reduction of the "superfluous" in the film make the image of the Phantom more psychologically plausible (from the perspective of realist understanding) and, at the same time, increase the possibilities of symbolization and generalization. The character remains romantically tragic, and it is he who primarily suffers from his involvement with evil; love is perceived as his hope for salvation. In our opinion, the most significant are the following aspects of symbolization of the image of the Phantom in J. Schumacher's musical film:

1) Art is born from suffering and despair as a way to overcome them, to defeat evil and its consequences in the human spiritual existence. A real work of art is a drama with God, a religious drama, according to J. Tischner [7]. The creators of the musical film *Phantom of the Opera* have managed to achieve this "dramatic" quality.

2) Art is nobly selfless and full of love for every person. Its purpose is to give and save. By giving beauty and harmony, art paves the way for the salvation of the human soul, freeing it from the captivity of evil and death. An attempt to subordinate it to any self-serving purpose leads to the destruction of art.

In its highest form, pragmatism means violence against another person, physical and spiritual manipulation, treating people as things, ignoring and destroying the personality. The Phantom fails to turn other people into puppets, to replace Christine with a doll in a wedding dress. *Don Juan Triumphant* is a symbol of the defeat of art, the superiority of passion over love and strength over compassion. The victory of love is quiet and discreet, often mistaken for defeat. Such a victory leaves no one defeated and brings people together in a benign society.

3) Art requires both putting on and taking off a mask. The Phantom puts on the mask of Don Juan to tell about his feelings, pain, despair, and hope. This is what any author does when he creates characters and tells a story. However, it is done to discover the truth about oneself and the world, find one's true face, and learn the truth about the inner self, no matter how unattractive it may be. Art is fiction, fantasy, which paradoxically leads to confession and self-disclosure. The film's climax is when Christine, in front of the audience, removes the Phantom's mask during the production of *Don Juan*. Her gesture is full of love and compassion. By removing the mask and showing who is hiding under it, she turns the Phantom to all people and, at the same time, gives him a cue that the hunt for him has begun, provokes the last escape and final discovery of his "self," lost in the labyrinths of passion.

The same can be said about love: everyone strives to be consistent with the ideal image created by their loved ones and to hide their shortcomings from them. However, love is impossible without nakedness, including the spiritual one; it tears off the masks, revealing the person's true face and the true magnitude of the personality. Due to the experience of Realist art, this unity of creativity and love, which existed only in its spiritual and ideal plan for Romanticism, acquires very specific real-life dimensions and asserts the

possibility but also the difficulty of achieving happiness.

4) Art is born in the space of death as a counteraction to it. Because of the evil (sin) that leads to death, there arises a need for resurrection, a real work of art becoming a ground for it. According to the literature of Classical Realism, art always meditates on death and thus always creates life. So, within the framework of art, the spiritual overcomes the physical, evil and death are made impossible; human returns to God through repentance and forgiveness, which come through the compassion and love of other people and can be seen in the ability to forgive. The Phantom thus leaves the space of death owing to Raoul's and Christine's involvement in his life. And the art of opera, which has lost its former popularity and power over modern audiences, is given a new life in A.L. Webber's musical and, especially, in J. Schumacher's musical film.

Something similar happens to Romanticist traditions. By using the possibilities of contemporary postmodern art with its free game appeal to any artistic and aesthetic paradigms of the past and any works representing them, the film score composer and director make Romanticism sound in a new way, incorporating it in a living artistic process that meets the actual needs for the search for truth today. The Romantic synthesis achieved by the authors of the musical film *Phantom of the Opera* helps to discover, in a way, the quintessence of Romanticism, its DNA formula. The latter makes it possible to discern the influence of the Romantic worldview,

aesthetics, and poetics on modern works of art, and on the other hand, shows how far this art has moved away from 19th-century Romanticism, how it reinterpreted its guiding principles, overcame the extremes it demonstrated, and went beyond the dead ends outlined by it.

Modern consciousness does not see art as anything opposed to real life. It is a necessary part of this life that reflects the whole. Similarly to life in general, art faces the threat of simulacrization, brutalization, and being turned into a mirror maze where it is impossible to meet the other and discover oneself. This discovery of the other, non-existent for Romantic consciousness, was at the core of the movement from Romanticism to Realism in 19th-century art. The main discovery of Realist art of the 19th century, humanism, namely, compassion and understanding, love and forgiveness addressed to every person, became a salvation, a release from the captivity of self-centered self-affirmation and self-reflection. The return to realist humanism is inevitable, no matter how the aesthetic revolutions and counter-revolutions of the 20th and 21st centuries will revise it. The union of the Romantic vertical (heights and depths, ups and downs in human existence) and Realist horizontal (benign connections between people based on love and understanding) opens the way to harmony, overcoming the crisis of artistic and historical life. This opens up new perspectives for the artistic practice and its scientific understanding.

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