

*Palimpsests of the Romantic*

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## Abstract

This article offers a *longue durée* perspective to illustrate that just as romanticism was a necessary, though not single-handedly sufficient condition for nationalist movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an understanding of later cultural and political phenomena – including contemporary neo-nationalisms – benefits from an appreciation of the romantics' continuing, albeit often unacknowledged legacy. Empirically, we make this argument through select and carefully contextualized Polish and Austrian discursive 'snapshots'. Conceptually, we propose that new theoretical terminology is needed, which we find in what we describe and analyse as *palimpsests of the romantic*. Key assumptions and sentiments that defined romanticism are thereby shown to be re- and over-written, under novel social conditions and by later generations of political and cultural actors in both Poland and Austria. ‘

## Key words:

Romanticism – the romantic – palimpsests – Poland – Austria

## 1. Introduction

The relevance of the romantic movement of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries for the rise of nationalism – itself tied to industrialisation and *the great transformation* wrought by widening commodification and its ‘disembedding’ effects (Polanyi 2001) – has been long established (Gellner 1998). Romanticism is commonly seen as a ‘counter-Enlightenment’, anti-rationalist philosophy manifest in artistic writings and political positions critical of modernity. Kenan Malik (1996, 73-75), for example, ties romanticism to the ‘racial logic’ that has haunted Western modernity, defining the romantic movement as: a ‘backlash against ... universalistic assumptions ... not a ... stable phenomenon ... [but] a celebration of particularistic values ... order and stability, tradition and authority, status and hierarchy.’ More generously, some commentators insist on the (late) romantic movement's ambivalence, combining ‘strong anti-modern and escapist as well as critical and enlightened potentials’, acting as handmaiden to nationalism but also channelling rebelliousness and – in some manifestations – acting as a ‘gateway to pluralism’ (Kohlenbach quoted in Daffner 2014, 3).

We here propose that just as the romantic movement was a necessary though not single-handedly sufficient condition for 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalisms, later cultural/ political phenomena, including contemporary neo-nationalisms, reflect the romantics' continuing legacy. Put differently, if romanticism was a reaction against modernity, we here argue that current reactions against post-industrial *liquid modernity* (Bauman 2000), for example, also display more or less prominent features of (neo-) romanticism. We thus call for philosophical *longue durée* in the study of contemporary (European) politics and culture, particularly for sensitivity to how some defining assumptions and sentiments of the earlier romantics recur in, and inform, contemporary protest politics (especially, though not exclusively, on the far right). Empirically, we make this argument through select Polish and Austrian ‘snapshots’.

Conceptually, we suggest that to illuminate continuities *and* important discontinuities and contemporary re-appropriations of romanticism, new theoretical terminology is needed: we find this in what we describe and analyse as *palimpsests of the romantic*.

Our argument unfolds in three steps. We begin with a conceptual outline of our analytical tool: the palimpsest. This is followed by a discussion of ontological assumptions and socio-political sentiments that partly defined 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century romanticism and that, as we then demonstrate, reappear in a range of more recent and contemporary cultural and political phenomena. Finally, we introduce our empirical illustrations of how and where romantic thought has been re-articulated, albeit without its genealogy being necessarily acknowledged by those invoking it. We demonstrate that what is at stake in those examples is more than a history of ideas: an excavation of subsequent and contemporary traces of romanticism calls for their careful contextualization, which in turn helps throw some of today's defining social changes and (perceived) dislocations into sharp relief.

## 2. Ideological re-/ over-writings

Used to describe annotations and substitutions made to texts over lengthy periods of time (Jauss 1993, 459; Assmann 1999, 151-158), the notion of the 'palimpsest' has derived considerable conceptual momentum from Genette's (1997, 1) theory of transtextuality, or 'textual transcendence' creating 'a relationship, obvious or concealed, with other texts'. Gerald Prince (1997, 1), in the foreword to Genette's *Palimpsests*, ties textual transcendence to texts being many times re-written and partly erased. While Genette's focus lies on literary palimpsests, the digital revolution has seen conceptual applications to hypertextuality in cyberspace (Kaźmierczak 2008, 138; Pisarski 2011, 192). In what follows, we push the concept yet further, to serve as a heuristic device in cultural and political studies. Genette's core-terms – transtextuality, intertextuality, hypertextuality, derivation, imitation, transformation – are relevant here. *Palimpsests of the romantic* capture processes of meaning-making that are rooted in romanticism, re-articulate it new contexts, while only selectively conserving some of the original interpretative and axiological trajectories. Philosophical assumptions and political sentiments anchored in the past thereby reappear transtextually, referencing particular discursive components for contemporary purposes.

Andreas Huyssen offers a conceptual broadening that transcends the literary connotations of the term to capture what he terms 'urban palimpsests':

[W]e [can] read cities and buildings as palimpsests of space... [A]n urban imaginary in its temporal reach put[s] different things in one place: memories of what there was before, imagined alternatives to what there is ... [P]resent space merge[s] ... with traces of the past, erasures, losses ... The trope of the palimpsest is inherently literary ... but it can also be fruitfully used to discuss ... urban spaces and their unfolding in time ... [L]iterary techniques of reading historically, intertextually, constructively, and deconstructively ... can be woven into our understanding of urban spaces. (Huyssen 2003, 7)

The re-writing tied into successive versions of a text is taken as a metaphor for other symbolic or material elaborations on, additions to, and creative modifications of 'an original'. Hence, architecture, amongst other things, can transport 'memory traces', while simultaneously carrying markers of the present and of – at least partly future-oriented – 'collective imaginaries'. As such, palimpsests are symbolic and/ or material manifestations of temporality, reflecting the past and its contemporary re-appropriations. Extending Huyssen's

conceptual broadening, we propose that palimpsests also offer other analytical applications. We here speak of *ideational* or, understanding ideology as language, ideas or cultural practices that reproduce or subvert existing power relations (Augoustinos 1998), *ideological palimpsests*. The latter, as we show through our examples below, enable fresh analyses of some defining political phenomena of later eras: prominent discourses, social institutions and cultural phenomena can be read as ideological palimpsests that carry obvious or subtle traces of romanticism and provide evidence of ‘re-writing’ informed by contemporary agendas. We build on Anit Bhatti’s discussion of the legacy of Johann Gottfried Herder’s late 18<sup>th</sup>-century ethnic-organicist social philosophy – which resonates in today’s ‘nationally encoded and territorialized understanding of cultural identity’ (Feichtinger and Cohen 2014, 2) – in close proximity to the ‘image of the palimpsest’: the latter’s heuristic value, Bhatti shows (2014, 36), lies in its negation of essentialized concepts of ‘authenticity’ or ‘origins’, emphasizing the ‘non-synchronous simultaneity’ and significance of every ‘layer’ of multiply re-written texts. Similarly, we extend Uhl’s suggestion (2010, 84) that the ‘fading and transcription’ of memories, not inevitably rational or ‘calculated’ processes, be thought of as social palimpsests.

Analysing neo-romantic palimpsests requires an extrapolation of core-dimensions of the original romantic movement as a philosophical, literary and political phenomenon, to then read those dimensions – following Huyssen – ‘historically, intertextually, constructively, and deconstructively’ in later re-appropriations. Before turning to such ‘archaeological’ (Foucault 2003) ground work, it is worth remembering that romanticism was, from its inception, prone to being re-articulated in new settings.

A few examples suffice to substantiate this. Rüdiger Safranski (2013) distinguishes between *Romantik* (romanticism, as a movement) and *das Romantische* (the romantic, as a quality): the former refers to the early romantics – themselves a heterogeneous, though for some time in late-18<sup>th</sup> century Jena socially ‘tight’ group inspired by Herder, Schiller and Fichte that included literary critics August and Friedrich Schlegel, theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, writer Ludwig Tieck, philosopher Friedrich Schelling, and the poets Friedrich von Hardenberg (better known under his pseudonym Novalis) and Friedrich Hölderlin (Pinkard 2002, 132). *Das Romantische*, conversely, captures a wider and later group of thinkers (i.e. according to Safranski, there are at least traces of romanticism in most German-speaking intellectual production and politics of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20 centuries, from Feuerbach to Heine and Marx, from Wagner to Nietzsche, Hofmannsthal to Thomas Mann, and from Heidegger, elements of Nazism, to even parts of the student movement of the 1960s). This distinction and the early romantics’ legacy in later manifestations of ‘the romantic’ (*des Romantischen*) exemplify the *re-* or *over-writing* captured by the notion of the palimpsest.

Romantic thought has not only, as we shall see, been continuously, albeit selectively re-appropriated. Romanticism itself was in some of its key-formulations a palimpsestic re-writing of earlier ideas. Michael Dusche shows how Friedrich Schlegel’s ‘proto-nationalist writings’ articulated ‘cultural defensiveness and German chauvinism’ through a ‘positive Orientalism’ that revered Indian antiquity for its purported ‘holistic spirituality’; Germany was thereby constructed as ‘Europe’s true Oriental self’, as a direct ‘descendent’ of Sanskrit culture, and hence as a ‘countermodel’ to modern (i.e. ‘degenerate’) French society. (Dusche 2013, 32-40).

Bram Mertens (2014) provides evidence of later, partial re-appropriations of romantic thought in Walter Benjamin’s ‘judicious interpretations’ of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. Benjamin is shown to have appropriated the ‘utopian, revolutionary and messianic spirit of Romanticism’ with ‘little regard for the integrity of the [original] (literary) text[s]’,

approaching them in fragments to be ‘used, quoted, divided [and] combined’; put differently, the romantics were read ‘selectively, anachronistically and creatively’ as mere ‘vehicles’ for Benjamin’s own thought. (Mertens 2014, 259, 272-3)

With regard to political romanticism (see below), the geographical export of romantic thought has been well-documented. Thomas Blom Hansen, for instance, shows how romantic nationalism, as (inadvertently) shaped by Herder and Fichte, spread beyond ‘the German nation’ and orientalist scholarship; ‘romanticist notions of fullness, spirituality, depth, sensitivity, and authenticity’ also appealed to colonised, middle-class intelligentsias and thereby impacted on anti-colonial struggles and, in the specific context of Hansen’s work (1999, 40-42), on an emerging Hindu nationalism.

The conceptual usefulness of the palimpsest lies in its ability to capture deviations from original texts (or, more broadly, pre-existing ideas), their creative, at times distortive re-interpretations formulated by later generations driven by different concerns. Presentist re-writings have indeed haunted the legacy of romanticism. This is arguably clearest in later re-uses of Herder’s understanding of ‘human history’ as revolving around distinct ‘ways of life, or “cultures”, whose standards for excellence’ are ‘internal to themselves and ... expressed in distinctive language[s]’ (Pinkard 2002, 133). Pinkard insists that nationalists have re-cycled this organic understanding of culture/ language as a ‘defining mark’ of ‘a people ... in a manner completely unintended by Herder’.

To unpick later palimpsestic re-workings of romanticism, we first have to identify those ‘family resemblances’ (Pinkard 2002, 131) defining the early romantics that re-appear – in re-/ over-written fashion – in the snapshots we discuss later in this article. Our next step therefore consists of an outline of those romantic assumptions and sentiments that have appeared most useful and appealing to later *bricoleurs* (Lévi-Strauss 1966).

### **3. Core dimensions of the romantic**

A starting point to an extrapolation of romanticism’s key-dimensions, which have provided subsequent generations with important, if not always acknowledged points of reference, is Novalis’ definition: ‘I romanticise’, Novalis outlined, ‘by granting a higher meaning to the ordinary ..., by giving the dignity of the unknown to the familiar and a glow of infinity to the finite’. This explains Safranski’s interpretation of romanticism as anti-secularist re-enchantment of modernity, as a ‘continuation of the religious by aesthetic means’. Highly relevant to our argument, Safranski’s offers historical contextualization to his earlier-mentioned distinction:

Romanticism is an epoch. The romantic, [conversely], is an attitude that cannot be confined to an epoch. While the romantic found its most complete expression in Romanticism, the former is not restricted to the latter. The romantic still lives on today. It is certainly not an exclusively German[-speaking] phenomenon, but it has been particularly salient in Germany. (Safranski 2013, 12-13, *our translations*)

Constraints of space prevent us from doing full justice to either phenomenon here, romanticism as a literary and philosophical epoch or the romantic as an enduring set of aesthetic and subsequently politicized dispositions that spread from Jena, Berlin and Heidelberg to the rest of Europe (Pinkard 2002, 131), a task that is more than adequately performed by the (history of ideas) literature on the early romantics and their later influence (Bowie 1996; Berlin 2000). Instead, our analysis requires a distillation of those diachronically

recurring sentiments and propositions that are discernible in the later palimpsests we begin to examine below. There are several such features.

The first core-element is romanticism's social critique, manifest, for instance, in its opposition to modern(izing) society's functional division of labour and concomitant disciplinary specialisms (Safranski 2013, 60; Bowie 1996, 13; Wellbery 2012, 24). It is the romantic self-perception as a counter-hegemonic, subversive but ultimately re-integrative force that has continued to resonate across a range of cultural and political phenomena over the last two centuries. As Safranski (2013, 392, *our translation*) notes, 'the romantic perspective ... is almost invariably involved whenever a disquiet with the real ... triggers a search for alternatives' and the 'possibility of transcendence.'

Tied to its critique is a view of history that resonates in much nationalist historiography or, more accurately, myth-making (Bell 2003): a schematic construction of history as having purportedly seen a now bygone 'golden era'; followed by a 'fall from grace' that has led to present circumstances found unsatisfactory and alienating (e.g. Dusché 2013, 42) and in turn juxtaposed to an anticipated future that holds the promise of a return to former glories or a state of social and individual completeness (e.g. Hutchinson 1987).

Similarly pertinent is the romantic tendency towards the Dionysian, the spirit of excess and life-affirming individualism. This extends to a relativist, anti-foundationalist subjectivism (Berlin 2004), and – in its collective form – the celebration of particularistic traditions that featured in the romantic pre-occupation with pre-modern myths and folktales (e.g. Safranski 2013, 153-171). The latter were considered the timeless encapsulation of a given *ethnie's* (Smith 1986) spirit.

Such primordialism provides the link to political romanticism. The latter has assumed different forms in different contexts, including anti-Napoleonic sentiments, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalist movements of increasingly anti-Semitic orientation, Heidegger's philosophy, as well as Nazism's *stählerne Romantik* ('romanticism of steel') and its 'vulgarized', murderous synthesis with a (mis)reading of Darwinian socio-biology (Safranski 2013, 348-369).

Political romanticism's characteristics include a deep essentialism, pre-supposing a 'category essence ... thought to be the causal mechanism that results in those properties that we can see' (Gelman et al. 1994, 344). This 'logic', applied to social groups and taken to one possible extreme, reduces individuals to epiphenomena of an assumed core – or primordial 'essence' – held to define a collective. Such is the tenor of the collectivizing organic romanticism (Gellner 1998) that reappears in reified discourses and monolithic portrayals of 'culture', 'tradition', 'nation' or 'race'. A related manifestation of this collectivizing essentialism is the subject's loss of its 'philosophical and epistemological primacy' encountered in political romanticism: 'the disappearance of the individual subject, abandoning itself to tradition like the wave is subsumed into the ocean' (Mertens 2014, 273-4)

Several of Herder's earlier, at times less rigid propositions ought to be remembered here: first, his dynamic, non-linear understanding of history as characterized by ruptures and shifts; second, a collectivist ontology that indeed saw individuals as deeply embedded in a wider community; third, in contrast to many later re-appropriations, Herder's patriotism was 'democratic' rather than chauvinistic, keen to stress both virtues and vices amongst all nations, premised – in other words – on respect for cultural pluralism. (Safranski 2013, 24-28) This corroborates Bowie's (1996, 15) contextualization of 'romantic thought ... [as] driven ... by an understanding of language ... linked to the emergence of interest in the integrity and diversity of other cultures'.

Yet, critical readings of neo-romantic palimpsests to be examined below also require an appreciation of an ambivalence in Herder's ontology, encountered in his thoughts on the

‘relation between language’, places and people. Sonia Sikka (2007, 174-175) summarizes these with reference to two much-quoted passages from Herder’s writings:

*The mode of representation of each nation is the more deeply imprinted upon it because it is their own, bound to their sky and their earth, sprung from their form of life (Lebensart). (Ideen, 298)*

And:

*Whoever is raised in the same language, whoever learns to pour his heart, to express his soul in it, belongs to the people (Volk) of this language. (Briefe, 304)*

As Sikka shows, paradigmatic ideas follow from this: a lifeworld subsumes historically enduring traditions – or ‘collective patterns of significance’ (Sikka 2007, 175) –, their geographical setting (i.e. the significance of place), and the individuals born into them. Further, the world – seen from this perspective – is constituted by linguistic groups, and languages are never completely translatable, as ‘one would have to translate a[n entire] world’ (Sikka 2007, 180).

Most crucially, such an organic understanding of culture, and its equation of linguistic and cultural units, displays a historically consequential preference for ‘unitary’ – rather than complex, hybrid – identities, while tying singular ethno-linguistic identities to particular places and histories. Invoking Grossman’s account of the ‘limits’ of Herder’s ‘tolerance’, Sikka pinpoints a key-juncture in Herder’s thought:

[W]hile he enthusiastically admires ... the ancient Hebrews, he is much less enthusiastic about the ... Jewish ... diaspora. According to Herder, once the Jewish people were no longer ... in a particular place, their culture deteriorated and their language became ‘a sad mixture’ ... The remedies [Herder] proposed ... are a return of Jews to their homeland ... or their full assimilation to the cultures upon which they have been ... grafted. (Sikka 2007, 178)

It is arguably a small step from Herder’s insistence on the centrality of language and place to defining geographical ‘transplantation’ as resulting in ‘lack of organic “fit” between a first language and a new world’ (Sikka 2007, 179). Herder’s position on the Jewish diaspora also reveals a deeply essentialist ‘logic’, which – however distorted later re-readings may have been – go some way to explaining why Herder and the romantic have continued to be major points of ideological reference for later nationalists. We thus turn to our empirical examples palimpsestic re-writings of the romantic.

#### **4. Palimpsests of the romantic: Snapshots and a research agenda**

While ‘the romantic is a necessary part of any vibrant culture’, Safranski concludes (2013, 393), ‘political romanticism’ is ‘dangerous’. The empirical snapshots of neo-romanticism, to which we turn next, indeed reflect ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions associated with romanticism, or – more accurately – with the romantic. We use the term ‘snapshots’ deliberately: what follows is a first indication of the analytical work the concept of the *palimpsests of the romantic* can perform. While we offer some necessary contextualization and a first, tentative analysis of our snapshots, we primarily do so to delineate an agenda for future research. Our central suggestion is that we are better able to

illuminate later eras, if we become attuned to the traces of the romantic, and their ideological re-appropriations, at work in prominent cultural and political phenomena.

Ernest Gellner's *Language and Solitude* (1998) provides a 'bridge' from the theoretical discussion above to the empirical examples examined below. Part comparative intellectual biography of Bronislaw Malinowski and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gellner's last, posthumously published book provides contextualization that locates these two intellectual greats in relation to two competing ideational currents that shaped the Habsburg Empire's final decades. Gellner terms this *the Habsburg Dilemma*, capturing a 'chasm' between two diametrically opposed epistemologies and social philosophies: on one hand, an 'atomic-universalist-individualist vision' associated with the Enlightenment, positivism, and urban cosmopolitanism; on the other hand, an 'organic counter-picture' – a 'communal-cultural vision ... articulated by Herder and countless "romantic organicists" [and] "nationalist populists" ... stressing totality, system, connectedness, particularism ... favouring *Gemeinschaft*, roots, "closed, cosy" communities, *Blut und Boden*' (Lukes 1998, xiv). Steven Lukes' additional paraphrasing of Gellner's thesis prepares the ground for our argument:

The 'alignment' of the elements within these poles and the tensions between them was especially strong in the Habsburg lands, not least *Poland and Austria*, as the Empire reached its end, where 'the confrontation of atomists and organicists ... meshes in with the alliances and hatreds of daily and political life. (Lukes 1998, xiv, *italics added*)

Malinowski's Cracow and Wittgenstein's Vienna differed in important respects, including the fact that in Poland – unlike in the centre of the Habsburg Empire – romanticism incorporated elements of Hegelianism (Gellner 1998, 124-125). Such contextual differences aside, Gellner demonstrates the ubiquity and far-reaching consequences of this clash between atomistic individualism and romantic collectivism across Central Europe of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It needs stressing that constraints of space force us to here largely bracket out the arguably most crucial subsequent re-appropriation of romanticism: the much-discussed question (e.g. Berlin 2004; Voegelin 2006) as to the relationship between the romantic and Nazism. According to some, the link is an immediate one, with Hitler arguably 'the heir of the Romantic tradition' (Kohlenbach in Daffner 2014, 15). Other assessments are more nuanced, acknowledging that national socialism utilized the romantics' organicist understanding of a people, its culture and myths (*Volk und Volkskultur*), while suggesting that Nazism's defining ideological 'poison' was derived from its concurrent, above-mentioned misappropriation of a vulgarized, deeply racist biologism (Safrinski 2013, 350-366). Daffner's assessment (2014, 9) that 'the National Socialists misused the later phases' of the romantic movement underscores the complexity of a historical question that transcends the remit of this discussion and awaits further examination.

With more geographical and historical specificity, if our claim that the romantic has many times been re-/ over-written under different social conditions is to be substantiated, then – projecting Gellner's argument into the present – Poland and Austria constitute obvious contexts, in which to search for such ideological palimpsests. As we begin to demonstrate below, later reformulations of the romantic go beyond their obvious resonance in nostalgic longings and ideas of rooted- and homeliness, as conveyed by the Polish concept of *ojczyzna* (Duszak 2013, 214) or the German *Heimat*. Such polysemic tropes, as Blickle (2002) shows, communicate ideological 'wish-fulfillment' and construct familiar spaces as epitomes of 'identity, shelteredness, harmony, and disalienation' (Wickham 2003, 506). All this echoes



romantic sentiments (Lekan 2007). Yet, the latter can be traced with greater accuracy – using the notion of the palimpsest – and across a wider range of social, discursive and institutional sites.

#### *4.1. Polish palimpsests*

Romanticism in Poland is widely understood as a source of positive values (i.e. belonging and homeliness), while it also taps into a symbolic matrix of national imaginations rooted in ideas of sacrifice and messianic history (i.e. Poland's purported special role in global history). Arguably, the Warsaw Rising Museum ([http://www.1944.pl/about\\_museum/](http://www.1944.pl/about_museum/)) exemplifies such a palimpsest of the romantic. Starting on 1 August 1944, the Warsaw Rising was the biggest operation by the Polish resistance Home Army against Nazi Germany. Without adequate military equipment insurgents, wanting to liberate Warsaw, fought the occupiers until 3 October 1944. The tragedy of the struggle was exacerbated by the fact that the Soviet Union, like the other allies, failed to support the Warsaw Rising. Some of the insurgents were brave, though ill-prepared teenagers and children. This has often drawn criticism. A large proportion of insurgents were part of the first generation born in free Poland in the 1920s and educated in schools where the romantic tradition was deemed important. The Warsaw Rising Museum documents the events of 1944 but it also reveals cultural continuity stretching from the inter-war period, to World War II, to the here and now in terms of romantic thought, sentiment and views of Polish history. The museum's official website ([http://www.1944.pl/about\\_museum/?lang=en](http://www.1944.pl/about_museum/?lang=en)) reads as follows:

To design a modern museum exhibition we reached for proven foreign examples, such as: The Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the House of Terror Museum in Budapest. First and foremost we wanted to convey the climate of those times, recreate the atmosphere of fighting Warsaw, show not only the military struggle of those 63 days but also civilians' everyday life. Only in this way could we reach our target audience – the young people. Our Museum is designed to tell them a story of the Rising, show all of its aspects and convey its significance.

'Convey[ing] the climate' of this particular past to today's intended audience is clearly deemed to be crucial. There are further echoes of romantic thought. The Warsaw Rising Museum displays and celebrates resilient Polish-ness; elements of 'transtextuality' can be discerned in internet postings about the museum, some of which reveal colloquial invocations of national history that often display defining characteristics of Polish romanticism, such as a preoccupation with war-time sacrifices for the greater, national and spiritual good. One seemingly more nuanced internet posting quotes an interview with historian of literature Maria Janion who has described the Warsaw Rising Museum as articulating 'the romantic myth about war' ([http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,16375,108325733,,O\\_wojnie\\_dla\\_pieciolatki.html?v=2;](http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,16375,108325733,,O_wojnie_dla_pieciolatki.html?v=2;) *our translation*). Another, more critical internet user favourably compares Warsaw's Copernicus Science Centre (<http://www.kopernik.org.pl/en/>) with the Warsaw Rising Museum:

I have just visited the Warsaw Rising Museum – I took my son there. And now I am more sceptical of its depictions of children and war ... the Copernicus Centre is much better for children  
([http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,16375,108325733,,O\\_wojnie\\_dla\\_pieciolatki.html?v=2;](http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,16375,108325733,,O_wojnie_dla_pieciolatki.html?v=2;) *our translation*).

These very different institutions ‘work’ in public discourses as palimpsests of different axiological and cognitive paradigms – romanticism, in the case of the Warsaw Rising Museum; positivism, in the case of the Copernicus Science Centre. The palimpsest of the romantic created by the Warsaw Rising Museum arguably employs its rich symbolic repertoire in the service of axiological continuity (i.e. the preservation of the positive values ascribed to national memory and identity) rather than of scientific validity. Some palimpsestic evocations of the past contain the risk of interpretative reductions, political instrumentalizations, and decontextualizing historical analogies (see Müller 2002). As such, palimpsests can be read as context-specific forms of ‘colloquial thinking’ (Geertz 1983; Kloch 2006). Moreover, Polish palimpsests of the romantic bear the inevitable imprint of Polish political and philosophical history. In terms of the former, the historical legacy of Poland’s periods of partition (i.e. variously in 1792, in 1793, in 1795, followed by 123 years of Russian, Prussian and Austrian occupation) occupy central and enduring places in Poland’s national ‘mythscape’ (Bell 2003). In the philosophical domain, the confrontation between romanticism and positivism – thematised both by Gellner and in the above-quoted internet posting – continues to matter.

As a medium for colloquial thinking, such palimpsests recycle select romantic ideas and thereby shape contemporary forms of being in history, in nature, in society, and in the political realm. The ‘subjective’ dimension – of what it means and how it feels to be Polish – is crucial. Put differently, colloquial thinking can aid the trans-textual and intergenerational transmission of romantic ideas. Marion Janion and Maria Żmigrodzka, in their analysis (1978, 18-19, 24) of romanticism’s penetration of philosophy, religion and politics, discuss the romantic presumption of there being a mysterious bond connecting human and divine history, leading romantics to ‘learn’ history ‘from the inside’, by creation and transformation of ‘it’. Some such ideas indeed re-appear, in palimpsestic fashion, in what may first appear to be unlikely discursive locations. These include the – in contemporary Poland commonplace – utterance of ‘never again war and genocide’. Echoing romantic historiography (i.e. history as a form of self-cognition), this asserts that one can understand, learn from and avoid repetition of historical wrongs. Often encountered in (Polish and other) discussions about World War II and the Holocaust, the ‘never again’ formula was also articulated by former Polish prime minister (and now President of the European Council) Donald Tusk during his commemorative visit of the Westerplatte on 1 September 2014 (<http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/donald-tusk-na-westerplatte-haslo-nigdy-wiecej-wojny-nie-moze-byc-manifestem-slabych/g8lr8>). Such discursive invocations often show elements of abductive reasoning typical of colloquial thinking. Jason Slone (2004, 10) defines abductive reasoning as ‘involv[ing] constructing general principles as explanations for particular events, such that if the principles are true the event ... in question is explained.’ Tusk’s invocation of ‘never again’ implied, in line with the romantic notion of historical awareness enabling control over the future, that knowledge of World War II would be productively projected onto other contexts.

Arguably a more obvious palimpsest of the romantic emerges from the programme of Poland’s Law and Justice Party (PiS). This is a conservative, right-wing party, with close ties to the Roman Catholic Church, stressing traditional values, a distinctly romantic reading of Poland’s historical status in the world, and much-discussed recent electoral successes. Parts of the PiS party programme read as follows:

The universal character and universal value of the Polish historical and cultural experience is not accidental, neither is the unity of the Christian message presented in

the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and manifest in the Polish experience. (PiS 2014, 10, *our translation*)

This corroborates Janion's and Żmigrodzka's assessment (1978, 22) that typical of the Polish romantics were views of Polish historical experience as encapsulating universal lessons. This also manifests in widespread views of the significance of the Roman Catholic Church in Polish public life through successive historical eras. Experiences of the Church as enabling an alternative, 'subaltern counter-public' (Fraser 1992) – a 'symbolic free homeland' of sorts – were important not only during Poland's partitions in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also during the country's 'fourth partition' effected by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939 between Germany and the Soviet Union, and again during the communist era (1945-1989).

While the continuing discursive centrality of the Church as a 'free symbolic homeland' has been harder to maintain in the democratic era since 1989, conservative politicians have nonetheless continued to evoke it, not least to strengthen their appeal to sections of the electorate closest to conservative Catholicism. The above quotation from the PiS programme, in its paradoxical reference to the purported universality of Poland's historical experience, reflects romantic patterns of thought. Law and Justice thus invokes the notion of a close tie between the divine and the human, with – in this particular case – the Roman Catholic Church being taken as the defining link between Poles, their national identities and the transcendent. This is assumed to be a historical constant, from the middle ages, via the period of partition, until the communist era (<http://www.pis.org.pl/dokumenty.php?s=partia&iddoc=164>). 'History' thus becomes a useful resource not only for literary texts and culturally salient images but also for electoral slogans, party manifestos and everyday, 'colloquial thinking'. The present, thereby, is made intelligible by analogy and through interpretative patterns taken from cultural memory.

Another example was provided by a 2014 public exorcism performed in front of Warsaw's Presidential Palace (Szczepański 2014) by a priest and in the presence of Law and Justice party politicians and sympathisers. As a symbolic means of articulating opposition to the President of Poland, this exorcism was staged as a ritual for the expulsion of 'evil' from the Presidential Palace. The latter was referred to by the participants of this performance as 'Namiestnik Palace' (Viceroy Palace), a clear historical/ analogical reference to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the term referred to the representative of the Russian tsar in Poland during the partition. Clearly, the term thus connotes foreign domination, with the implied accusation, in 2014, that the contemporary President of the Polish Republic works for Russia like viceroys served the tsar. The rich symbolism of the recent event centred on a priest and politicians purporting to explain and to change perceived contemporary political problems through metaphysical invocations. Once again, we here encounter the influence of romanticism and its notion of a divine connection with Poles and its required mobilisation in order to solve contemporary ills. Again, God is taken to intervene in Polish history, symbolically expressed through a member of the Catholic Church fighting purported evil. This act of exorcism reaffirmed the connection between religion and history, between the nation and God, although we must add that the spokesman of the Polish Bishop's Conference, priest Józef Kloch, criticized the ritual performed by Stanisław Małkowski in front of Presidential Palace (<http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/artykuly/456351,ksiadz-jozef-kloch-uderza-w-ksiedza-malkowskiego-za-egzorcyzmy.html>). This controversial 'exorcism' was thus also deeply rooted in Polish romanticism and its incorporation of divine presence in human history. Once again, the symbolic logic implied that, just like in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Poland was in danger and only God could help. This exorcism was therefore also an example of

colloquial, analogical thinking as manifest in this ritual palimpsest of the romantic. Again, Poland was assumed to have a special historical role and status in God's plans.

In Polish palimpsests of the romantic, and underpinned by the most painful chapters in the country's history, the discursive figure of the 'invading alien' plays a central role. This crystallized in parliamentary debates in 2003 on Poland's Treaty of EU Accession. Some concerns, like those articulated by PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński about allegedly badly negotiated Polish accession to the European Union were framed through discursive comparisons with Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 (Każmierczak 2009, 217). In such staggering comparisons, the EU was discursively constructed as another 'dangerous alien', in historical analogy – purportedly made plausible by recurring patterns in Polish national history – to 'explain' contemporary political challenges.

Overall, elements of romantic thought thus reappear in texts, utterances, symbols, and in the commonly assumed, purportedly enduring role of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. Palimpsestic romanticism displays hallmarks of colloquial thought, including the re-appropriation of select memories and discursive tropes as analogies employed by politicians, other 'creators' of public discourse, in everyday conversation, popular culture, or the digital realm. Just how selective such re-appropriations of (Polish) romanticism are is revealed by the fact that its historical representatives – including Mickiewicz, Norwid, Słowacki, Krasiński – also showed peculiarly modern, 'material' interests in technology, physics and electricity, or European economy, alongside their more immediately romantic preoccupations with the realms of the will, ideas and spirituality (Janion and Żmigrodzka 1978, 9).

Further insights into palimpsestic re-workings of elements of Polish romanticism can be gleaned from statements by the National Movement in Poland, an organization that in its self-understanding can be traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues to be committed to preserving 'patriotic tradition' through an 'uncompromising ideological attitude'; in practice, this precludes tolerance and dialogue. Invoking a deeply reified 'tradition', the National Movement's ideological declaration includes the following:

The nation can be independent only when the thinking of its elites is uninfluenced by external centres and instead rooted in its own history. The National Movement will develop an original, Polish political thought. It will restore the importance and magnitude of Polish culture ... also as a guarantor of universal values (<http://ruchnarodowy.org/deklaracja-ideowa>, *our translation*).

A sought-for 'sovereignty of culture' lies at the heart of the National Movement's agenda, yet such cultural sovereignty remains undefined. Historically, one surely needs to ask when the 'importance and magnitude of Polish culture' were more widely accepted. Once again, we encounter the trope of Poland's assumed historical status and mission. To speak metaphorically ourselves, such patterns of colloquial thought have people running backwards into the future.

Returning to Gellner's analysis of the philosophical chasm at the heart of (Habsburg) modernity, one may paraphrase the clash between positivism and romanticism as the enlightenment emancipating individuals from the collective, while romanticism purported to emancipate individuals from a lack of historical consciousness. The latter discursive tendency reappears in the Polish palimpsests examined above, in which Poland's purportedly special historical role is asserted, often in confrontation with contextually variable forms of historically real or analogically constructed invasion. Another part of the romantic view of history also features in many such discourses: the idea of the 'lost self', or a (national) self in danger of being lost amidst current developments, to which the political position being

advocated offers the allegedly only possible corrective. One of our earlier examples, Poland's Law and Justice Party, also illustrates this (<http://www.pis.org.pl>): the party frequently references the beginning of Martial Law in Poland, on 13 December 1981, not only as a date marking the struggle for democracy and freedom, but as point of continuing relevance and reference for Poland in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A state of permanent suspicion is discursively created, which can be read through our notion of the palimpsests of the romantic, in which the danger of the national self 'losing itself' is ubiquitous and requires constant vigilance: emotions take precedence over reasoned, balanced analysis; the present is explained through the analogical, interpretative frames of the past; a martial discourse pits patriotic 'fighters' against new 'invaders'. The 'inability to compromise' in the context of moral imponderables has been an important feature of romanticism in Poland (Janion and Żmigrodzka 1978, 8-9). The Law and Justice party appeals to a significant proportion of Poles (i.e. with 146 seats in parliament, the PiS [<http://www.sejm.gov.pl/poslowie/kluby.htm>] is now the second largest party) in part through a discursive frame that applies the same logic to present political situations, invoking 1981, and, more generally, a purported inability to morally compromise when confronted with 'foreign' systems of values and policy.

Palimpsests entail the re-appropriation and partial transformation of meanings and signs. In their uses of the past for the purposes of making sense of the present, they incorporate defining elements of colloquial thinking (Geertz 1983; Hołówska 1986; Kloch 2006). In the Polish examples examined here, as in the Austrian snapshots discussed next, select elements of the romantic clearly appear, to some, to be 'good to think' and politicise with.

#### 4.2. Austrian palimpsests

The arrival and reception of the early romantics in Austria are well documented. Friedrich Heer (2001, 159-176) contextualizes German romanticism in relation to poverty in German cities in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the social frustrations among many of the university-educated, and resulting youth rebellion. Important romantics – including the brothers Schlegel – were amongst Prussian émigrés to Vienna in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Friedrich Schlegel had converted to Catholicism and was amongst those then associating a Germanic revival with the Austrian empire (Heer 2001, 161, 171). As Heer documents (2001, 176), ultimately only a pan-Germanic self-understanding – and never Austrian patriotism – stood to gain from this. Such romantic-inspired pan-Germanism would play a key-role throughout and far beyond the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly through pan-Germanic fraternities and corporations, in energizing nationalist quests to 'Germanise Austria and purge her of all Slavic roots and traces' (Heer 2001, 163-164, 167).

Konstantin Kaiser (2006, 18-19) interprets distrustful Viennese reactions to Friedrich Schlegel's offer of his services as a publicist to the Habsburgs as symptomatic of an allegedly distinctly Austrian dislike of individual agency (*Subjektlosigkeit*); this is a common trope in reflections on the legacy of feudal hierarchies post-1918 and of the delay to the development of an Austrian civil society in the post-World War II era (e.g. Pelinka 1990, 24). Kaiser argues that Schlegel's status as a Catholic convert, rather than winning friends in Catholic Vienna, had the opposite effect in the early 1800s: his decision to change his confession had shown too much agency and hence made him suspicious to those whose (German) future he sought to help build. There are two complementary readings to be offered here. First, such distrust of converts from Protestantism may need to be interpreted in the context of what Heer (2001, 84-87) describes as 'crypto-Protestantism', of outwardly neo-Catholics still privately self-defining as Lutheran following the counter-Reformation. Second, the earlier mentioned

romantic strand that undermines the subject's 'philosophical and epistemological primacy' by subordinating them to 'tradition' (Mertens 2014, 273) resonates in such distrust of converts and their agency. Put differently, an organic-romantic understanding of culture, in which the individual is but a channel for, and expression of, the 'form of life' they are born into (Gellner 1998, 97-98, 104-105) and whose life-long member they are presumed to be, is ideologically at loggerheads with the biographical redefinition effected by conversion. Seen through the lens of romanticism's cultural organicism, the distrust Schlegel encountered in Vienna in the early 1800s suggests that Austria was in this particular respect already more romantic than Jena, Berlin or Heidelberg or, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, than even one of the chief romantics.

Against this historical backdrop, a – due to constraints of space inevitably brief – look at subsequent appropriations of romanticism is needed. Some palimpsestic re-articulations in and beyond the late 19<sup>th</sup> century may appear, at first glance, surprising. Thus, Steven Beller's seminal discussion of Vienna's Jewish communities in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century traces the impact of German idealism and romanticism on some prominent Viennese Jews, including Josephine von Werthemstein and her mid-century intellectual salon, or the lawyer and writer Heinrich Jacques; the latter, in fighting for Jewish emancipation, saw himself supported by 'Kant, Schopenhauer and Fichte' since the German idealist premise of the 'autonomy of the will', its anti-Semitic applications notwithstanding, offered a 'vital prerequisite' for Jewish assimilation (Beller 1990, 138). Much better-known was the influence of the romantic on the so-called Pernerstorfer circle of the 1870s (McGrath 1974), a group of subsequently prominent cultural and political actors (including Engelbert Pernerstorfer, Gustav Mahler, Siegfried Lipiner and Victor Adler) whose formative years stood under the influence of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and especially Richard Wagner; particularly the latter's 'Dionysian abandon' came to channel the circle's yearning for social and cultural 'regeneration' and rebelliousness against classical liberalism, Habsburg traditionalism, and Austria's exclusion from Bismarck's Germany (Whiteside 1976, 173). Beller (1990, 156-160) identifies this as part of the much wider, pan-German, *völkisch*, organic-romanticist cultural current that came to increasingly dominate Austria towards the end of the Habsburg empire and that for a time – before turning 'virulently anti-Semitic' – also pulled some prominent Austrian Jews into its orbit, with 'German irrationalism' initially seemingly promising cultural integration as opposed to social exclusion and alienation. This, in turn, can be read in relation to David Luft's analysis of the Austrian reception of Arthur Schopenhauer's ideas: following initial opposition – whether on Catholic, rationalist or empiricist grounds – by important sections of Austria's literary and philosophic scene to German, post-Kantian idealism and romanticism, Schopenhauer's ideas had, by the 1880s, become 'commonplace' across Vienna's medical, psychiatric and philosophical establishment; Schopenhauer's influence on Austria became yet more pronounced with the 'generation of 1905', which included Rudolf Kassner, Otto Weininger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hermann Broch, Karl Kraus, and even Vienna Circle positivists like Moritz Schlick. (Luft 1983, 60, 66, 68) To state the historically obvious, such partial ideational overlaps with 'German irrationalism' as encountered in some palimpsestic re-articulations of the romantic in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna could not prevent the concurrent hardening of ethnic boundaries, which ultimately helped pave the way for Nazism and the Holocaust.

Recent scholarship has helped illuminate other dimensions and the far-reaching impact of Austrian appropriations of (German) romanticism. It has been shown, for instance, that political romanticism and romantic interest in purportedly medieval 'folkways' aided not only the growing 'nationalization of society' (Judson 2005a, 15) since the Napoleonic wars, but also strengthened local, regional, provincial or ethnic attachments (e.g. Vick 2014, 43-45;

James 2013). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, an additional palimpsest is worth noting: the ideological over-writing of romantic self-/ other images by what has been described as peculiarly Habsburg-, dual or ‘frontier Orientalism’ (Gingrich 2006), which distinguished two ‘variants’ of ‘the Orient’: namely images of a distant, threatening, Turkish ‘other’, from that of another, ‘better’, more familiar Orient ‘much closer to home’ and invoked to legitimize the Habsburgs’ occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Heiss and Feichtinger 2013, 148-149). At the same time, yet another, unusually self-critical form of Orientalism, encountered in works by Hoffmannsthal, Musil and Kafka, inverted positive self-images and romantic ‘notions of national and cultural identity ... [by] invoking the oriental “Other” ... to express concerns about the ... troubled [Habsburg] empire’ (Lemon 2011, 1).

Most importantly, we have come to understand the political and cultural dynamics of how nationalities were actively constructed between the 1840s and the 1920s across Central Europe, a process in which nationalist associations, civil societies and increasingly divisive political discourses played key-roles (e.g. Judson and Rozenblit 2005; Judson 2005b; Wingfield 2003; Engemann 2012; Promitzer 2003). However, we also now know that the (romantic) construction of nationally defined boundaries and groups was not invariably successful, often clashing with and being contested by ‘pluricultural’ (Feichtinger and Cohen 2014, 10), bi-lingual life-worlds, more complex, local and dynamic self-understandings and solidarities (e.g. Stergar 2012; Judson 2005a, 6). Put differently, there is also evidence of sites and ‘forms of popular indifference’ (Judson and Zahra 2012, 21) to nationhood, nationalism and their romantic ‘logic’.

Corroborating that palimpsests can reveal ideological cross-overs and confrontations, romanticism was also the subject of heated discussions in Central Europe’s transnational discursive space prior to World War I. Stefan Simonek (2013) has analysed polemical discussions in *Die Zeit*, arguably the most important medium for Central European modernism, in 1897 of the romantic writings of Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz.

Fast-forwarding to the post-World War II era, perhaps surprising traces of romanticism have been detected in further cultural phenomena. Ewa Mazierska (2014, 26-29) has shown that German romanticism was a ‘main reference point’ for Austrian popular music icon Falco, seeing this international superstar of the 1980s/90s style himself in the romantic tradition of the ‘lonely individual ... misunderstood by the masses’. Meanwhile, the cultural-political criticisms by Austrian writer (and film-maker) Josef Winkler have been shown to engage with romanticism’s ambivalence, its deeply reified images of ‘self’ and ‘other’ as well as its ‘revolutionary spirit’ (Daffner 2014).

More immediately recognizable palimpsests of the romantic can be discerned in some of the rhetoric by Austria’s far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) and some *Burschenschaften* - ‘student fraternities [that] have ... shaped Austrian politics in numerous ways since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ... [and as] standard-bearers of German nationalism in Austria after 1945 ... [are] strongly represented in the ranks of the FPÖ’ (Weidinger 2014, 213) – respectively. With regard to the former, the FPÖ has come to present itself as a ‘socially conscious homeland-party’ (*soziale Heimatpartei*). In a 2013 interview, FPÖ-head Heinz-Christian Strache offered the following, deeply organic-romanticist account of *Heimat*:

*Heimat* is where people are accepted and feel comfortable. It’s the place one experiences with one’s loved ones in a common language, culture and identity. I agree with Johann Gottfried Herder: “Heimat is where one need not explain oneself”. But today we often see native Austrians having to explain themselves in their country. (*Profil* 2013, 23)

When queried about what is ‘specifically Austrian’, Strache mentioned ‘culture ... tradition, a way of life, folkways’ and ‘great historical achievements’ such as the successful defence against ‘two Turkish sieges’ and its contribution to Europe’s freedom (*Profil* 2013, 24, *our translations*). This serves as an illustration of a palimpsest of the romantic that credits its main point of ideological reference, while also over-/ re-writing its version of Herder’s thought in light of present interests and concerns.

In terms of Austria’s pan-Germanic corporations, the centrality of their romantic ethno-nationalism, which discursively ties ‘German-ness’ to ‘soil’ (i.e. often in historically contested territory such as South Tyrol/ Alto Adige) and advocates a ‘*völkisch*’, ‘anti-individualist’ nationalism that constructs (individual) Germans as mere ‘vessels of Germanness’ (Weidinger 2014, 214-215), as well as the continuing significance of the revolutions of 1848 to their self-understanding (Graf 2009) are well-documented. Historically, with the rise of racial anti-Semitism fraternities started expelling Jewish members in 1877 and in 1896 declared ‘all Jews by descent to be ... without honour’ (Beller 1990, 191-192), thereby illustrating how strands of liberalism had ‘spawned exclusivist nationalism’ (Beller 2001, 14). Recent years have seen some (far-right) fraternities engulfed in renewed controversies, particularly surrounding their annual proms, one of which, in 2012, was most controversially held on January 27, the international day commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz, leading to civil society protests and clashes (*Der Standard* 2012; Karner 2013). A series of essays by prominent fraternity members marking 150 years of their organizations’ history in Austria provides noteworthy examples of romantic palimpsests. We here again encounter politically motivated interpretations of present circumstances informed by selective articulations of romantic influences and their ‘over-writing’ with other ideational borrowings. Thus, prominent fraternity members insist that their organizational commitment to ‘honour, freedom, homeland’ is as timely today as it was in 1848, with their axiological system allegedly threatened by multiculturalism and demographic shifts predicted to see ‘Austria’s German-speaking majority become a minority’ (Graf 2009, 7); or that fraternities have lost none of their relevance ‘since the wars of liberation against Napoleon and the revolution of 1848 for the preservation of our German people’ (Stefan 2009, 11). Another essay references ‘German idealism’ and particularly Kant, Schiller, Herder and Fichte as direct sources of influence and insists – in pan-Germanic tradition – on an ethnic rather than civic understanding of ‘the nation’ (Pilz 2009, 20, 34). Readers are told that the *Mensur*, the fencing contests ritualized by fraternities, symbolize dedication to ‘the community and homeland’ (Lackner 2009:176). Finally, romantic commitment, ‘irrespective of the dominant *Zeitgeist*’, to ‘German culture’ and ‘freedom’ are combined with socio-biological discursive elements, postulating ‘natural differences’, primordial ethnicity, and warning against a possible ‘ethnic death’ (*Volkstod*) due to the purported dangers of immigration, ‘Islamization’, and lack of ethnic (i.e. Germanic) consciousness (Kuich 2009, 180, 189-197; *our translations*).

A final snapshot corrects possible but mistaken assumptions that romantic palimpsests are exclusive to the far-right and (German) nationalist fraternities only. This last illustration implicates the traditionally Tyrolean ‘cult of Sacred Heart’ (*Herz Jesu*), rooted in the region’s history of the 1790s, particularly its ‘conservative, “proto-romantic”’ struggle against the Enlightenment, Habsburg centralism, and Napoleon (Cole 2000, 481-481). When in 2013 Austria’s coalition government of Social Democrats and the centre-right People’s Party (ÖVP) was sworn in, its new agricultural minister, Tyrolean Andrä Rupprechter (ÖVP), embellished the usual ministerial oath by swearing it, not only to the Austrian president, but – as he put it to general surprise – ‘in front of Christ’s Sacred Heart’; clearly, to Rupprechter



this important occasion deserved to be symbolically further enriched through an impromptu cross-reference to Tyrol's legendary Andreas Hofer (*Kurier* 2013).

## 5. Conclusion

In an interview with the German *Der Spiegel*, controversial Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin re-articulated the romantic by insisting that 'values differ according to social context', by suggesting that he loved the now vanished 'roots of German culture', and by arguing that what remained of Europe's 'cultural roots' was more likely to be found in Russia than in Europe: Dugin claimed that Russia, 'unlike Europe, cultivates rather than condemns German Romantics like Schelling and Hegel [sic], Heidegger and Schmitt' (*Der Spiegel* 2014, *our translations*). We here encounter another contemporary, palimpsestic re-writing of the romantic legacy. The latter, we have argued in disagreement with Dugin, is also still very much alive in Central and Eastern Europe. We have made this argument through a small number of empirical 'snapshots', 'taken' – so-to-speak – of select cultural and political phenomena in Poland and Austria. Analysis of those requires a philosophical *longue durée* capable of identifying the ideological re-workings of features of the romantic that occurs in the phenomena in question. Conceptually, we have argued for an extension of the notion of the palimpsest and the selective, presentist re-writing of older texts and ideas it denotes. As stressed, the resulting discussion needs to be read first and foremost as an invitation for, and outline of, future research into the manifold, contemporary palimpsests of the romantic encountered across and indeed beyond Europe.

It has recently been shown that 'the lines between the rational and the irrational, Enlightenment and Romanticism, between science and the occult' were historically not 'nearly as sharp as once depicted' (Vick 2014, 142). The notion of the palimpsest helps conceptualise a more fluid borrowing of disparate ideas and influences, both synchronically and diachronically. Such colloquial thinking, or *bricolage* of diverse ideational sources for present political agendas and interpretative purposes, can also be discerned in some of our snapshots. Clearly, more work is needed on these and many similar examples, in Poland, Austria and elsewhere.

In Western academia in the post-World War II era, romanticism came to be widely seen as archaic and naïve thought, ignored by post-structuralists, mocked by existentialists, despised by structuralists, with theoretical interest in the romantic only re-commencing in earnest in the 1970s through work by Northrop Frye and M.H. Abrams (Bielik-Robson 2004, 19). The thrust of our argument is that what is easily dismissed from the safe distance of the social theorist's armchair, may be the very appeal of systems of thought that have long infused political imaginaries and continue to inform much colloquial thinking. Some features of the romantic are evidently experiencing a palimpsestic revival, though certainly not their first, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rather than responding with easy dismissals, it is surely the task of cultural and political analysis to illuminate the social conditions that lend renewed plausibility to such palimpsests of the romantic. The present paper constitutes a modest but necessary first step in this direction.

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