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Модерн III (вторая половина XX века). Бум инициатив. Очерк второй

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Аннотация. В данной работе продолжается рассмотрение художественной культуры второй половины XX века (Модерн III) с опорой на раскрытие её глубинной романтической сущности, начатое в предыдущей части: Demchenko A. I. Modern art III (the second half of the 20th century). The boom of initiatives. The first essay // Pan-Art. 2026. Vol. 6. Iss. 3. <https://doi.org/10.30853/pa20260045>. Отмечается, что в данный период искусство пережило радикальное преобразование, вызванное общественными движениями и молодёжной культурой. Этот период характеризовался синтезом популярного и академического искусства, обращением к серьёзной проблематике и обострённым историческим самосознанием. Возникло противопоставление урбанизма и антиурбанизма, отражавшее напряжение между техническим прогрессом и ностальгией по более человеческой, естественной сущности бытия. Художественная картина эпохи передавала чувство разочарования, обусловленное историческими событиями, и изображала хаотичный мир, полный противоречий. В 1960-е годы особенно ярко проявились интенсивные романтические устремления; в 1970-е они привели к кризису и последующему повороту к неоромантизму. Постепенно стали преобладать объективные мировоззренческие установки, что сказалось на образно-тональном строе искусства и к середине 1980-х годов подготовило почву для постмодернистского искусства. Эта эпоха представляет собой переходный этап, который, с одной стороны, соотносится с определёнными историческими тенденциями, а с другой – создаёт трудности при определении его места в истории искусства. Развивающееся художественное выражение сочетает новаторские и традиционные начала, свидетельствуя о сложном и многослойном характере современного искусства.

EN

Modern art III (the second half of the 20th century).
The boom of initiatives. The second essay

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Abstract. This study continues the examination of the artistic culture of the second half of the 20th century (Modern art III), building upon the analysis of its profound Romantic essence initiated in the previous part: Demchenko A. I. Modern art III (the second half of the 20th century). The boom of initiatives. The first essay // Pan-Art. 2026. Vol. 6. Iss. 3. <https://doi.org/10.30853/pa20260045>. It is noted that during this period, art experienced a radical transformation driven by social movements and youth culture. This period synthesized popular art with academic art, addressing serious themes and showcasing a heightened historical awareness. Urbanism and anti-urbanism contrasts emerged, reflecting tensions between technological progress and nostalgia for a more human essence. The artistic landscape mirrored a sense of disillusionment due to historical events, portraying a chaotic world filled with contradictions. The 1960s expressed intense Romantic aspirations, which led to a crisis in the 1970s and a shift towards neo-romanticism. Objective worldviews began to dominate, influencing tonal qualities in art and paving the way for postmodern art by the mid-1980s. This era marks a transition, which parallels certain historical trends while presenting challenges in defining its place in art history. The evolving artistic expression reflects a blend of innovative and traditional elements, indicating a complex landscape of contemporary art.

Введение

Now, let us move from the exceptional, sometimes extreme, and even transcendental sphere, to more real, mundane phenomena. A radical renewal of the palette of art could successfully be achieved on such a foundation. Much in this direction was achieved through a qualitatively different *development of folklore*. This had the greatest impact in music, especially in Russia, where this movement acquired enormous scope and entered the annals of artistic creativity under the name *new folklore wave*. This implied the next stage in the modern exploration of folk art, compared to the folkloric explorations of the early 20th century, which found their most vivid expression in the works of Stravinsky and Bartók.

In the second half of the century, composers (especially young authors of the period under review) felt free in their development of folklore material, allowing themselves any degree of subjectivity, using all the means of the latest compositional techniques.

It is noteworthy that they relied on folklore texts, but rarely quoted folk melodies, creating a new sound world through a free, emphatically modern interpretation of the laws of folk musical speech.

One of the most active representatives of the new folk wave was *Sergei Slonimsky*. The vocal-symphonic cycle **The Songs of Freedom** (1959) can be considered a pioneering work for him and for the movement as a whole. This title, in its own way, captures the rebellious spirit, in many ways characteristic of the Sixtiers – it expressed a desire for free life manifestations.

The sharply expressed contrast between the masculine and feminine principles is vividly presented here, which has already been noted, for example, in a number of paintings by K. Vasilyev and which is equally sharply presented in another iconic work of the new folklore wave that appeared several years later – in *Songs of Kursk* by G. Sviridov.

The personal emphasis, so important for the period under consideration, is especially strong in women's songs. The first number of *The Songs of Freedom*, with its somewhat paradoxical quality, is noteworthy in this regard. Indeed, a folk character is portrayed, yet how much languor and luxury is in the revelation of love feeling, and the intricate twists of vocal intonation and the refined sound of the instrumental accompaniment suggest a genuine aristocratic nature!

Noting such an intense internal enrichment of the folkloric prototype, one can draw a parallel from the stories of the Kyrgyz writer *Chinghiz Aitmatov*: essentially all of them are about ordinary people, yet what complexity and depth is revealed in the artistic modeling of their characters!

The folklore movement spread across all regions of the multinational USSR. And almost every republic put forward its own unique national standards, distinct from the character and mentality of neighboring peoples. Let us take Estonian music as an example.

Veljo Tormis became the leading representative of folklorism. He wrote a great number of folkloric works. He often emphasized their elemental pagan origins and archaic rituals, extending the thread of continuity from ancient Estonians to their modern state. And it is quite obvious that a Russian composer would be incapable of achieving anything of the sort.

But let us also note a characteristic common to all the composers working in this vein (primarily young ones): expanding the scope of possibilities of academic art, they boldly introduced such specific means as an open, guttural, stentorian manner of singing or the effects of shouting, noise, roar, and the stamping of a crowd. All of this is present in Tormis's **Litany to Thunder** written for male choir and timpani (a litany is a prayer, interpreted in this case as an incantation).

Another inexhaustible resource for the radical renewal of art in the second half of the 20th century, closely connected to the current state of life, stemmed from the *youthful spirit* of the time.

The youth movement was, as is well known, extremely multifaceted and contradictory (from student political unrest to hippies and the so-called sexual revolution). It had a profound effect on shaping the era – both in its strong ethical and philosophical foundations and in its various fashion trends.

Art responded sensitively to this influence. We have already repeatedly turned to the poetry of the young, which captured an extremely broad spectrum of life at that time. But perhaps the most powerful expression of youthful energy was *rock music*. Its initial impetus came from England, where the first rock group *the Beatles*, emerged and soon this form of youth music spread across the globe.

Over time, conceptual works began to emerge from rock music. And again, the crown must be given to Great Britain. It gave the world the first classic of rock opera – *Andrew Lloyd Webber*. Later similar genres emerged – rock ballet, rock oratorio, and so on.

All of this formed part of the so-called third trend. This designation implies the following: there is pop music and there is an academic art, and the synthesis of these two can produce large-scale works with serious themes and developed dramaturgy, but based on the intonation and instrumental culture of popular genres. Rock opera is one of such hybrids.

To experience both the positive, charming, and the contradictory, even perverse, aspects of the youth movement of the second half of the 20th century, one might recall a revealing fragment from *Lloyd Webber's* opera **Jesus Christ Superstar**. At the beginning of this musical number (Mary Magdalene and her friends), the music captures a new understanding of femininity, conveying a vibrant charm and a unique grace. Then (Judas's entry) there is a deformed image, contorted by a grimace, expresses painful feelings on the verge of hysteria and pathology. Both, of course, are supported by a resilient rhythmic pulse and the sound of electric guitars.

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We discussed previously the romantic essence of art in the second half of the 20th century, which was particularly reflected in a radical renewal of expressive and pictorial means, including the emergence of numerous new systems and techniques. All of this was a consequence of a radical enrichment of the semantic potential and the expansion of the thematic range of artistic creativity.

One aspect of this process was the projection of the current expansion of *historical memory* and, in general, an extremely heightened sense of the link of times and places, the correlation of past, present, and sometimes even future events.

On this basis, in a number of cases, an ascent to global philosophical issues occurred. We find this, for example, in the last films of *Andrei Tarkovsky* (**Nostalgia**, 1983; **The Sacrifice**, 1986) and in the novels of Chinghiz *Aitmatov*, which became perhaps the most significant phenomena of Russian literature of those decades.

One of the most famous Aitmatov's works, the novel **The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years** (1980), is particularly noteworthy in terms of the issues under consideration. Indeed, in full accordance with its title, it compresses a vast historical dimension, from legendary antiquity to the hypothetical prospects of human existence, into a minimal period of real time.

Furthermore, it weaves together events that take place across the vastness of the universe and in the remotest part of the country where the protagonist of the story, an ordinary railway worker, lives. Another title for this work is *The Buranny Railway Stop*, and the word *Buranny* (which means *snowstorm* in Russian) conveys the atmosphere of the time in its own way.

Through this "scaling", a number of difficult questions about contemporary life are raised. One of them concerns the threat of zombification (a zombie is a person blindly obeying someone else's will). Moreover, it turns out that sinister projects to control people through violent ideological and psychological processing of their consciousness are reviving the cruel experience of the distant past (the tale of the *mankurts*, introduced here as an insert story).

The central problem, which is ultimately the purpose the novel (the fantastical motif of the discovery of an extra-terrestrial civilization is used for this), is the survival of our planet. The author's commentary on this matter is categorical: *"The most tragic contradiction of the late twentieth century lies in the boundlessness of human genius and the impossibility of realizing it due to political, ideological, and racial barriers. If humanity does not learn to live in peace, it will perish"* (Cited by: Демченко, 2021, p. 529).

The problem of survival was posed in literature of the second half of the 20th century with exceptional urgency and from a variety of perspectives, including through plot twists of quite private and specific nature. In his novel **The Woman in the Dunes** (1962), Japanese writer *Kobo Abe* conducts an artistic exploration of our ingrained instinct for survival, survival at any cost.

The protagonist is an intellectual with a well-developed sense of the individual self. Passionate about collecting insects, he dreams of writing his own chapter in entomology. While searching for rare species, he finds himself in an area that is buried under sand. The village in this area will only exist as long as its inhabitants have the strength to fight the sand drifts – a broader metaphor for the existence of human civilization as a whole.

The protagonist is tricked into descending into a large sand pit, where a widow lives in a shabby house, struggling to clear the sand alone every day. Horrified by the violence perpetrated against him, the man searches for a way to escape this sandy hell. And each time, he is restrained, they play on his survival instinct – an instinct that overrides all else.

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One of the key issues of Romanticism at any stage of its historical evolution is the relationship between the *individual and their environment*, that is, the world surrounding them. From this perspective, the art of the second half of the 20th century was no exception and also distinguished itself by its thorough emphasis on this conflict and its unprecedented intensity.

It is significant that it was precisely during this heightened interest in such themes, and precisely in the USSR, that this situation was first successfully modeled through "pure", that is, abstract, non-programmatic music. This occurred in the genre of the instrumental concerto, in which the very initial texture stratification facilitated the successful resolution of this problem: the *solo* embodied the individual world, while the orchestral *tutti* represented its surroundings.

The original model of this kind was *Boris Tishchenko's Cello Concerto No. 1* (1963), where the confrontation is emphasized by the juxtaposition of the soft timbre of the solo cello and the harsh sound of the orchestra, from which the strings are deliberately cut off. Then came *Dmitri Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 2* (1966) and *Violin Concerto No. 2* (1967), *Rodion Shchedrin's Piano Concerto No. 2* (1966), *Boris Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto* (1967), and so on.

In such cases, the composer's sympathies naturally sided with the individual attempting to assert the sovereignty. Meanwhile, the environment was often portrayed in the darkest colors, as aggressively cruel, striving to suppress the individual by any means.

Let us take, for example, *Dmitri Shostakovich's* vocal-symphonic poem **The Execution of Stepan Razin**. Its central section is the peasant leader's monologue on the eve of his death. Let us listen to the soloist's reflections in relation to the orchestral part. And note the deadly irony in Yevgeny Yevtushenko's text used here, characteristic of the publicistic attitude of the 1960s. What a nefarious political move: to accuse of anti-nationalism someone who stood for the people! This shameless mockery contained a direct allusion to the social situation in the USSR during those decades, when the authorities fought dissent by any means.

And if Razin's thoughts before death are distinguished by high dramatic character and deep concentration, then the orchestral part is distinguished by "beating chords", incredibly harsh in sound, cutting like a whip – it is difficult to imagine a more tangible, "physiologically" barefaced depiction of an act of violence against a person.

Let us consider another music example of the conflict between the individual and environment. *Rodion Shchedrin* created two of his most significant ballets on this theme: **Anna Karenina** and **The Seagull**. In both productions, the lead part was performed by Maya Plisetskaya. Drawing on these stage works, *Andrei Voznesensky* created the cycle entitled **Portrait of Plisetskaya**, which includes the following lines: *"She spins the audience into the furious vortex // of her thirty-two fouettés..."* (Cited by: Демченко, 2021, p. 531).

Listening to the corresponding episodes of the ballet **The Seagull**, it is easy to sense this hyper-tension in both Plisetskaya's dance and Shchedrin's music. A phrase from Voznesensky (1964) also comes to mind: *"...my burning nerves"*. The tragic tension of a "charred" soul suffocating in an oppressive and overwhelming atmosphere is reproduced here, and the despair of this soul is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Indeed, the expression of the paroxysm of despair is brought to the point where the strings begin to almost literally "break the strings".

And then, in glaring contrast, the music depicting the entourage of the ballet protagonists emerges: gaily decorated windbaggy, futile, buffoonish fuss (according to the plot, this portrays the audience that booed the first performance of Chekhov's *The Seagull*). Outwardly amusing, the characters in this musical picture soon show their faces when, as the scene unfolds, a far from harmless grotesqueness of "snarling" sonorities asserts itself – a werewolf of the Soviet cheerful music, represented in this case by Andrei Petrov's popular song from the film *Walking the Streets of Moscow*, in its spoofed rendition.

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Such polarized contrasts pushed to the point of incongruity were highly characteristic of the art of the second half of the 20th century. This signified an attainment of the level of antithesis, and the *principle of antithesis* is the cornerstone of Romantic aesthetics. One of the antitheses of this period captured the opposition between urbanism and anti-urbanism, conveyed in artistic forms.

Urbanism developed in connection with a new stage of industrial evolution, marked by the scientific and technical revolution. The technological re-equipment of the world gave art powerful impetus, and artistic creativity captured in its images the heightened intensity of active processes, the excitement of breakneck speeds, and the priority of principles of business-like manner and rationalism. In music, the urban character was often conveyed through the introduction of jazz elements. Jazz acted as one of the symbols of modern city life and its rhythmic pulse.

A striking example is Andrei *Eshpai's* **Concerto for Orchestra**, which uses a jazz style to convey a massive onslaught of "iron" energy, while the use of the musical expressiveness characteristic of Western film scoring contributes to the impression that the action takes place across unusually vast expanses, on a global scale.

In the visual arts, perhaps the most interesting thing to note is the impact of urban trends on the portrait genre. It seems that this genre comes under such influences least of all. Let us turn to the works of Azerbaijani artist *Tahir Salahov*, especially to his portraits of composers, that is, people of an "emotional" profession.

He conveys the image of his compatriot Gara Garayev through a sharp, linear stroke, revealing the firmness of intellectual discipline, the intensity of creative will, and its concentrated power. Such works of the artist, with their emphasized severity, graphic clarity, restraint, and laconic color scheme, have given rise to talk of his *austere style*.

He managed to capture the tragic worldview of Dmitri Shostakovich in the final years of his life through the same stroke. He depicts the great musician (the portrait of **Dmitri Shostakovich**, 1967) in a state of intense inner tension, in a prickly estrangement from the outside world, striving to isolate himself from it with all his might.



Illustration 01. Tahir Salahov. "Dmitri Shostakovich". 1974-1976.
Canvas, oil. 136 × 115 cm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia

Elena Romanova's **Self-Portrait** conveys an entirely different urban character. The graphic style of painting seems to be roughly the same, with the same deliberate clarity and distinctness of composition. However, the vibrant, major color shifts the essence of the canvas onto a completely different plane revealing the sitter's youthful spirit and cheerful business-like manner against the backdrop of the hustle and bustle of the city. The overall atmosphere somewhat echoes the so-called *urban prose* of the period, most vividly represented in the stories of Andrei *Bitov* and Yuri *Trifonov*.

Thus, rational and linear urban painting could also develop a unique poetics. One such poetics is found in Dmitri *Zhilinsky's* **USSR Athletes** (1965). It can be considered as a curious metamorphosis of the ancient genre of the formal portrait, particularly in its rare variation – the large group portrait. This was partly due to the idea of capturing in color the most famous athletes of their time, the pride of the country. Each figure is depicted in an individual pose, but the common thing is an open representativeness – the celebrities seem to pose demonstratively for the artist, hoping for the most striking visual effect.

Urbanist aspirations unfolded with exceptional scope and as an unquestionably dominant factor in the *architecture* of the second half of the 20th century. We will not consider the overwhelming volume of urban development characteristic of most regions of the USSR at that time. This was the so-called *industrial* construction, whose purpose was to provide affordable housing for the needy population of rapidly growing cities. Such pragmatism gave rise to the corresponding Soviet housing standard of those years – gray, faceless, primitive, and aesthetically pitiful.

Having mentioned this sad sign of the times, let us turn to the type of buildings that aspired to a certain architectural expressiveness. The following fact immediately catches our attention: the essence of their urbanized appearance ultimately was reduced to the comprehensive assertion of rational, and even more so, rationalistic character.

The most obvious expression of this quality was the *geometric* construction of architectural volume. A sufficient idea of the various interpretations of this principle can be provided by such examples of buildings as the **Izmailovo Sports Palace** in Moscow, the **airport** in St. Petersburg, Ulyanovsk **State Pedagogical University**, and **Zvezdnaya metro station** in St. Petersburg. The latter is designed as a strictly controlled parallelepiped made of glass (in keeping with the “cosmic” nature of the structure).



Illustration 02. Zvezdnaya metro station. Designed by K. N. Afonskya, A. C. Getskin, and V. P. Shuvalova. 1972. St. Petersburg, Russia

Another key trend in urban architecture is a striving for the sky, an emphasized verticalism. The construction of skyscrapers at the dawn of the 20th century in the United States has now become almost universal in this country. Unfortunately, in most cases, the resulting urban aesthetics are unlikely to evoke positive emotions: the chaotic “stakewall” of protruding “cigars” is perceived as a provocative and brazen assertion of big business.

Verticalism, as a principle, has influenced all kinds of buildings. Notable examples of this can be found in the VDNKh area in Moscow. The appearance of the first of these examples corresponded to an artistic concept that was symbolic in nature – the **Monument to the Conquerors of Space** (1964, architect *Andrei Faidysh-Krandievsky*), designed in the form of a rocket with a fiery trail soaring into the sky.

The second example was born of purely technical considerations: the **Ostankino Tower** (1967, chief designer *Nikolai Nikitin*), which rose to a height of 540 meters (at the time, only a similar structure in Toronto, Canada, stood taller at 555 meters, making it the tallest free-standing structure in the world). Incidentally, since then, television tower needles have become a mandatory attribute in major cities around the world.

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Over time, a resistance to absolute geometricism developed within the depths of architectural urbanism, and all sorts of deviations from it arose. A search for unconventional forms began. For example, the use of a curved surface on a façade (the **Alma-Ata Hotel** in Almaty, Kazakhstan) or the likening of a building to an open book (**Novy Arbat** in Moscow).

Architectural volumes of varied and original configurations were created, for example, the **Intourist Hotel** in Chisinau, Moldova, resembles an ocean liner, thus reflecting its name and purpose, while the **sports complex** in Prague, Czech Republic, resembles the base of a truncated pyramid. This idea was later replicated in a number of other European buildings, including the **Opera House** in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Finally, the most preferable, of course, is a compromise between urban architecture and natural elements, where the structure blends organically into the surrounding landscape. For example, the **Iveria Hotel** (the ancient name of Georgia) in Tbilisi (1967, architect *Otar Kalandarishvili*) stands out with its high-rise silhouette against the greenery and surrounding neighborhoods, striking a resonant chord, like a shining peak resonating with the mountain ranges surrounding the city.

Another example is the **Juras Perle** restaurant in Jurmala (a famous resort near Riga), which, resembling a ship in its outline, seems to emerge from a sea of pine needles into a lagoon. Its name reflects the poetic quality of its architectural imagery and, translated from Latvian, means “*Sea Pearl*”.

The symptoms of resistance to urban expansion within itself foreshadowed something greater – a broad *anti-urban current*, born of a reaction to the total rationalization of existence, with its attendant tendency toward estrangement and even soullessness. Much of this artistic current was defined by nostalgia for a vanishing human and natural essence. Furthermore, a number of works expressed anxiety for the very existence of life on earth.



Illustration 03. Otar Kalandarishvili. *The Iveria Hotel*. 1967. Tbilisi, Georgia

The poet *Stanislav Kunyaev*, speaking about the “construction of the century” typical of socialist times, literally cries out in his poem **“From the Great Hydroelectric Power Station to Ust-Ilim”**: “*Do not ruin the last swamp, // Spare the hunted wolf, // So that something remains on the Earth, // That makes your heart beat faster*” (Cited by: Демченко, 2021, p. 540).

In his poem **“Farewell to the Snow”**, *Alexander Mezhirov* takes nostalgia for a devastated natural world to the point of a veritable apocalypse. Although this is presented through a particular moment, it speaks with such searing pain, and the seed of an ecological catastrophe lurks in the poet’s observation of this vital detail: “*There will be no more snow in Moscow, // There will never be snowing*” (Cited by: Демченко, 2021, p. 541).

A counterbalance to the powerful pressure of urbanism was the sense of genuine human nature and a healing natural environment, recreated in artistic images. This feeling was best expressed in music by *Georgy Sviridov* and his younger colleague, *Valery Gavrilin*, who shared a similar creative spirit.

Gavrilin’s choral concerto, **Chimes**, contains passages that convey moments of special spiritual grace. The heart-stirring warmth often comes from the so-called heart-rending romance and songs of suffering, which were characteristic of the middle-class and suburban environment, but poeticized and transformed into a lofty, innermost feeling. However, the main feature of the surprisingly soft melodiousness of these pages of the concerto stems from its peasant roots.

Incidentally, the subtitle and dedication of **Chimes** is no coincidence: *Upon Reading Vasily Shukshin*. *Gavrilin*, like *Sviridov*, had much in common with so-called *village prose*, which became, perhaps, the most precious acquisition of Russian literature in the second half of the 20th century. Naturally, we find the name of *Vasily Shukshin* among its creators (*Viktor Astafyev*, *Valentin Rasputin*, and others).

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The moments of emotional balance, peace, even bliss that can be heard in *Valery Gavrilin*’s *Chimes* were quite rare for that time. Judging by works of art, such features as doubt, emotional ambivalence, painful contradictions, and everything that we call *disharmony* were far more common.

Disharmony is probably the defining characteristic of those decades. A world and a person, lost in the dark, hurtling toward an unknown destination and purpose, in chaos and confusion – this image was not uncommon, and it marked one of the extremes of the individual and society as a whole.

The other extreme was well conveyed by the title of the American film *It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963) – the key word appears here four times, like an incantation, although, through external signs, director *Stanley Kramer* developed the situation as a semi-absurd comedy.

The Polish composer *Krzysztof Penderecki* repeatedly turned to the idea of chaos and the madness of the world. Having mentioned his name and the name of *Witold Lutosławski*, it should be noted that the Polish avant-garde was at the forefront of world musical art in the second half of the 20th century. *Penderecki* was one of the leading exponents of sonorics, and using its means, among other things, he modeled the flow of blind matter of life, the hum and groaning of which reveals one important vector: the convergence of the forms of existence of the industrial world with the forms of existence of the universal elements, thus confirming the inevitable “cosmization” of earthly life. The significance of this theme is confirmed, for example, by the fact that almost all of the eight symphonies of the outstanding Armenian composer *Avet Terterian* are devoted to its development (based on sonorics).

If we turn to Penderecki's composition entitled **Polymorphia** (from Greek "many forms"), which in its own way reflects the author's cosmogonic intent, there is a striking fact: the work is intended for 48 string instruments, but the exceptional variety of timbre effects creates the impression of surround sound, as if a full orchestra was playing, that is, a formation of wind and percussion instruments.

The second half of the 20th century was plagued by another scourge, which could be defined as *corrosion* – rust, which ate into not metal, but into human souls. "Corrosion" most deeply affected the intelligentsia, which was associated with the loss of beliefs, ideals, and even faith in life. The most striking examples in Russian cinema are *Andrei Tarkovsky's Stalker* and *Nikita Mikhalkov's An Unfinished Piece for Mechanical Piano*.

"Corrosion" is an all-pervasive process, and music, for example, very expressively explored it, juxtaposing contemporary events with the distant past, which was depicted as something ideal through the haze of time. One of the most vivid embodiments of this idea is found in the orchestral composition **Collage sur B-A-C-H** by the Estonian composer *Arvo Pärt*.

The musical monogram of the great Bach's name (*si b – la – do – si b*) has been used in art for a long time. Pärt's composition, based on the outline of this four-note motif, first stylizes a magnificent Neo-Baroque, embodying the harmony, sublimity, and beauty of the past. A solo oboe, supported by strings, carries the melody on the *piano*, and this adds to the impression of a beautiful legend of bygone times.

Then, the timbre and texture variation is introduced along the same intonation contour. The sound is literally disfigured by the grinding of clustered stratifications (a cluster is a vertical, noisy structure with a continuous filling of tones). This conveys the nightmare of our current reality. The return of the original material (now in *forte*) is perceived as a protest against the disharmony and madness of the modern world – this time the voice of the past sounds with bitterness and sorrow.

What can be heard in A. Pärt's opus is in keeping with *polystylism* (literally, "many styles"). Composers of the second half of the 20th century began to freely draw on styles from various eras, combining these diverse styles in a single work and thereby unifying all eras and national manifestations, which reflected the sense of historical memory so inherent in the artists of that period.

The most significant master of polystylism in world music was *Alfred Schnittke* (who, incidentally, introduced the term into general use). The composer used this technique to embody all sorts of artistic ideas. In particular, he repeatedly expressed the following idea: we inherit standards of beauty and poetry from past eras, often distorting them almost beyond recognition. But even such convulsive twitching beauty with a grimace of pain on its face has no place in the modern world, which negatively transforms many things and presents them in a distorted way. If one listens to the music of the fifth movement of Schnittke's famous **Concerto Grosso No. 1**, one can sense what happens to the theme, written in the spirit of Vivaldi. It sounds pained and convulsive from the start, and as it develops, it mercilessly "corrodes".

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From the preceding discussion, it is easy to see how bleak the worldview presented itself through the prism of art in the second half of the 20th century. And as one can see, the overall tone of life was by no means comfortable or cloudless; on the contrary, it was characterized by *extreme tension* and *heightened conflict*.

Analyzing the external picture of existence during this period, one might wonder: did the reality provide grounds for such a condensed and dramatic perception? Was the life really so hard for people then, and were there really so many historical upheavals and catastrophes? In this regard, is it possible to compare the events of the second half of the 20th century with what happened in the middle of the century? It is enough just to look at the monstrous atrocities of totalitarianism and the sacrificial altar of World War II! Meanwhile, the artistic creativity of that era gravitated fundamentally toward life-affirming and objectively positive attitudes.

It was a completely different story in the 1960s-1980s. It might seem like an inexplicable paradox, but we must remember: art, first and foremost, explores what goes on in the human soul and in the depths of the human spirit. And at this stage, dramas and tragedies were evidently taking place. All the more so because this was painfully captured by the sensitive perceptions of modern romantics, who tend to exaggerate and exacerbate everything to the extreme.

To clarify this, let us turn once again to *military prose*. It was precisely the acuteness of this dramatic perception of life that determined an ardent interest of Russian literature in the theme of the past war. And the vision noted in the title of one of *Yuri Bondarev's* war novels, **The Hot Snow**, could emerge only in the context of this unique, often unusual interpretation of past events.

The prose of those years revealed the merciless truth of war in its entirety. Perhaps this was especially true of the Belarusian writer *Vasil Bykov*, who was more devoted to the theme of war than anyone else (his stories **The Alpine Ballad**, **The Dead Feel No Pain**, **Sotnikov**, **Wolf Pack**, and many others). They speak of *Bykov's unique situation*: the author depicts his characters in situations of extreme danger, when a person is tested to the very end and it becomes clear who is who.

A somewhat similar, equally poignant twist is found in *Viktor Astafyev's* story **The Shepherd and the Shepherdess** (the first version was written in 1967, with updated versions in 1971 and 1989). During a few days of lull in the war, a twenty-year-old lieutenant experiences a moment of happiness, having met his true love. But he loses her immediately, torn from her arms by the fortunes of war. The writer emphasizes the cruelty of life with a special technique of a triple ending.

The *first ending* is as follows: Boris (that is the lieutenant's name) manages to come from the front on leave and rushes to the place where he has found happiness. And now he is at his beloved's house; she throws herself at his feet, "fervently

kissing his dusty, worn boots...” It seems like a well-deserved happy ending, but the author immediately pulls the rug from under the reader: “*But none of this happened and could have happened*” (Cited by: Демченко, 2021, p. 544).

The *second ending* is entirely realistic: Boris’s serious injury is neglected by doctors, and he dies on the ambulance train that was supposed to take him to the hospital. They unloaded the body at a railway station, leaving a nurse with him so that she can bury the deceased lieutenant with the traditional funeral rites.

However, the author rejects even this outcome. Again the phrase follows: “*But none of this happened and could have happened*” (Cited by: Демченко, 2021, p. 544). In fact, when the hospital train made an emergency stop at a remote station due to a malfunction, the deceased lieutenant was carried out and left in an abandoned freight car. This is the *final, true ending*. And this is the end of the man who fought at the front sparing no efforts, who held the “For Military Merit” medal and two Red Stars! Could one speak with greater bitterness that a human life is priceless, but it has absolutely no value in reality?!

Tragic motifs have become most widespread in music. One of its characteristic themes can be expressed as follows: the vulnerable thread of life, which at any moment can be broken by the onslaught of terrible cataclysms in the outside world. This theme became, in essence, the only theme of the entire symphonic work of the Georgian composer *Gia Kancheli*. This is what we find in two completely typical fragments from the central section of his **Symphony No. 5**.

The first of these is a true oasis of poetry and beauty, revealing exceptional tenderness and sensitivity of the soul as the highest expression of humanity. The ultra-transparent, refined sound is presented in a neoclassical style, emphasizing the sublimity of the image.

The second fragment depicts a frenzied onslaught of aggressive, militaristic energy. It is an energy of suppression that sweeps away humanity and tramples everything human. This orgy of evil is conveyed through rushes of cyclopean sonorities, and a screaming alarm of universal calamities can be heard at the climax (the composer uses theatrical techniques to emphasize the presentation of such images).

Such polarized contrasts (contrasts of incompatibility) naturally lead to the final requiem-funeral litany in the coda of the symphony.

* * *

The tragic element discussed above was determined by the following circumstance to a certain extent. The 1960s were marked by the radicalism of Romantic aspirations, which found particular expression in moments such as a veritable explosion of heightened activity and a boom in all sorts of discoveries and innovations. A desire for a radical reorganization of life lay behind this (even in its internal aspects, at the level of worldview). And although the world was changing, it was not nearly as rapidly and far from the desired direction. This is what quickly gave rise to a sense of the futility of intentions and hopes. And this is why the following years, the 1970s, became, to a large extent, a time of *lost illusions* and *tragic disillusionment*.

This caused a profound crisis of Romantic consciousness, but, on the other hand, led to a retreat from the extremes of radicalism and subjectivism, a rejection of overestimated claims and extreme tensions. Now art begins to tend towards a more real and objective vision of life, towards more natural and balanced manifestations.

This could occur within a retained Romantic foundation, but with a return to tradition and a revival of positive, affirming basis. This is how *neo-romanticism* emerged. Its most distinct expression was in musical art. Works of this kind emphasized emotional warmth and spiritual openness, which found expression in beautiful and soft melodic plasticity, in recourse to long-established lyrical genres (romance, waltz, elegy), and sometimes in direct contact with one or another 19th-century style, most often in consonance with the work of Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Tchaikovsky.

Krzysztof **Penderecki**, one of the leaders of the musical avant-garde, was among the first to make a sharp turn toward neo-romanticism in the late 1970s. Following him, other composers (for example, György **Ligeti**) also began their creative reorientation. In Russian music, the Georgian composer **Otar Taktakishvili** was very productive in developing the principles of this trend (the vocal-orchestral suite *Mengrelian Songs*, the opera *Mususi*, etc.). If we turn to his **Violin Concerto** as an example, it is easy to feel the gulf that separates this music, with its soft, gentle melodiousness, from works of a radical character.

The movement toward a more objective worldview brought about a significant change in the overall landscape of art, including its coloring. While works of a somber tone, and especially those of a tragic nature, voluntarily or involuntarily, to varying degrees, led to a *denial of life*, the works that contrasted with them were aimed at *life affirmation*, conveying a bright and even joyful acceptance of existence.

The zest for life connected with the element of humor and joy actively asserted itself along the lines of this opposition to high drama and tragedy. A notable milestone in this regard was **Andrei Petrov’s** ballet **Creation of the World**. It was so timely that it became something of a record-breaker: in the number of productions performed on stages worldwide, it surpassed other contemporary ballets.

This score offers a fresh and distinctive interpretation of the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of world comic theatre. The dominant scherzo-like element is tinged with vibrant, elegant colors (the composer’s timbre and texture inventiveness is astonishing), marked by a playful piquancy and, at the same time, genuine elegance (thanks in part to the inclusion of classical music reminiscences).

* * *

The aforementioned trends toward greater objectivity and balance became the basis for the development of so-called *postmodern art*. This artistic movement, whose contours began to emerge in the mid-1980s, marked the entry into the horizons of the next historical period, which chronologically can be defined as the *turn of the 21st century*.

The concept of *postmodern art* is one of the most ambiguous. Its interpretations in contemporary research literature vary to such an extent that one might even speak of their polarization. Without entering into a debate with the authors of these various interpretations, we propose to proceed from the etymology of this new term, as well as from the fact that it has become widely used in the most recent decades.

Phenomena collectively known as *modern art* developed until relatively recently. But they have now been replaced in the artistic process by other phenomena, which aesthetic connotations require a different designation. Let this be the widely used neologism *postmodern art*, although it should be immediately noted that this term contains a contradiction and even a misunderstanding.

The contradiction lies in the fact that, compared to the previous state of art, it implies a fundamental shift in criteria and forms. In fact, a careful analysis of the trends that emerged at the turn of the 21st century reveals that, in general, everything has remained within the aesthetic coordinate system of the era that began its chronology in the early 20th century. And the essence of these changes is linked to the natural swings of the pendulum of History.

Indeed, such a fundamental “change of landmarks” has already occurred: after the wildly innovative first decades of the 20th century, there was a retreat to more traditional and balanced modes of artistic expression in the 1930s-1950s. And now, in the same way, the radical innovations of the second half of the century, beginning in the late 1980s, have been replaced by generally more restrained forms of expression, revealing features of a very clear continuity with the proven criteria of classical art. This is why the term *post-avant-garde* is sometimes used in relation to this situation, which has its own rational kernel, but this definition is far from capable of encompassing the entire multifaceted structure of the ongoing process.

While recognizing the conventionality of the concept of *postmodern art*, it can nevertheless be adopted for the convenience of designating a historical stage that can be chronologically designated as the *turn of the 21st century* – to a certain extent similar to how, based on the significant differences between the artistic process of the first half of the 19th century and its second half, we increasingly introduce the differentiating terms *Romanticism* and *Post-Romanticism*.

Then it was “after Romanticism”, now it is “after modern art”, or more precisely, after the three preceding periods: Modern Art I, Modern Art II, and Modern Art III. Let us note that, in their location, as well as in their artistic essence, Post-Romanticism and postmodern art correspond to each other: in each of their eras (the Classical Era and modern art as a whole), it is the fourth period.

Since a thorough and objective understanding of this recently completed artistic-historical stage requires sufficient chronological distance, we will limit ourselves to its most general designation in accordance with the “timeline” of previous historical dimensions –

Postmodern (the turn of the 21st century). The attempt to maintain balance

The definition of the *turn of the 21st century* in this case refers to roughly the same three decades that chronologically defined the preceding Modern Art II (1930s-1950s) and Modern Art III (1960s-1980s), that is, the 1990s-2010s. Overall, this was a time when, starting around the mid-1980s, there was a growing opposition to all kinds of radical innovations and extremes, a move away from complex artistic language and its often inherent break with traditional values. It turns out, that “*not everything has been said in C major*” according to A. Schoenberg, the founder of dodecaphony (Cited by: Демченко, 2021, p. 567), and that the search for a “*new simplicity*” (a phrase from the lexicon of Sergei Prokofiev, another “subverter” of tradition who emerged during the early modern period) may not be in vain.

In conclusion, it remains to add that the current final period of modern art began its countdown in the 2020s and can be expected to last until approximately the 2040s. However, we should not forget that this final phase of this era, as in the past, coincides with the beginning of the next era, which, for a number of reasons (including the growing importance of digital technologies and the advancement of artificial intelligence), might preferably be called **Inform**. The turbulent nature of geopolitical events that marked the 2020s is evidence of the fundamental changes taking place.

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Благодарность | Acknowledgements

RU Автор выражает благодарность переводчику Кристине Васильевне Соловьёвой, преподавателю иностранных языков Музыкального училища при Саратовской государственной консерватории имени Л. В. Собинова, заведующей отделением «Гуманитарные дисциплины», преподавателю первой квалификационной категории, за помощь в подготовке публикации.

EN The author expresses gratitude to Kristina Vasilievna Solovyova, translator, foreign language teacher at the Music College of the Saratov State Conservatory, Head of the Humanities Department, and teacher of the first qualification category, for her assistance in preparing this publication.

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Дата поступления рукописи (received): 15.06.2026; опубликовано online (published online): 02.10.2026.

Ключевые слова (keywords): мировой художественный процесс; Модерн III; искусство постмодернизма; радикальное преобразование искусства; неоромантизм; world artistic process; Modern art III; postmodern art; radical renewal of art; neo-romanticism.