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**MELANCHOLY AND INFINITE SADNESS: A COMPARISON OF JIM MORRISON
AND KURT COBAIN IN TERMS OF THE ROMANTIC HERO AND THE MODERN
ANTI-HERO**

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INTRODUCTION

I first started to develop this thesis eight years ago, shortly after one of my readings of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*. I found a parallelism between Lermontov, a novelist and poet of the 19th century, and Jim Morrison, a rock'n'roll musician and a popular culture icon of the 20th century. Both of them died at the age of twenty-seven from deaths that they brought on. The similarities between the two were not only their deaths but their artistic output, where I found a similar sort of lust for life that went hand in hand with deep melancholia. Then I wrote a short piece on this subject for a newspaper, giving it the title: *Both of them lived for their curiosity-Mikhail Lermontov and Jim Morrison*. The editor of the newspaper said that he liked the piece but could not publish it, as there was no occasion to print it. Long after I forgot about it all, this came to my mind once again when I was thinking about sixties icons such as Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and their suicidal tendencies.

These figures that all died tragic deaths at the same age of twenty-seven seemed to be both symbols and victims of the neo-Romantic zeitgeist of the 1960s. The youth of the times saw them as symbols and found their feelings reflected in these rock musicians' songs. They found a feeling of community in their concerts, and followed their clothing and hair styles. These musicians were the icons of the times, yet victims as well. They could not find a way of living in which they could keep their lust for life, share this with others, get the utmost satisfaction through artistic creation, and belong to an opposition which was trying to make changes for a better world. They could not promote what they believed in and at the same time live happy and satisfied lives.

As the 1960s were neo-Romantic times, a flash-back of 19th century Romanticism, it would be inevitable for these icons of the neo-Romantic 1960s to

resemble the spokespeople of the Romantic movement in the 19th century who came from the literary world of the times. The Romantics of the 19th century such as Lord Byron, Goethe, Pushkin reflected a Romantic approach to life, but they did not destroy themselves like the neo-Romantic icons did. Thus, I began to wonder why they couldn't carry on living by channeling their feelings into creating outlets, and why "the romantic belief in self-expression and self-realization" (Langbaum 4) could not help them to survive. The answer I found lay in the changing dynamics of social conditions.

The main difference between the Romantic literary figures of the 19th century and the neo-Romantic popular culture icons of the 1960s was that the latter were celebrities, not in small literary circles but all around the world. International media made use of them as great material. They were the stars in the world of glamour. Moreover, the culture industry that gave them the identity of stars and icons had to make money from their existence. Thus, the culture industry turned them into commodities. This transformation made their lives much different from the lives of the literary figures of the 19th century. The popular culture icons of the 1960s were not left alone to live on their own with the meanings they found through this Romantic self-expression and self-realization. The concept of the self for them was split between their private selves and their public selves. This led to their eventual self-destruction.

This is not to claim that the tragic ends of these icons can simply be explained by their being turned into commodities, sold by the culture industry and used by the media. In each of these cases, there must have been different personal motives and dynamics that led them to self-destruction. The aspect of being turned into commodities is only one dimension of the subject matter: It illustrates the way that

these neo-Romantic icons were different from the Romantic literary figures and how this difference led the way to their eventual self-destruction.

Despite this important difference, I still found a lot in common between the Romantic literary figures of the 19th century and the neo-Romantic popular culture icons of the 1960s. And in this research, I focused on the similarities between them rather than the differences, which is a huge issue that could easily be the subject of another study. The main parallelism I saw was that in both cases, the boundaries between the artist and the artistic output were blurred in a Romantic way. The Romantic artist himself was identified either with heroes or one particular hero that he created in his works. According to Butler, “the first three decades of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a heightened interest in the personality of the artist, evidence in the phenomenal spate of biography,” meaning that the public began “to see the artist *as a hero*”¹ (Butler 2). Thus, usually the most prominent hero in the works of a Romantic poet or the author was seen as the persona of the poet or the author himself. As a result of this Romantic perception, Lord Byron was identified with his character Childe Harold; similar cases were Goethe with Werther and Lermontov with Pechorin.

Although it may seem different at first glance, a similar process occurred with the 1960s’ icons. As the 1960s era was a time of a revival of the Romantic spirit, they had to produce their own Romantic heroes. Parallel to the way in which Lermontov was identified with Pechorin, a character that he created, Janis Joplin the real person was identified with Janis Joplin the icon on the cover of *The Rolling Stone* magazine or Jim Morrison was identified with the Lizard King—a persona that he created on stage.

¹ Italics belong to Butler.

From such a perspective, icons such as Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix appeared to me as heroes of the 1960s that emerged in the popular culture. Although they had the status of commodities created by the culture industry, they were more or less the equivalent of the Romantic heroes of the 19th century, *in the way that they satisfied the society's need for heroes*. Instead of the poetry or prose of the 19th century Romantic heroes, these icons had their music. Times had changed; in the 19th century the heroes came from the world of literature, but in the 1960s they came from popular culture.

Among these figures that appeared to be the heroes of the neo-Romantic 1960s, Jim Morrison seemed to me to be the figure that particularly fit the model of the Romantic hero. He was a poet as well as a musician, which gave him the aura of the genuine Romantic hero. His identity as a poet gave him the capacity to tell about the times and to express the feelings of his generation. His charisma, “a characteristic that heroes have,” a “uniqueness” that is “instantly sensible to those who come contact with them,” (Pears 79) helped him to develop a heroic persona, one that is reminiscent in many ways of Childe Harold, Werther or Pechorin. Like these Romantic heroes, he seemed to be in a constant struggle with himself and in search for his identity and for self-realization, no matter how much self-destruction this thirst for knowledge and lust for experience took. Suicide was the eventual outcome of this self-destruction. Werther's suicide is a classic example of this, similar to Jim Morrison's death from self-abuse and Kurt Cobain's suicide: all their ends carried the notion of *weltschmerz*—world-weariness as a result of the impossibility of living a life in harmony with one's high ideals in the material world.

From this angle Jim Morrison appeared to me to be the last Romantic hero that appeared in the popular culture. Yet, at that moment I remembered Kurt Cobain, the

lead singer of the grunge band Nirvana and decided to avoid coming to such a conclusion.

There was an important similarity between Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain. Looking at the parallelism between their iconic status, their symbolic value and their tragic deaths, it did not seem right to call Jim Morrison the last Romantic hero of popular culture, somehow ignoring Kurt Cobain. On the other hand, Cobain, rather than being a Romantic hero, seemed like an anti-hero with Romantic characteristics. This was a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, Cobain's existence prevented me from seeing Morrison as the last Romantic hero and motivated me to think of Cobain as the last Romantic hero. On the other hand, Morrison and Cobain seemed very different from each other with Morrison representing Romantic heroism and Cobain representing anti-heroism.

Comparing and contrasting Cobain to Jim Morrison in terms of the Romantic heroic and the anti-heroic, I arrived at the idea that these two icons of the rock'n'roll culture, both of whom lived a life of melancholy and infinite sadness² and died at the age of twenty-seven of self-induced deaths, were both similar to and different from each other. This was so because Jim Morrison, as a Romantic hero, was both a hero and an anti-hero, and his heroism was different from Cobain's anti-heroism, whereas his anti-heroism was similar to Cobain's anti-heroism. On the other hand, although he was an anti-hero of punk, Cobain showed some Romantic characteristics, and these Romantic characteristics developed in Cobain similar to the Romantic heroic side of Jim Morrison.

Kurt Cobain was different from Jim Morrison, with his grunge appearance, exactly the opposite of Jim Morrison's glamorous looks. Morrison was different from

² I gave this thesis the title "Melancholy and Infinite Sadness" with a reference to the alternative rock band Smashing Pumpkins' 1995 album *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*.

Cobain as he appeared as a figure to lead people, with his image of the Lizard King or a shaman, in contrast with Cobain who bore a persona that he created as a loser and an outsider. How different Cobain was from Morrison is evidenced in the biography of Cobain written by Cross and the acclaimed biography of Morrison written by Hopkins, where we learn that Cobain did not sleep with more than five or six women, while Jim Morrison is known to have slept with numerous women. Morrison was different from Cobain as “his legacy to rock was a style of contempt, the Californian version of the old bohemian argument that the pain of one ‘artist’ is worth the boredom of any number of ‘ordinary’ people” (Frith 67), while for Kurt Cobain the seed of rock was the *do it yourself* mentality; that is, anyone could be a part of that world with a guitar in their hands and a passion for music in their hearts.

On the other hand, Kurt Cobain, no matter whether or not his punk soul carried Romantic characteristics, like Jim Morrison, did not hesitate to go deep into the depths of himself. Both of them exemplified Faust’s “tragedy of epistemology,” (Thorslev 84) destroying themselves while they were forcing the limits of their perceptions through music and drugs. Jim Morrison, like Kurt Cobain, was attacked by the media, and both of them had court cases that caused them much suffering. They were similar, as both of them appeared on posters as the anti-heroes of their generations: anti-heroes that no parents wanted to accept as role-models for their children. At the age of twenty-seven they faced a decision of either continuing to exhibit a Romantic teenage anger and lust for life or growing up and becoming an adult. They were similar as they both made their choice in the same way: “It’s better to burn out than to fade away” (from Cobain’s suicide note, Cross 339).

The Romantic hero represented the last ring in the long chain of heroism. With the Romantic hero, the idea of heroism began to be transformed into the idea of anti-

heroism, for the old sense of heroism seemed impossible in the modern age. Thus the Romantic hero was on one hand the last of the heroes and on the other hand the first of the anti-heroes. The Romantic age became “the last great age of the heroes” (Thorslev 16). As the Romantic hero signaled an evolution from heroism to anti-heroism, in the Modernist literature of the 20th century the anti-hero came onto the stage. The Romantic hero contained many characteristics of the modern anti-hero. This dialectic from the Romantic hero to the modern anti-hero is discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

In a similar way to what happened in literature, a transition from the Romantic hero to the modern anti-hero emerged in the popular culture as well. This can be seen in Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain. The first step in understanding this is to analyze Jim Morrison as the Romantic hero of the neo-Romantic 1960s, bearing the characteristics of the anti-hero but still being a hero. In his time, the idea of spectacle in rock concerts laid the groundwork for a hero to emerge on the stage as “hippie musicians began to identify with Romantic artists generally—writers, painters, and poets; they began to assume a culturally well educated audience even while proclaiming their superiority to it” (Frith 64). This change, together with other social dynamics that laid the appropriate context for a neo-Romantic hero and for Jim Morrison to appear as this hero, is discussed in the second chapter.

On the other hand, with the emergence of punk, in the late 1970s and early 1980s the idea of spectacle in the rock concert that created, together with the big sales of the records, the gap between the musician on the stage and the audience, was destroyed in the name of authenticity. Thus, in the post-punk era of rock’n’roll history there was no room for a hero. The icon of the post-punk era could only be an anti-hero. This anti-hero came from the grunge movement that was based on the legacy of

punk: Kurt Cobain, the lead singer of the grunge band Nirvana. His emergence as an anti-hero is discussed in the third chapter of this work.

There is another point to underline here. In this study, I did not intend to compare a Romantic hero and a non-Romantic anti-hero and simply show the differences between them. Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain seemed to be the appropriate figures to work on in a study on American popular culture, as they were both Americans who have become international icons, yet there was another reason for me to choose these two figures. This reason was that Kurt Cobain did not fit the stereotypical punk anti-rockstar model, but instead bore Romantic characteristics, thus he seemed the right figure to compare and contrast with a neo-Romantic figure, Jim Morrison.

As mentioned earlier, Jim Morrison, as a Romantic hero, embodied the characteristics of both the hero and the anti-hero. His heroic characteristics reflected the Romantic heroism that to some extent included the older conception of heroism. He also exhibited the characteristics of the anti-hero because the Romantic hero was also the beginning of the anti-hero. Thus Romantic hero is a hero and an anti-hero at the same time. On the other hand, the modern anti-hero may or may not embody the characteristics of the Romantic hero. This depends on what type of an anti-hero he is; an anti-hero in an Albert Camus novel may reflect many aspects of the Romantic hero, whereas an anti-hero like the Good Soldier Schweik may not at all. Thus, if for instance I had taken Sid Vicious, the lead singer of the punk band Sex Pistols, as the figure to compare with Jim Morrison, I could simply say that Sid Vicious was an anti-hero of the punk movement, a movement that was against the idea of heroism as well as other Romantic ideals. In this case it would be enough to show how Sid Vicious was an anti-hero reflecting a negation of the Romantic heroic values.

However, in our case, with Kurt Cobain, things were different. Kurt Cobain revealed Romantic characteristics, although this did not turn him into a Romantic hero. The personal reasons accorded with and conflicted with the times he lived in. The way that his iconic status was shaped is discussed in the third chapter.

1. THE INEVITABLE DIALECTIC: FROM THE ROMANTIC HERO TO THE MODERN ANTI-HERO

In James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* there is the idea of the struggling artist as hero (Poirier qtd. in DeKoven 190). In both Morrison's and Cobain's identities we see a manifestation of the struggling artist as hero. To be able to compare and contrast Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain in terms of the Romantic hero, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of the Romantic spirit and the ways that these characteristics have worked in the development of the Romantic hero.

From the Age of Reason to Romantic times, there was a shift from the social to the personal. The Romantic conflict was mainly a conflict between the individual's subjective world and reality. This found a further manifestation as the clash between the subjectivity of the Romantic attitude and the rebellious social consciousness of the Romantic individual. This social consciousness that created the will to rebel was a reaction against extreme rationalism and the disenchantment of the world by modernity. The Romantic individual searched for a shelter to escape from the alienation thus created. The Romantic artist reflected this need in his artistic output. His art was the means with which he reacted against social conditions. The art that he created, being expressive in its nature, reflected its creator. Thus emerged the Romantic hero: a persona that has evolved from the vanishing boundaries between the Romantic artist and the character that he creates in his writings.

In the ambivalence between the personal and the social, in the situation of being both inside and outside of society, in the contradiction between optimism for a utopian future and an apocalyptic vision of the present, in the very existence of the Romantic hero, there is a transition from heroism to anti-heroism. To understand this

progression, we have to analyze the various different and at times contradictory ways that Romanticism has been defined.

1.1. The Romantic Critique of Modernity: An Ongoing Process

From a historicist perspective, before investigating the definitions of modernism, it would be necessary to try to periodize Romanticism. Like all the artistic and philosophical movements, Romanticism also developed out of social dynamics, as a means of satisfying the needs that have emerged with these changing dynamics. Thus, as in analyzing any movement, in analyzing Romanticism we have to locate it in its historical and social context. Only in this way can the analysis reflect the facts. Praz confirms “in separating the work of art from its own particular cultural substratum, it is easy to fall into arbitrary, fantastic interpretations which alter the nature of the work even to the extent of making it unrecognizable” (2). In the present case, dealing with Romanticism, it is important to track the Romantic views and perspectives back to the important changes that occurred in the cultural and social life in Europe with the Enlightenment.

According to Löwy and Sayre, “the movement’s genesis has to be located in the course of what has been customarily called the ‘the century of Enlightenment,’ and more specifically around the middle of the [18th] century” (45). The pre-Romantic genesis in the eighteenth century with writers such as Thomson, Gray, Collins, Goldsmith, Cowper & Crabbe led to the Romantic Movement’s emergence in the 19th century. The Romantic Movement was basically a reaction against the modernity that came with industrialization. Langbaum observes, “literature since the romanticists has been concerned to salvage our humanity against the modern conditions that would turn us into machines” (15). By modernity, I mean the era that starts with the Industrial Revolution and goes until the high modern times after the Second-World-

War. By Modernism, I mean the Modernist Movement that emerged in the mid 19th century, based on the idea that traditional forms of culture and arts, literature and social life had to be reinvented. Thus, I take Romanticism as a modern movement but not as a Modernist movement.

Löwy and Sayre assert Jacques Bousquet's perspective that "we still belong to the great Romantic era" (45). If we conceptualize Romanticism as a reaction against the negative outcomes of modernity, and as in the words of Habermas, "modernity is an unfinished project," (qtd. in Mahdavi 5) we can estimate an approximate date for the start of Romanticism but not for its end.

A fundamental negative outcome of modernity that Romanticism reacts against is alienation. Modern alienation can appear simply as estrangement from traditional human bonds of community, family, and relations in favor of an individualistic way of existence associated with material belongings rather than humanistic sharing. Or in its Marxist sense that the laborer becomes alienated from her labor as she sells her labor to put bread on her table, and the capitalist employer owns that which is created by her labor. Modern men and women turn into this self-driven slave as in modern, alienated life people get lost in false desires, expectations, and struggles that are imposed on them by the rhetoric of the modern capitalist mentality: "The kinds of social aspirations [...] whose benefits can be counted, measured, and explicitly distributed: technological advance, high economic productivity, general material welfare" (Grana 201) seem to be dominating as the ultimate meaning of life. As another outcome of modernity, Romantics illustrated the disappointment that came with the bourgeois revolution as well. Republican France, in contrast with what its supporters expected, brought invasions and wars instead of a new democratic way of life.

According to Praz; “it is not the content which decides whether a work should be labeled ‘romantic’ or not, but the spirit” (11). This sense of the Romantic spirit implies Romanticism’s status as a mentality, an attitude and a perspective of looking at life. In *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, we hear Werther “pass from grief to extravagant joy and from sweet melancholy to disastrous passion” (Goethe 17). This portrayal of Werther’s state of soul illustrates the basic Romantic way of being. On one side there is an enormous love of the world, of human beings and of life. This love and appreciation of life reaches the point where one sees everything as enchanted; the idea of existence and the experience of existing itself is enchanted. On the other hand, there are many things in life that do not fit into this idea of an enchanted existence: bad things, things that create hatred; such as struggles over money and material goods, people’s bad behavior toward each other, and the dullness and boredom that is infused into life through the modern necessities of alienated work. Werther says, “I can’t understand the human race, when it has so little sense as to make such a downright fool of itself.” (83) This pushes the Romantic individual to the extreme of losing the joy of life totally. The feelings of the Romantic sensitivity are always on the extremes. Melancholy is the point where joy and sorrow meet. Looking at life and seeing its beauty creates joy, but appreciating this beauty causes sorrow, because everything about life is beautiful and yet depressing because it is so filled with suffering. This melancholy sometimes leans toward extravagant joy and sometimes toward disastrous passion. At the end of the book, after Werther’s suicide Goethe asks the eternal questions of the Romantic soul while explaining the spring of its melancholy and infinite sadness, for when man “soars upward in joy, or sinks down in suffering, is he not checked in both, is he not returned again to the dull, cold sphere of awareness, just when he was longing to lose himself in the fullness of the

infinite?” (120) The Romantic individual sees a path towards the infinite in the beauty of all that is created, yet his soul is a prisoner of his body; he cannot get out of it and reach the infinite. He feels the ultimate joy of life as he gets closer to this feeling of unity with the infinite, but he again and again realizes that in this world he does not have the chance to reach this peak of fulfillment as long as he is a prisoner of his body.

In our day, the spirit of Romanticism is sometimes confused with sentimentality. Today, the term “romantic” can be used for attitudes or products that are in fact sentimental. A romantic atmosphere is considered in terms of clichés, such as a candle-lit room and roses. A romantic film is one in which there is an unrealistic love affair; romantic music is what can easily create some quick tears. “In modern popular usage, the ‘romantic novel’ is a sub-literary genre, a love story, probably in an unreal setting, in which the reader is invited to indulge his (or generally her) fantasies” (Butler 1). Löwy and Sayre emphasize that

The culture industry appropriates certain Romantic clichés for itself [...] and integrates them superficially into a fundamentally apologetic whole that is subject to dominant values. The Romantic elements are thus neutralized or disfigured by the elimination of their critical thrust; they are distorted and made to serve what is fundamentally a market culture. (227)

Löwy and Sayre call this a “pseudo-Romantic culture” that it is not always easy to distinguish from “an authentically Romantic mass culture.” He draws the conclusion that “still, the existence or nonexistence of a (not necessarily explicit) rejection of industrial-bourgeois civilization is a criterion that in principle provides a basis for distinguishing between them.”(227) Löwy and Sayre explain this as follows:

Romanticism cannot be reduced to a list of themes; it is rather a worldview with its own structure and coherence. [...] Its various themes are organically integrated into a whole whose overall signification tends toward a nostalgic rejection of modern reification and alienation.” (227)

In other words, Romanticism reflects sympathy for the past in the name of an authenticity that capitalist values have not yet destroyed. In the Romantic refusal of modern industrial society where nearly everything can be bought and sold, there is a rejection of material values taking the place of the spiritual.

1.2. The Romantic Vision: A Gloomy Picture of Existence

Looking at the artistic and cultural output of Romanticism, it is easy to see that Romanticism is manifested by a dark side rather than a light one, with rain rather than sun, with loneliness rather than company. “The Romantic individual,” say Löwy and Sayre, “is an unhappy consciousness” (26). Figures like Goethe’s Faust, Werther, Lermontov’s Pechorin, the Byronic heroes such as Childe Harold or Manfred all illustrate this unhappiness. Eugene Onegin, a Romantic hero created by Pushkin, who was influenced in his writing by the image of the Byronic hero, is, “like Childe Harold, glum, unpleasing, / he stalked the drawing-rooms, remote...” (stanza XXXVIII, lines 9-10).

Langbaum finds solipsism at the root of the Romantic agony. This agony results in the Romantic individual’s endless struggle with the self. Solipsism as “the epistemological counterpart to narcissism” was the “condition dreaded by the romanticists- the danger incurred by the individualism and self-consciousness that was their special glory” (Langbaum 6). Romantic critique of rationalism relied on objective knowledge as Romanticism was nourished by individual subjective

experience; thus self-expression of the individual was of utmost importance. Because of this, the idea of individual liberty was taken to such an extreme that, according to Langbaum, the romanticist faced the question “whether things outside himself, including other people, were real and whether, if he were indeed the only living reality, he would not die of claustrophobic loneliness in his prisonhouse of self”(6).

Langbaum’s conclusion of this argument is worth quoting at length:

It took great vitality to overcome the Enlightenment, to make the imaginative organization of self and experience that could recombine the worlds of subject and object, value and fact that the Enlightenment had split asunder. When vitality failed, the romanticist was unable to project, to make connection with the outside world; he was thus unable to receive back from the outside world the vitality necessary to feed his own life. (6)

This paradoxical situation of the romanticists is a result of their situation both as “heirs to the great critical effort of the Enlightenment, the effort that dissolved the Christian system of God-created values” (Langbaum 6), and their position as critics of Enlightenment philosophy. In the last wave of the Enlightenment, Rousseau, Kant and Goethe started to question the rationalism of the Enlightenment, along with the belief that reform could be a solution for humanity’s problems. From this pre-Romantic perspective, which saw the universe as having its own natural order, and chaos as a result of an overly rational imposition on it, evolved the Romantic critique, which asserted that truth is unique and subjective. Romantics criticized the thinkers of the Enlightenment who “had believed in a universal world of reason and progress” (Watt 186).

The Romantic conflict between subjective and objective reality creates a permanent state of clash. Langbaum illustrates the two components of this clash: “On the one hand, there is the need for a strong individuality that can reject old values and create new ones that can create its own organization of the world. On the other hand, there is the danger that such an individuality will make a world of himself” (7). The clash between the self-imaginative and reality, the clash between the self-created world and the outside world, the clash between the self and the others, led to an endless struggle of the unhappy Romantic individual with himself.

The Romantic soul is in constant motion mentally, spiritually and sometimes physically. He is on a spiritual journey to the past in a search for what has been lost, and to the future with the hope of a utopia. He goes from the city to nature. Sometimes he goes from one country to the other. He is not happy today, where he is. The Romantic soul is on its own in this journey. According to Benjamin, “the poets find the refuse of society on their street and derive their heroic subject from this very refuse” (79). What he strives for he cannot share with others in the great loneliness of each individual in modern times. “The abasing power of the machine and the abstract commands of the market,” according to Grana, “separated him [man] from the partnership of nature and, in so doing, produced a peculiar sense of privation and loneliness not to be appeased by the mechanistic greed for still further domination of which modern man had become the self-driven slave” (174).

The Romantic conflict between subject and object comes to the surface once again: on the one hand, the Romantic lives in his own imaginative world and nourishes his creativity with his loneliness and isolation, and on the other hand, the Romantic mourns for lost human relationships because with the new capitalist system the old sense of community has vanished.

This conflict between subject and object, which leads to the Romantic clash between the imaginative world and reality, finds a further manifestation in the social consciousness of the Romantic. The Romantic is, on the one hand, a person whose soul's eye is open to see all that is wrong with the world around him. This makes him accept that he has a responsibility to try to change things in the realm of reality. On the other hand, he keeps floating off, into an imaginary world of his own, where he rejects reality in the name of fantasy. Thus, his rebellion against this mechanized, alienated life of modernity is turned against him. Because he cannot change things on his own, he feels frustrated. Butler sees Romantic rebelliousness as “outrageous and total,” where the individual rejects “the very principle of living in society—which means that the Romantic and post-Romantic often dismiss political activity of any kind, as external to the self, literal and commonplace” (30).

The romantic artist is divided between the personal and the social. Butler draws attention to Shelley and Peacock's “reluctance to countenance the poet's withdrawal into privacy.” She compares “the concept of a duty to society [...] in the writings of Tennyson, Browning, Arnold and George Eliot,” who were anticipated by them, with the representatives of “the openly Romantic, that is otherworldly,” such as Wordsworth and Coleridge:

It is one of the peculiarities of polemic, that both sides lay claim to the same virtues and the same ground; and one of the ironies of literary history, that even writers of the more ‘Romantic’ position in the second decade of the century should have accepted what we now feel to be a classical or utilitarian premise, that the poet is bound by society's claim on him. (143)

The Romantic simultaneously experiences a tendency to isolation and a responsibility to the society of whose artist he is. Although the Romantic artist is not involved in any kind of active revolutionary cause to change the world, apart from a couple of exceptions he may carry on a self-struggle in his artistic creativity. He may criticize the things that he wants to see changed. Or he may just escape into a world of fantasy. “The self-acknowledged Romantic [...] tends to project an imaginative world which is clearly distinct from the actual world” (124) whereas, writers such as “Shelley, Keats, the ambivalent Scott—reject any fantasy world as immature and preach acceptance of reality, but do so in a mood of grim stoicism” (127). In this way he can only illustrate a black world that people have to escape from, a reality that is to be escaped.

This escapism results from the fact that the Romantic sees and criticizes but cannot offer a solution. To offer a solution he has to lean on realism. In his refusal of reality and realism, in his creation of a subjective imaginary world, the only thing that he can offer is a utopia, an earthly heaven in nature, a past like a fairy tale or, far away, exotic places where the sun always shines.

1.3. The Romantic Artist in the Mirror: The Romantic Hero

We must not confuse this subjective imaginativeness of the Romantic with the modern person’s egoism. “The Romantics’ ‘individualism’ is fundamentally different from that of modern liberalism,” say Löwy and Sayre, citing Simmels’ definition of “individualism of the Romantic type as ‘subjective individualism’ to distinguish it from eighteenth-century ‘numeric individualism’ and from ‘French and English liberalism’”(25). They point out that “Romantic individualism stresses the unique and incomparable character of each personality” as its first “major value” (26).

From this individualistic self-realization of the Romantic artist evolves the concept of the Romantic hero. According to Löwy and Sayre, “Some Romantics, and above all certain neo-Romantics, have glorified their own isolation and the ‘self’ of the artist or the privileged individual—the individual as hero” (26). This Romantic individual, as he struggles with alienation on his own, is involved in something heroic: Heroic journey into his self.

The subjective nature of modern Romantic art in contrast with the objective nature of Classical art can be useful in understanding the notion of the Romantic hero. In the Romantic lyric *I* usually implies the poet himself. In the introduction to *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* it is said,

In the poems of Coleridge and Keats, for example, the experiences and states of mind expressed by the lyric speaker often accord closely with the personal confessions in the poets’ letters and journals. [...] Byron usually invites his readers to identify the hero with the author” (6).

There were arguments in Russia in the 19th century about whether the character Pechorin in the novel *A Hero of Our Time* reflected directly its writer Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov or was only a *dramatis persona* that he created. Butler asserts that “Romanticism inflates the role of the artist, for it is expressive where Neoclassicism is mimetic,” and thus it relies on “the artist’s experience” (6-7). Abrams uses the expression “poem as a disguised projection of its author” (239) and Butler argues that “the search for ‘Romanticism’ is not so much the quest for a certain literary product, as for a type of producer” (70). Both of these approaches support the tendency of identifying the Romantic hero created in the Romantic literature with the author and the poet who produces it.

For the classicist, says Abrams, the work of art resembles a mirror, which is passively mimetic [...] and for the Romantic a lamp, which throws out images originating not in the world but in the poet. Art becomes subjective rather than objective, and intuitive rather than rationally planned. (qtd. in Butler 7)

Thorslev, underlining Lovejoy's definition of the ethics of early eighteenth century "prudent mediocrity," (16) observes that the figures of the Augustan Age, such as "Swift and Pope, were against [...] 'eccentric' individualism." He adds that "such an age... did not produce heroes, for there is always something of rebellious individualism, of pride, of *hubris*, about heroes." Thus "the Romantic Age was our last great age of heroes" (16) and "Romantic poets and their heroes were isolated from the society of their day; they were all in some degree rebels and outsiders" (17).

For a well-explained account of this type of rebel, Löwy and Sayre are worth quoting once more at length:

Capitalism gives rise to independent individuals who can carry out socioeconomic functions; but when these individuals evolve into subjective individualities, exploring and developing their inner worlds and personal feelings, they enter into contradiction with a universe based on standardization and reification. [...] Romanticism represents the revolt of repressed, channeled, and deformed subjectivity and affectivity. (25)

The nuance between the individual and individuality that Löwy and Sayre underscore here indicates the fundamental modern dilemma. With the bourgeois revolution, modern societies gave human beings the right to be responsible for their own actions, to be equal before the law. With the advent of bourgeois law, there could no longer be

a feudal lord who possessed the people working on the land as he possessed the land itself. In the modern age people could belong only to themselves. But the freedom that came with the bourgeois revolutions is a pseudo-freedom. People's minds are constantly filled with the propaganda of bourgeois capitalist ideology that the meaning of life is to make more money and to consume more. This propaganda of the system that permeates the ideological state apparatus blocks people's minds and prevents their self-realization.

When the individual can get over this blockage and create his individuality, he finds himself in a world where the values of the capitalist economy destroy human authenticity. The ideological apparatus of the capitalist establishment is so powerful that those who cannot turn into individuals greatly outnumber those who can. As a result, those who can attain individuality find themselves isolated and frustrated inside a system that seems impossible to change. The Marxist philosophical and political system, which is based on demolishing capitalism and progressing to communism, may seem for most of these individuals the right way of standing against the existing ideology. But for the Romantic soul, whose primary concern is subjectivity and individual imaginativeness, the collectivism that constitutes the core of a communist worldview seems to be a handicap that prevents him from taking such a position. "The individualistic temper and extreme subjectivity" (Thorslev 188) of the Romantic movement prevents him from becoming politically involved:

Romanticism posits the unity of the self with two all-encompassing totalities: the entire universe, or nature, on the one hand, and the human universe, the human collectivity, on the other. If Romanticism's first value constitutes its individual or individualistic dimension, the second reveals a transindividual dimension. [...] The demand for

community is just as essential to the definition of the Romantic vision as its subjective and individualistic aspect. (Löwry and Sayre 26)

On the one hand, the motivation to change things and, on the other, not finding a means to do that pushes the Romantic soul into a state of melancholia and an infinite sadness.

In the situation of the Romantic artist, this notion of subjectivity is related to the Romantic artistic distance created by the belief that artists see a bigger picture of life than ordinary people see and that they have been created and sent to this life to do something that ordinary people cannot do, i.e., create a bridge between the reality and the imaginary. As “one article of faith in every Romantic’s creed was that the artist was solitary and superior, a hero and a leader above the common herd” (Thorslev 18), the Romantic artist eventually turns into the Romantic hero.

The Romantic hero is an individual who experiences life as a heroic journey. Like the initiation of a hero such as Gilgamesh, he faces tests of love, friendship, and sorrows. After each of these tests he gets to know himself better. His soul’s eye opens more with each experience, and he sees a larger picture of life and existence. His endless search for truth thus turns into a heroic journey. Lermontov’s Pechorin expresses the meaning of the Romantic quest that is carried on throughout the life of the Romantic as he says:

And now here, in this dull fort, I often scan the past in thought, and wonder why I had not wanted to tread that path, which fate had opened for me, where quiet joys and peace of mind awaited me? No, I would not have got used to such an existence! I am like a sailor born and bred on the deck of a pirate brig. His soul is used to storms and battles, and,

when cast out on the shore, he feels bored and oppressed, no matter how the peaceful sun shines on him. (148)

The Romantic hero accepts life as a challenge. He is not a part of the established order, he is a man of quest, and in each of his life's adventures he learns more about life and himself.

For the Romantic hero, on the one hand there is his social concern and aspiration to change the world. "The Romantic hero is never simply an antisocial being; his conflicts always involve some germ or vestige of social concern, and he may be pictured as an eventual redeemer of society" (Reed 5). On the other hand, he cannot overcome his subjectivity. His isolation defines the way that he rebels. He is not a hero who guides people to a better place. The Romantic artist cannot become a revolutionary who belongs to a community who fights with his comrades for a better world. He does not feel the motivating life force of being a part of a community in a battle for what's right and good. "The Romantic Heroes," emphasizes Thorslev, "from the Noble outlaw through Satan-Prometheus, stand firmly as individuals outside of society. Thoroughgoing rebels, they invariably appeal to the reader's sympathies against the unjust restrictions of the social morals, or even religious codes" (22). So, the Romantic hero is in a process of endless rebellion, but he is doing this on his own.

This outsider position of the Romantic hero would be strengthened in accordance with the progress of modernism towards high modernism after the two world wars, where alienation would reach to its peak with the creation of a consumer society. For the members of a consumer society, the most important value is material wealth, money and material goods. This situation would eventually push the Romantic hero to the extremes where he will not be able to find any meaning in life apart from the experience of existing. His rebellious attitude will turn into pacifist disgust for

alienation that will be reflected in the manifestations of existentialism, and the romanticists will be “the existentialists’ predecessors” (Langbaum 13). Thus, the Romantic hero’s heroic status would turn into an anti-heroic way of existence where the very concept of heroism will no longer be valid.

In our popular culture we see a reflection of this transition from the Romantic hero to the modern anti-hero through pop icons. In the 1960s, where the Romantic idea of the self emerges with its notions of heroism, a popular culture hero such as Jim Morrison appears, whereas when we come to 1990s a figure like Kurt Cobain appears as the hero for youth: a loser and an outsider who lays bare all the notions of anti-heroism.

1.4. “A Cruel and Inhumane Era Requires Antiheroes”³

The modern anti-hero developed according to three main dynamics. The first of these is the new concept of the hero that came with Romanticism. The Romantic hero, who is in many ways different from earlier heroes, is the beginning of the anti-hero. Another dynamic is the appearance of the common man on the stage of literature. The third dynamic is two-fold. The concept of heroism was not appropriate in the scientific culture that modernity created. In addition to that, in the 20th century two world wars and phenomena like Nazism and Stalin’s dictatorship have been major factors for the questioning of heroism and hero-worshipping.

Romantic heroism was a transition from the heroic to the anti-heroic determined by the change in heroic values. At the end of this process, the anti-hero who carried the opposite of the heroic values emerged. According to the description of the hero that Aristotle made in *Poetics*, “The hero must be ‘bigger than life’ [...] above the common level, with greater powers, greater dignity, and a greater soul. [...]

³ (Walker 38)

In spite of his tragic flaw, he must be ‘better,’ ‘more virtuous,’ than the average man” (qtd. in Thorslev 186). The main progression in the idea of heroism in the Romantic era was in the changing notions of being better, being more virtuous. The Romantic hero illustrated a greater soul, but he was not necessarily more virtuous. The very notion of virtue, goodness, and dignity were being questioned in the manners and attitudes of these Romantic heroic characters. Faust was above the common level in his perception of the universe, in his thirst for knowledge, but he did not have greater dignity than the average man. What appeared as the mistakes of Lermontov’s Pechorin were not his tragic flaws but the natural outcomes of his own sense of morals and ethics. The Romantic heroic notion was a process of the idea of heroism rather than a static concept. It was the process of deconstruction of the values that created the concept of heroism.

The idea of being bigger than life starts to be distorted as the concept of the hero starts to change. The beginning of this change can be found earlier than Romanticism. Don Quixote is usually referred to as the archetypal anti-hero, and in Thorslev’s note on Sterne here we can see the reference to Lawrence Sterne’s novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, in terms of its similarity both in the characterization and the structure to *Don Quixote*. The line between heroism and anti-heroism starts to get blurred with the publication of *Don Quixote* in 1605. Edith Kern, commenting on the seventeenth century, argues that “the hero of a book no longer has to be heroic. He may be, indeed, the very opposite. He owes his designation as hero solely to the fact that he is the book’s leading character” (qtd. in Reed 8).

Although the foreshadowing of the emergence of the anti-hero was present much earlier, the process from the heroic to non-heroic towards the emergence of the

anti-hero starts with modern literature in the mid-19th century. Reed observes the “older, public sense of the hero” as a “figure of strength and stature,” but this is no longer the case in modern literature, where he is only “the main character” (8).

In the literature earlier than modern times the tragic hero, or epic hero, are “above and beyond the common range of human experience, even though he is ultimately human and not a god” (Reed 1). But as we come to the Romantic era, “the hero is not heroic because of any moral excellence; he may well be a wrongdoer but is in some sense ‘beyond good and evil’, beyond the common categories of morality” (Reed 5).

The Romantic hero was the embodiment of a new sense of heroism, i.e. of modern times.

The Romantic hero is involved in a relationship to himself, that is, to his own heroic identity. He is not a simple unified self but must live up to, or decline from, an inherited heroic ideal. [He] finds his being organized along historical lines. His identity is never completely fixed but is in a process of evolution or devolution. (Reed 10)

This process of evolution is a process of devolution as well, because it leads to the emergence of the anti-hero where the heroic ideals will be replaced with the impossibility of heroism in the modern world. This process of change starts with the Romantic hero at the very root of whose existence lies the emergence of a new man, the modern man, whose main burden is to cope with the alienation that comes with modernity.

A new type of heroism is inevitable because a new type of man exists in modern times. Thus the Romantic hero is in the process of creating himself in this new world. Baudelaire, in his prose poem *Crowds*, illustrates the poet as someone

who “enters, when he pleases, the personality of anyone and everyone” (202). Modern city life gives us the opportunity of meeting different kinds of people, having a part in their lives, seeing their lives intersect with our lives for a moment, putting ourselves in the places of others, and then carrying on with our loneliness; or as Baudelaire puts it: “The man who cannot people his solitude will not be able, either, to be alone in a busy crowd” (201). Therefore, the experience of the Romantic soul in modern life is defined by an internal loneliness.

Benjamin traces the concept of the heroic in Baudelaire’s poetry:

See, sheltered from the swells

There in the still canals

Those drowsy ships that dream of sailing forth;

It is to satisfy

Your least desire, they ply

Hither through all the waters of the earth. (trans. By Richard Wilbur)

Commenting on the above stanzas, he argues:

The hero is as strong, as ingenious, as harmonious, and as well-built as those boats. But the high seas beckon to him in vain, for his life is under an ill star. Modernism turns out to be his doom. The hero was not provided for in it; it has no use for this type. It makes him fast in the secure harbour forever and abandons him to everlasting idleness. (95-96)

The hero is not at home in the modern world which has no use for heroes, so in the modern world, the hero has to create a new self out of himself. Benjamin sees an “embodiment” of the hero as a “dandy” who, according to Baudelaire is “the last shimmer of the heroic in times of decadence” (qtd. in Benjamin 96). In modern times,

the hero is created again and again as different types, different men. He has no fixed identity but a fluid nature. “Flaneur, apache, dandy and ragpicker were so any roles to him. For the modern hero is no hero; he acts heroes” (97). In modern times the hero no longer has a fixed identity such as that of the tragic hero or the epic hero. Heroism is no longer an identity card; furthermore, in modern times heroism is no longer a fixed notion. From all the new pictures of the hero that could be substituted or exchanged with each other, a new hero was to be born who would surpass all the notions of the heroic: the modern anti-hero.

The modern notion of identity was crucial to the emergence of the anti-hero. With modernity came the perception of the individual as a unique entity in society. This new notion of the self was accompanied by a loss of confidence and belief in society and distorted social relations in the modern ages. In his endless walks in Paris, Baudelaire felt an urge to rise above the masses to find his self which he has to rescue from alienation. According to Benjamin, Baudelaire “did not see through the social aura which is crystallized in the crowd. He therefore opposed to it a model [...] This model was the hero. [...] [He] was looking for a refuge for the hero among the masses of the big city. [...] Baudelaire sundered himself from [the city] as a hero” (66). Thus, as in the past, the hero in modern times in its evolution to the anti-hero was once more a figure of isolation and individualism. Reed argues, on speaking about “the heroes of French Romanticism,” that they “exhibit the disease of the age rather than provide its remedy.” (6) According to Benjamin, “The Romanticists transfigured renunciation and surrender” (74). As was discussed in the preceding chapter, the Romanticists criticized the world but, unable to change it, they could only express their dissatisfaction with the world situation.

The Romantic hero was a new type of hero, in a new world where it was impossible for a hero to redeem society. For instance, Baudelaire was a Romantic who instead of joining the working class struggle against the bourgeoisie, preferred to criticize and reflect his discomfort rather than offer a solution. He was an example of the hero's loss of his heroic function as the redeemer of society as he changed from the Romantic hero and took a new direction towards becoming the anti-hero.

The other important change of the heroic concept in modern times was the questioning of the credibility of the modern Romantic hero in terms of morals. The Romantic hero is different from the earlier heroes, as he is not a figure to imitate or to follow. The Romantic hero is not sociable enough to be imitated, to be a role model for his followers. According to Reed, "the Romantic hero is set apart from the rest of society. He is a figure from the distant past upon whom a modern intelligence meditates" (17). Furthermore, the Romantic hero does not show the good things to be done and the bad things not to be done. He is not identified with moral definitions, as were the earlier heroes. Reed takes the example of the Gothic heroes to compare this notion characteristic of the Romantic hero: "Gothic villains and heroes are ultimately different types of character from the Romantic hero, primarily in their not having gone beyond good and evil, in their characters continuing to be defined by moral categories" (25). The Romantic hero does not have any morals to offer since with the coming of modernity, all moral and ethical values are shaken from their roots.

The industrial revolution created new social classes and this resulted in new social relationships. On the other hand, the new scientific methods led to the questioning of religion, as a result of which all the moral and ethical codes started to become transformed. All these changes in the social and cultural life made the world a

place where certainty no longer existed. In a world where certainty no longer existed, the heroes with certain codes and values could no longer exist:

Nineteenth and twentieth century literature is [...] crowded with weak, ineffectual, pale, humiliated, self-doubting, inept, occasionally abject characters. [...] [They] do not conform to traditional models of heroic figures; they even stand in opposition to them. [...] Implicitly or explicitly, they cast doubt on values that have been taken for granted, or were assumed to be unshakable. (Brombert 2)

As “the Hero is a purely social creation” who “represents [...] a socially approved norm [...] socially acceptable character,” (O’Faolain 14) at a time when all moral values were being shaken, and all notions of good and bad were questioned, the only heroism that could possibly exist would be going beyond good and evil. Nietzsche, in his work *Beyond Good and Evil*, published in 1886, says that “morality itself” was “taken as ‘given’.” He adds that “in all ‘science of morals’ [...] the problem of morality itself has been *lacking*⁴: the suspicion was lacking that there was anything problematic here” (105). From the point of questioning the idea of morality itself, Nietzsche comes in his *Twilight of the Idols* to “demand of philosophers that they place themselves *beyond*⁵ good and evil” and to emphasize that “*there are no moral facts whatever*⁶” (119). In modern times, the possibility of representing a socially approved ideal becomes impossible. As “most of our traditional certainties have become progressively less and less certain, it will be evident that the Hero as a personification of those certainties would also have to become less and less sure of

⁴ Italics belong to Nietzsche.

⁵ Italics belong to Nietzsche.

⁶ Italics belong to Nietzsche.

this position” (O’Faolain 16) thus “the conceptual Hero has in our time been replaced by what, for want a better word, we have come to call the anti-Hero” (16).

1.5. The Common Man as a Subject of Literature

The appearance of the common man in modern literature is one of the main components in the emergence of the anti-hero. According to Benjamin, “The hero is the true subject of modernism. [...] It takes a heroic constitution to live modernism” (74). In modern literature the ordinary man appears in his fight against alienation to survive in the modern world. The term used for this common, ordinary man who starts to appear in literature in the modern age is the *little man*. As Benjamin notes, it is a kind of heroism to be able to stand in the modern, alienated life. But this is a different sort of heroism than what appeared in the past as heroic.

The little man is an ordinary person who finds himself alone in the changing modern world where all values are undermined. He is a sad figure trying to adjust to the new values. The little man appears in Russian literature with Pushkin, is carried on with Gogol and taken to its peak by Dostoevsky. He’s like Pushkin’s postmaster in the *Tales of Belkin*, who is very upset while looking at his daughter Dunya, whose values are much different from his. The material values of modern life seem unfamiliar to him. When he leaves Captain Minsky’s place without being able to get his daughter back, “for a long time he stood motionless until finally he saw a roll of paper under the cuff of his sleeve. He pulled it out and unrolled several crumpled five- and ten-rouble notes. Once again the tears welled up in his eyes—tears of indignation!” (49) Here, the postmaster’s indignation is not only toward Minsky, who is so dishonorable that he pays money to get rid of the postmaster who wants to save his daughter from remaining as his mistress, but also toward all the new material values that are taking the place of the old ones. Or the little man may be a government

official like Akaky Akakyevich in Gogol's story *The Overcoat* who commits suicide because he loses the new coat which he bought with a month's salary, deprived of the respect that this coat brought him in a world where materialistic values seemed to replace humanistic values.

In these illustrations of the little man in literature, the stories are of ordinary men, who do not have enough material belongings in a new world where material values are more important than anything else. The heroism of these men as Benjamin describes it is a heroism of being able to survive in the modern world. It is important here to see the irony in Benjamin's idea of heroism. There is a similar sort of ironic demystification of heroism in Gogol's characterization of Akakyevich. "Gogol is ironic about all heroic poses, heroic values, and heroic figures. When Akaky wears the new coat, his pulse beats faster [...] he appears somehow to have almost become virile. Yet the overcoat is also the emblem of false values, of trivial passion, of a silly reason for a human downfall" (Brombert 29). This ironic approach manifests clearly the progression from heroism to anti-heroism as it manifests the falseness of the values, like the values that create heroism. In Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* the term anti-hero appears in the last paragraph of the novel from the mouth of the anti-hero himself: "A novel needs a hero, and all the traits of an anti-hero are *expressly*⁷ gathered together here, and what matters most, it all produces an unpleasant impression, for we are all divorced from life, we are all cripples, every one of us, more or less" (114). Underground Man is honest with himself in his declaration of his solitude, and manifests the alienated state of modern people by calling them inverse cripples. Earlier on in the book he says: "I am alone and they are *every one*" (39). Dostoevsky's Underground Man is aware of his alienation, and he stresses the

⁷ Italics belong to Dostoevsky.

idea that modern alienated individuals who are not aware of their situation are in a worse situation than he is although he looks unhappier than they do: “you have taken your cowardice for good sense, and have found comfort in deceiving yourselves. So that perhaps, after all, there is more ‘life’ in me than in you” (115).

The use of the term anti-hero implies an important point in the discussion of the dialectic from the hero to the anti-hero:

The protagonist, already defined as a *paradoxalist*⁸ by the editorial voice, defines himself as an antihero. [...] The notion of antiheroism implies the subversion or absence/presence of the questioned model, while paradox suggests a deeper meaning hidden behind a logical incongruity or provocative negation. Both notions inform an ironic thrust whose aim is to carry the underground message to its radical extreme. The word *paradox* signifies countertruth. (34)

Thus, in the progression from the heroic to the anti-heroic, the first step as it appears in Benjamin’s approach to heroism is emptying the concept from what it earlier signified. And in the second step, the filling of this signifier with the opposite of the earlier signifieds, the deconstruction of heroism is complete and anti-heroism emerges.

“Although Dostoevsky gave common currency to the term ‘antihero,’” it is Akakievich who “is the genuine, unmitigated, and seemingly unredeemable antihero” as Dostoevsky’s “antiheroic paradoxalist [...] is well-read, cerebral,” and conscious whereas “Akakievich is hardly aware, and almost inarticulate” (Brombert, 24). The distinction between Akakievich and Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man* can be explained in Walter Kaufmann’s categorization of alienated men. He sees “two

⁸ Italics belong to Brombert.

distinct groups of alienated men”: “The few, being creative, can cope with it; and the many, who not being creative, cannot cope” (qtd. in Walker 15). According to Walker, Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man* belongs to the first category as an “alienated loner whose conscious awareness of being different ultimately leads to physical inertia;” he rejects society with “his heightened consciousness of the absurdity of reason, the senselessness of history, and the emptiness of reality” (16). The little man turns into an anti-hero here as he questions all values and heroism. So, he is not only an anti-hero, but he surpasses the concept of heroism as well. Akakievich, on the other hand, can be seen as belonging to the second category of Kauffman as he cannot cope and dies because of his grief. Both are anti-heroes, but one is aware of this situation and the other one is not.

The alienated man who is aware of his alienation questions the norms and values of society. This notion of the rebel is one of the main threads of the anti-heroic fabric that starts with the Romantic hero. “An understanding of the whole Romantic tradition and the Byronic hero,” Thorslev notes, “can help us see more clearly what Albert Camus has recently called the ‘philosophy of rebellion’” (197). Thorslev adds that the Byronic hero is “most intimately related” to the tradition “originating in Romanticism (or in the French Revolution as Camus says)—the tradition of ‘metaphysical’ or ‘total’ rebellion.” He adds that, “it is total rebellion because it is a rebellion not only on a political level, but also on the philosophical and religious level—and sometimes, in nihilistic extremes, against life itself” (197).

Once the rebellion turns against life itself, it reflects an existential anxiety, where the alienated individual not only finds himself alienated from society and daily life, but from all of existence. Existence seems like a vicious circle that leads nowhere, and life seems completely aimless and meaningless. As for the modern

individual, once God and the meaning of being created by him are lost, Sartre's *nausea* becomes inevitable.

1.6. The Closing of the Era of Great Men

Although in the nineteenth century the heroic notions in literature started to change, it would take until the 20th century for the idea of the hero and heroism to go through a complete transformation and emerge as the idea of the anti-hero. Robert A. Segal notes, "It is a truism in the twentieth century that impersonal forces, not individuals make history," whereas "in the nineteenth century ... heroic individuals were believed to make history" (1).

Carlyle in his lectures in the 1840s defended the idea that heroes could change history for the better and that these heroes should be worshipped. Carlyle's "sentiments were widely shared by his fellow Victorians who," according to Edmund Gosse, "turned admiration from a virtue into a religion, and called it Hero Worship" (qtd. in Goldberg xxxiii). Herbert Spencer criticized Carlyle for not seeing the great man as "rather than the cause of society, [...] product of society" (qtd. in Segal 3). Segal argues that Hegel, who wrote earlier than Carlyle, would probably disagree with him "for making the hero the cause rather than the manifestation of change" (Segal 4). According to Brombert, "Carlyle saw heroes as spiritual models guiding humanity, and thus deserving of 'hero worship'" (4).

On the other hand, the Romantic age had dynamics such as democracy and equality of rights, at least in terms of law, that motivated the ordinary person to dream of heroism. According to Thorslev, "the Romantic age was our last great age of heroes" (16). Cantor points out that, "the ideology of human freedom and equality" was a main component of the times and this became "the strongest provocation to mimetic desire." He adds:

In an aristocratic and strictly hierarchical society, human beings tend to view their positions in life as natural or divinely ordained, and hence are less prone to dream of rising above their given stations. In a democratic society, by contrast, with the traditional supports of social privilege weakened if not entirely undermined, the barriers to mimetic desire dissolve. (94)

So Romanticism was, on one hand, the peak of the idea of heroism. But as we noted earlier, this was a different sort of heroism. On the other hand, in the Romantic perception one did not have to be born a hero. Everyone could become a hero. This was an important step in the development of heroism towards anti-heroism.

The passing of the age of aristocracy affected the evolution of the hero to the anti-hero as well. Commenting on Hegel's ideas, Brombert notes that Hegel has "theorized that modern society, with its stress on functionalism and specialization (even kings had to serve!), could no longer tolerate the aristocratic notion of the hero" (11). In the modern age, there was no place for a hero who would do nothing but radiate his heroic status, without having any other function.

In modern society, the hero becomes more humane. At the same time, for the ordinary person to dream of being a hero becomes possible. The hero comes closer to the common man, and the common man comes closer to the hero. The importance of Romanticism is that it is the peak point of heroism, and as always the peak point indicates a downfall. So Romanticism on the one hand encouraged the idea of heroism for everyone, and on the other hand this very encouragement became the undermining of the idea of heroism. Thorslev finds it paradoxical that two of the factors that resulted in the end of the heroic tradition "can be ascribed in part to Romanticism itself." He asserts that "the rise of bourgeois democracy and of the cult of the common

man” is one “antiheroic factor in modern culture,” which is also “inherent in Romanticism” (193). The equality that bourgeois democracy brings in at first gives the common man the possibility of dreaming of heroism but it soon leads to the negation of heroism in the name of equality.

According to Thorslev, “a conception of man as hero [...] is perhaps not fashionable in our late antiheroic age. [...] Darkened as our minds have been with the shadows of two world wars and the pseudo—*Führerschaft* of Fascism” (122-123). Thorslev underlines “realism in art and ‘scientism’ in our culture” as important aspects of modernity helped to demolish heroism, for “in common with all forms of ideals, heroism and hero-worship require a certain mystique in order to thrive, and this is objectivity of realism or of science does not allow” (193). He adds that “the entire heroic tradition offends not only our sense of realism, but probably our sense of the democratic, of the commonness of everyman” (123). As Cantor, quoted previously, argues, with democracy people’s dreams of becoming someone more important became relatively possible. But in the process, this democratic possibility leaned more on the meaning and realization of the man as equal with others, the common man having the same rights and freedoms with everyone else in the democratic society.

Our modern world has had various experiences of fascism in practice, in all of which hero-worshipping was central. Hitler, Mussolini and Franco were all heroic figures with pagan references. Furthermore, Stalin in Soviet Russia and Mao in China, in the name of fighting against fascism created modern pseudo-communist *kingdoms* where no one dared to question the reign of the ruler-hero. In fact, World War II had a double effect regarding the emergence of the anti-hero. On the one hand, it exposed horrifying realities accompanying the myth of the great man and hero-worshipping. On the other hand, the two world wars, especially the second one, made irreversible

changes in the human psyche, in terms of courage, survival or heroism in its most divine and most casual meaning, that no older value could be valid again

“The period determines the kind of hero needed and even possible” (Segal 2). As “the hero gives one the broader and often the deeper perspective of the spirit of the age which he represents,” (Thorslev 20) when it comes to our age, we see that “every one of us shares the supreme ordeal—carries the cross of the redeemer—not in the bright moments of his tribe’s great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair” (Campbell 391). In our age the hero can be anyone and everyone, as the factories and the skyscrapers that we work in make us feel so small and as existence becomes more and more virtual everyday in our age of computer technology. Anyone trying to retain a personality in this age is a hero.

Our modern age creates anti-heroes who can develop their own strategies like comic wit, and carry on their resistance against systematical alienation. Or it creates anti-heroes, who float inside of alienation, not resilient enough and tenacious enough to resist it. This sort of an anti-hero can become destructive and direct his anger at the system against himself, which can even lead to suicide. In the next two chapters we’ll explore these ideas regarding anti-heroism and apply them to our two figures from American popular culture.

2. THE HERO STRIKES BACK: JIM MORRISON AS THE NEO-ROMANTIC (ANTI-) HERO

“People need Connectors

Writers, heroes, stars,

leaders

To give life form.”

(Jim Morrison)

The 1960s were a time of a revival of Romanticism in the Western world. This neo-Romantic zeitgeist was the leitmotiv of the counterculture in the USA. Members of the counterculture who were not politically active expressed a passive form of rebellion in their lifestyle, the philosophy of which had its roots in a neo-Romantic worldview. The counterculture was a youth movement protesting not only the values of the older generation and the political and social conservatism of the 1950's motivated by the Cold War, but all the bourgeois values that came with the victory of bourgeoisie through industrialization and capitalism.⁹

The counterculture included two main tendencies. One of them was active political struggle, and the members of the counterculture who were on that side became members of legal and illegal political groups and participated in non-armed and armed activities. The other tendency in the counterculture was personal rebellion. The supporters of this idea tried to bring about the revolution in their own lives by trying to cast off bourgeois values, perceptions and life-styles and to live in an alternative, authentic way. These people were mainly known as hippies. Hippies did

⁹ Neo-Romanticism was a movement in the arts and literature that started in the U.S in the 1920s. Its influence was seen later in the poetry of the Beats, who influenced the 1960s counterculture. I use the term here, in a broader sense, to define the general aura of the era.

not have manifestos or leaders, but there were some indicators to identify them, e.g., an interest in communal lifestyles, rejection of consumer culture, and, in a broader sense, Western bourgeois values, a strong belief in peace, and appreciation of Eastern philosophy. Hippies usually made use of drugs and their music style was mainly rock'n'roll. They clung to the ideal of transforming the world into a utopian society through pacifist means.

The concepts of returning to nature, making love instead of war, forcing the limits of human perception through consumption of drugs, and idealization of pre-industrial and pre-modern life-styles in nature were all direct reflections of the neo-Romantic worldview in over-developed Western countries after the Second World War, and they were manifested by both the actively political members of the counterculture and the passively political ones, the hippies. This was a flashback to the individualistic perception and subjectivity of the Romantic era. The aspect of Romanticism which made the earlier time an age of heroes functioned in the same way during the revival of Romanticism in the 1960s, when heroes were created as well. "From a Jungian perspective the way that the cultural psyche or soul reveals itself is through its images and dreams, wherever they occur. The most widespread and often the most vivid societal images are found in the society's popular culture," notes Kittelson (3). In the 19th century, novels and poetry created the popular culture, but in the 20th century music, records, and movies created it. Thus, it was inevitable that the heroes of the Romantic revival in the 1960s would come from music or cinema rather than from literature.

Various heroic figures emerged in the popular culture of the period, nominees to become the truest hero of the counterculture. At such a time, a figure from popular music, the rock star Jim Morrison, became a neo-Romantic hero of these neo-

Romantic times. Jim Morrison became a symbol and a hero of the youth culture which was based on a neo-Romantic spirit; with a belief in utopias, an urge to return to nature, an endless self-exploration through the usage of drugs and through the Dionysian way of appreciating music.

2.1. The 1960s: A Neo-Romantic Reaction against High-Modernity

Butler comments that the “Romantic mentality” is “born from social experience, out of unemployment, frustration and rejection of the outside world” (74). Looking at the social conditions of the 1960s, it is easy to see the conditions that created a ground for a Romantic revival.

In the 19th century, with industrialization and the triumph of capitalism, the Romantic sensibility reacted to the direction in which the world was going in the name of progress. Technology seemed to be devastating nature; materialism was taking the place of the spiritual. The process in the 1960s resembled this experience. The Second World War had boosted America’s economy, and the birth and rise of the consumer culture became a symbol of materialism taking the place of the life of the spirit. Marcus comments, “The sixties were first of all fast times, boom times; as in Haussmann’s era, capitalism almost overreached itself” (133). In this situation, “too many people had too much of everything that was on the market, and so they had the leisure to think about what else they might want” (Marcus 133).

On the other hand, the post Second World War 1960s were the peak times of the Cold War. Nuclear technology was legitimized, which gave rise to the fear of a nuclear war. At such a moment of Cold War consensus, at the peak of alienation, a new sensitivity evolved, with the search for a new political approach that could try to bring solutions to the ills of the over-developed Western society. Thus emerged the New Left, sliding the focal point from the traditional focus on labor issues towards,

the effects of high-modern society on the individual. Phenomena such as alienation, anomie, and authoritarianism were the main concerns of the New Left in creating an alternative political movement during these times.

As a matter of fact, the New Left created much of its discourse on the individual and his or her freedom. Thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, Erich Fromm, Wilhelm Reich, Norman O. Brown, R.D. Laing and Erik Erikson defined the “existentialist versions of alienation.” These philosophers diagnosed an “alienation specifically to the systemic human disenfranchisement wrought by bureaucratic, rationalized society, to be remedied by individual authenticity and liberation in participatory democracy” (DeKoven131). An individual-by-individual redemption was essential—in other words, a personal revolution within each individual.

In the 1960s a shift from the class politics to the identity politics emerged. Blacks, women, homosexuals, the disabled, people of various ethnic origins started to identify themselves in terms of these identities. The Civil Rights movement, “the catalyst both of the New Left and of all the postmodern ‘new social movements’: feminism, gay rights, ethnic politics, politics based on age and disability discrimination,” (DeKoven 130) has been a fundamental inspiration for identity politics to emerge. This is one of the reasons why the 1960s became such an important era, particularly in the USA.

On the other hand the approaches of Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich, who used Freud’s theories, brought an individualistic dimension to Marxism. The Freudian influences on Marxism have been effective in the development of the Romantic character of the times. “Freud is a romantic who sees man as ‘psychologically alone,’ ‘forever projecting his infantile family constellation on the

‘outer world,’ with man in the mass as a destructive mob, threatening self-fulfillment” (Langbaum 11). This Freudian content at once indicates the Romantic individualism of the 1960s as well as the utopian agenda for a transformed world where the individual wins her struggle for self-fulfillment.

The utopia of a transformed society through individual revolution reflected the Romantic stress on the individual’s struggle for self-realization. DeKoven, calls attention to the expression “we as the individuals” in *The Port Huron Statement*, the 1962 document written by Students for a Democratic Society in the U.S. She observes that “the communal ‘we’ of the New Left and the counterculture was always an aggregate of consenting, actively participating individuals” (130). This approach laid the basis for a neo-Romantic idea of heroism of the individual in his self-struggle against alienation and for a full and authentic self-realization.

“The sixties politics of the self [...] is rooted in a modernist view of the heroic struggle for selfhood of the exemplary subject against a resistant, hostile world” (DeKoven 190). Thus, heroism and heroic struggle emerged as a declaration of the Romantic subjectivity and identity politics of the 1960s. In such an environment, where a revival of the Romantic spirit with its notions of the heroic struggle and the hero was evident, it was inevitable for some figures to come forward as symbols of this heroic struggle and emerge as heroes of the times.

The aesthetic sensibility as it was expressed in the popular culture of the times was important in creating the myths and heroes of the era. Such popular culture media as music or cinema became increasingly important. Music, particularly rock music, was a means of cultural expression for the youth of the times. Rock stars like Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix represented alternative ways of existing and self-realization. They became symbols of countercultural life-styles. According to

DeKoven, “The Romantic ideology of sacred, authentic, unalienated creativity” was “central to the sixties counter culture” (DeKoven 144). In fact, in the personas of youth icons such as these rock stars this ideology of authentic, unalienated creativity was being worshipped.

As “the rock ‘community’ was a community of feeling” and as “music mattered to 60s politics for its openness, its ambiguity,” (Frith 67) so in rock music’s discourse in the 1960s was the Romantic belief in an authentic alternative for existence and a perspective for creating it through the energy of the individuals. According to Menocal, “the ethos of the rock tradition [...], both a highly lyrical structure in general and, more specifically, a phenomenon with deep roots and strong kinships [...] cultivated, in and with the Romantic tradition” (148). The youth who felt themselves completely different from their parents found an expression of their beliefs and expectations in rock music. In Grossberg’s words, “The affective alliance of critical rock and roll is a self-reflexive affirmation of difference, a decathexis of any affirmation. [...] The counterculture’s (and its music’s) search for community, its concern for concrete events, its utopian optimism, its sensuousness, its focus on lifestyle and its almost transcendental mysticism certainly locate it within a Romantic sensibility” (111-119).

As “San Francisco had become the symbol of the counterculture movement” (Fowlie 77), a lot of important rock bands started to appear on the West Coast. “An important segment of West Coast rock music—the Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, the Doors—vibrated between the harsh edges of American politics and the utopian gestures of an alternative America” (Chambers 94). The Doors were particularly successful in reaching into people’s psyches and creating a rebellious energy. “The Doors scream into the darkened auditorium what all of us in the

underground are whispering more softly in our hearts: we want the world and we want it ...NOW!"¹⁰ (Tom Robbins qtd. in Whitmer and Van Wyngarden 244). Their lyrics and the way they touched the youth with these lyrics and the music were stunning.

Rock was the soundtrack of the times; rebellious, Romantic and full of energy. DeKoven asserts, "No cultural phenomenon is more characteristic of the sixties than rock music" (116). Lyrically it carried the mottos of the counterculture. For instance, "All you need is love" sang the Beatles. Although lyrics came to the audience in forms of songs, in some bands they also functioned like the spoken word, poetry read aloud. "It is a truism that the lyrics of many sixties rock songs, particularly those by such great writers as Bob Dylan, Carole King, John Lennon, Joni Mitchell, Jim Morrison, and Neil Young, are of a piece with sixties avant-garde poetry" (116). This character of rock music is an indicator of its similar function with the poetry of the 19th century. Rock lyrics of the 1960s, like the Romantic poetry in the 19th century, manifested the Romantic agony of living in an alienated consumer society, dominated by white middle-class Western values of bourgeoisie; as well as a belief in an authentic way of existence, a different way of life, somewhere far away. "The character or quality of voice in sixties rock" reflected a "deep, passionate, visionary sincerity; a clarity or purity; a directness of emotion" (DeKoven 119). These characteristics of sincerity, the directness of emotion in rock lyrics reflects an important similarity between rock songs and Romantic poetry. Rock "was a music of liberation and transcendence, of untrammelled authenticity, of passion, truth and love" (119) so as Romantic poetry was a poetry of liberation and transcendence, authenticity, passion, truth and love. In the 19th century people who had the Romantic

¹⁰ Capitals belong to Whitmer and Van Wyngarden.

sensitivity found the reflections of their feelings in the Romantic poetry. In the 1960s, the Romantic and rebellious youth found the reflections of their feelings in rock music.

The readers of the Romantic poetry in the 19th century saw the Romantic poets as the embodiments of the Romantic ideals. In a similar way, in the 1960s, the listeners of rock music saw the rock singers as the embodiments of the Romantic and rebellious ideals of the times. Butler observes that “the idea of the ‘Romantic Poet’ or bohemian intellectual opposing society was as attractive following the demonstrations and barricades of the 1960s as it was after 1830 and 1848” (3). The rock singers of the 1960s corresponded the Romantic poet or the bohemian intellectuals of the 19th century. The hero of the 19th century was the Romantic poet, the hero of the sixties was the rock singer. Both the Romantic poet and the rock singer manifested the notion of the “the poet as rebel” (Butler 3). This rebel figure of the sixties, the counterpart of the Romantic hero of the 19th century, had to embody the characteristics of a “Romantic personality” who “acts out in life his neurotic gloom; he is frustrated and alienated from society” (Butler 127).

There were various nominees for that neo-Romantic hero. Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, Neil Young, Jimi Hendrix and John Lennon were all to some extent accepted as culture heroes of their time. But among these Jim Morrison had a unique identity with a more Romantic, and a more heroic, charisma.

2.2. The Lizard King: A Neo-Romantic Hero, a Modern Anti-Hero

Simon Frith observes that “Jim Morrison is a representative 60s figure precisely because of his self-importance. He stood for the claim that rock became an art form through its pursuit of the extraordinary and extreme, through the very process of self-indulgence” (67). The self-importance is a characteristic of the

Romantic attitude and Jim Morrison, in this sense reflected the aura of figures such as Faust or Pechorin. This self-indulgence of the rock stars was in harmony with the idea of the rock concert as a spectacle. As bands like The Doors became super bands, with audiences of thousands, rock concerts were transformed into spectacles. The rock singer became the figure in whose honor the spectacle was going on, rather than by whom the spectacle was being performed. Jim Morrison “seized on the romantic ideal of decadence—it was *Morrison’s* experience of rock performance that mattered, not his audience’s” (Frith 67). This idea of the spectacle reflected the heroic personification of the rock singer. Punk subculture, which would later emerge as a critique of hippie culture, would react against this idea of the spectacle of the rock concert and the heroism of the rock singer on the stage. Thus, a transition of the rock star from hero to anti-hero would come with punk.

Jim Morrison wanted to be a poet and to be remembered as a poet. According to Menocal, “Rock has had one spectacular and unlikely counterpart to Petrarch in Jim Morrison—or rather, in James Douglas Morrison, as he tried, unsuccessfully, to be known when he wrote poetry, which he did obsessively” (179). Many people agree that his poetry was not good. Still, his obsession with poetry and the poetic dimension of his song lyrics helped to build his image as a poet as well as a rock star. Frith, in a sharp analysis, notes that his “self-image as a poet referred not just to his lyrics but also to his personality, to his obsession with his own perceptions” (67). His image as a poet reflects the Romantic poet’s heroic charisma as an explorer for the truth. “In one almost amusing way Morrison is Petrarch’s distinct mirror image,” writes Menocal: “he escapes from the public persona and goes home to fill notebook after notebook with ‘real poetry’” (179). Jim Morrison’s Romantic heroism owed a lot to

the isolated situation of the artist, living in a world of his own with his art as his only means of resistance.

Jim Morrison, the heroic character as the outsider artist, “often maintained a deliberate image of the ‘loner’” (Hopkins 82). He wrote “like Edgar Allen Poe blown back as a hippie’ (qtd. in Hopkins 82). Morrison himself liked the Romantics. When he went to London, he tried to go to the Lake District to see Wordsworth’s house (Hopkins 106). He always praised poetry. “Poetry appeals to me so much—because it’s so eternal. As long as there are people, they can remember words and combinations of words. Nothing else can survive a holocaust, but poetry and songs” (int. with Hopkins 220). In a self-interview that appears in the prologue of his poetry volume *Wilderness*, he says: “I’m kind of hooked to the game of art and literature; my heroes are artists and writers” (1).

Morrison’s heroic identity owed a lot to his rebellious attitude. He was young enough to rebel and too young to be corrupted by the notions of the establishment. “Flower children” according to Fowlie, “saw in Rimbaud a man (an adolescent, really) purified of the world’s corruption. That is the meaning of ‘rebel’ they gave to Rimbaud and later to Morrison” (18). Morrison’s rebellious attitude was validated by his personal rebellions and troubles with the police, i.e., the establishment. Being arrested for allegedly waving his penis at a crowd of 10,000 in Miami loaded on him a Romantic heroic persona that was at the same time anti-heroic. This behavior against the status quo and accepted morals was heroic for the countercultural youth who were against the status quo and accepted morals. This was a heroism that was beyond good and evil. It was anti-heroic because it was destroying the image of the hero the youth were projecting onto him. In an interview with Salli Stevenson of *Circus* magazine, Morrison said that this concert was “his declaration of

independence” (qtd. Hopkins 141). “The audience was there not to listen to his music, but to see him do something outrageous, and he was telling them to wake up. His image had gotten out of hand” and “however responsible he was for that happening, he was ‘fed up’” (Hopkins 141-143). In the same interview, when Stevenson asks him “if he considers himself an idol or a hero,” he answers: “I think of myself as an intelligent, sensitive human being with the soul of a clown, which always forces me to blow it at the most important moments” (qtd. in Hopkins 243). Years later, Fowlie, a scholar of French literature, would use the following words to comment on what he saw in the Miami incident: “After the Miami scandal, Jim became the persecuted artist. He had gone beyond the permitted clowning” (124). In one of his poems in *The Lords*, Jim wrote: “We are obsessed with heroes who live for us and whom we punish” (9). Jim was worshipped and he was also punished. After the Miami incident his public image was shaken. Still, comprising the heroic and the anti-heroic simultaneously, he gradually turned into a legend. “How many legends in their own lifetime can you think of from, say Valentino to Jim Morrison?” asks Hollingdale (73).

Morrison liked reading Nietzsche, a philosopher influential in deconstructing the idea of good and bad. In interviews Morrison mentioned *The Birth of Tragedy* of Nietzsche (Hopkins 11). Like Nietzsche’s Superman, in Hopkins’ words, “Jim Morrison was a kind of cultural superman, larger than life, moving little girls (and many men) to sexual delight and intellectuals to profundity with equal ease and dispatch” (11). In many different ways he carried the image of a man above the rest, with a potential for leading others. “In concert, he resembled the Siberian shaman, rattling his tambourine like a gourd and entering a trance-like state to lead his audience toward communal ecstasy” (11-12). According to Hopkins, Jim and his

friend Dennis Jakob “talked endlessly about Friedrich Nietzsche. They both identified with Dionysus, ‘who was without any images, himself primordial pain and its primordial re-echoing’” (49). His identification with Dionysus hints at his capability to lead others to communal ecstasy. According to Fowlie, “he was being called ‘the Dionysus of Rock and Roll’” (80).

Jim Morrison had the aura of a Greek God, in his appearance as well as in the way he carried himself on stage, in his posture, in all his physical characteristics. This underscored his heroic identity. “He had modeled his early look from the classics, taking his haircut and the way he held his head from Plutarch’s description of Alexander the Great. The curly locks and bunched neck muscles resembled a bust by Michelangelo” (Hopkins 11). For Agnes Varda, the celebrated film-director, Jim Morrison was “the legendary hero of the sixties. He had, Varda said, the beauty of a Renaissance character” (Fowlie 94).

Having so many characteristics of the male icons of the classical era when male sexuality was at the center of aesthetics, it was inevitable that Morrison would become a sex symbol. “There really hasn’t been a major male sex symbol since James Dean died and Marlon Brando got a paunch. Dylan is more of a cerebral heart throb and the Beatles have always been too cute to be deeply sexy” (Howard Smith qtd. in Hopkins 82). One of the reasons Jim Morrison was so sexy could also be his Romantic ability to reflect the female within the male: “The Romantic tradition [...] consisted of male artists who believed they were in touch with the feminine within. From Rimbaud to Jim Morrison, these artists had set a premium on flow, flux, the chaos of the unconscious” (Reynolds and Press 356). As the 1960s were times of sexual revolution, the explicit sexuality of Morrison provoked his heroic and anti-heroic image. It was heroic because for the countercultural youth of the times, body

politics and sexual freedom were important components of liberating themselves from the norms and rules of the establishment. The establishment was against the idea of sexual freedom and saw it as a sin. Jim Morrison, by representing something sinful that conflicted with the society's morals, was behaving in an anti-heroic manner.

A main element in the lyrics and poetry that Jim Morrison wrote and in the sound of his music was the urge to reach the unconscious. He called himself the Lizard King. This was a mythic figure created as an alter ego by Jim Morrison. He said in a poem in *Wilderness*, "I am a guide to the labyrinth" (12). In his interview with Chorus he said, "The lizard and the snake are identified with the unconscious and the forces of evil" (qtd. in Hopkins 258). Another sign of this is the name of the band which comes from William Blake's and Aldous Huxley's reference to "the doors of perception":

Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, Blake's 'doors of perception', Celine's "journey to the end of the night", Rimbaud's 'sacred disorder of the mind'. From these Romantic influences Morrison derived the idea of the artist as a 'broker in madness', an explorer of the frontier territories of the human condition. (Reynolds and Press 118)

Morrison wanted to learn more and more about life, about himself and about the possibilities of existence. He wanted to test the boundaries in his experiments with drugs, in his encounters with women, in his endless nights of drinking and diving into the mysteries of the night. On drinking alcohol he commented in an interview with Chorus: "It's like gambling somehow, you go out for a night of drinking and you don't know where you're going to end up the next day. It could work out good or it could be disastrous. It's like the throw of the dice" (Hopkins 260). One of his poems in the first volume of *Wilderness* went,

Between childhood, boyhood,
 adolescence
 & manhood (maturity) there
 should be sharp lines drawn w/
 Tests, deaths, feats, rites
 Stories, songs, & judgements. (1-6)

He had numerous stories, countless tests, and a death that fit well to his whole philosophy. Jim Morrison's death reflects his self-destructive Faustian character. His tragic end at the age of twenty-seven reflects what Thorslev, in an analysis of the tragedy of Faust, calls "the tragedy of epistemology" (84). Like Lermontov's Pechorin, he took the all the risks of knowing more and more, and not putting a limit to what he could learn from the experience of living. He wanted to control his own life, and how much he would pay for that did not matter. In an interview with Bob Chorush, published in the Los Angeles Free Press in spring 1971, speaking of his poetry volume *The Lords* he said,

What that book is a lot about is the feeling of powerlessness and helplessness that people have in the face of reality. They have no real control over events or their own lives. Something is controlling them. The closest they ever get is the television set. [...] Somehow the Lords are a Romantic race of people who have found a way to control their environment and their own lives. They're somehow different from other people. (Hopkins 258)

As he wanted to learn how far he could go, as he tested the limits of knowing, he ended up in self-destruction. Hopkins says, "Whether he overdosed on something,

had a heart attack caused by a blood clot or respiratory failure, or merely drank himself to death [...] the bottom line still read 'suicide'. One way or another, he was dead of self-abuse" (21).

According to Butler, "the notion of the poet as rebel" could bring together, "along with the flamboyant Byronic model," something else, such as "the sensitive individual who rejected worldliness, and even, literally, this vulgar material world for a better. It is interesting to see how very soon Shelley's death was being interpreted as willed" (3). Jim Morrison brought both of these personalities together.

On the one hand, he was a Byronic hero: "the image of the artist as a mysterious, mocking, perhaps sinful, and certainly outcast figure"(McConnell xi). Bangs uses the phrase "onetime atropine eyed Byronic S&M Lizard King" for Jim Morrison (36). Byron, who left England in 1816 with his "Satanic, guilt-ridden creations," according to Butler, "played a larger part than any other single artist in shaping the stereotype soon recognized throughout Europe, the passionate, rebellious Romantic Poet" (3). Eventually the boundary between Lord Byron, himself and the literary heroes that he created such as Childe Harold or Manfred would vanish and the identity of the rebellious Romantic poet would be replaced with the persona of the Byronic hero. Jim Morrison reflected a dark image like the Byronic Hero. "His lyric themes included insanity, imprisonment, abortion, infanticide, incest and murder. He sang of snakes and drowning horses in a time when other performers sang about wearing flowers in your hair" (Hopkins 12). Fowlie lists Jim Morrison among the artists of all times who could interpret the language of darkness to their readers, "artists who know hell and speak of it familiarly: Dante, Dostoevsky, Blake, Rimbaud, Henry Miller, and Jim Morrison" (39).

He assumed the image of the Byronic hero: “sexy, but mysterious and threatening” (Hopkins 10). In a Byronic manner Morrison tried to get as much as he could from sexual love, making love to countless women in L.A. Salli Stevenson, in the introduction to her interview with Morrison for *Circus* magazine, published in December 1970 and January 1971, described him as “Demonic Jim Morrison, the American sexist devil of the late sixties” (Hopkins 240).

If we use Butler’s categorization here, Morrison was at once the flamboyant Byronic model as well as the sensitive individual. Morrison reflected the Romantic artist’s perception, struggle and dilemma in Butler’s sense:

His portrayal of the world of historical necessity is grim and disenchanted. In the long run men may achieve a juster society, but in the short run man—the poet himself—has to face a life of pain and difficulty, and moreover has to face death without the comforts of religion. The English post-war writers—Shelley, Keats, the ambivalent Scott—reject any fantasy-world as immature and preach acceptance of reality, but do so in a mood of grim stoicism. (127)

Although Jim Morrison used a lot of dope, he did not hide away in a surreal fantasy world, he did not ignore the reality. In the poetry that he wrote and in his song lyrics he reflected a struggle with reality, inside of reality. In the song “The Unknown Soldier” from the 1968 album *Waiting for the Sun*, he sang for all those lives wasted in the Vietnam War: “make a grave for the unknown soldier, nestled in your hollow shoulder, the unknown soldier.” Together with his dark perception and lack of hope, his faith in revolt was strong. “I’ve always been attracted to ideas that were about revolt against authority. I like ideas about the breaking away or over-throwing of established order. I am interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos” (qtd. in

Hopkins 74). According to Fowlie, Harvey Perr from the *Los Angeles Free Press* spoke “of Jim as an authentic poet in the Walt Whitman tradition in American poetry” (88).

As Morrison became a Romantic hero, he became a hero and an anti-hero at the same time. As noted earlier, the Romantic hero was not a leader that people could follow. A Romantic hero is heroic in his strength and his handling loneliness, being on his own; however, he is not heroic in the older sense of being a leader for people to follow. Hopkins calls attention to the incident where Morrison particularly pointed out that the lyrics for the song “Tell all the People” from the 1969 album *Soft Parade* did not belong to him but to the band’s guitarist Robbie Krieger, because he thought “it made him sound like he wanted people to follow him” (qtd. in Hopkins 120). Hopkins notes, “Jim had decided early in life not to trust leaders and a leader is the last thing he wanted to be” (120). He once said that “when you make your peace with authority, you become an authority” (qtd. in Hopkins 120).

Morrison, in a Romantic manner, was a hero and a critique of heroism at the same time. One can even argue that at times he was parodying heroism. According to Bangs, he “realized the implicit absurdity of the rock’n’roll bete-noire badass pose and parodies, deglamorized it” (Bangs 172). This was the anti-heroic side of Jim Morrison. Furthermore, in an interview with Richard Goldstein from *Village Voice*, when the interviewer associated him with the shaman, he simply said: “I don’t think the shaman, from what I’ve read, is really too interested in defining his role in society, he’s just more interested in pursuing his own fantasies” (qtd. in Hopkins 121). So, in his calling himself the Lizard King it is possible to see him pursuing his own fantasies in a heroic manner, and on the other hand parodying the heroic in an anti-heroic manner.

His poetic nature was a determinant in his artistic creativity from the very beginning, not only in what he wrote but also in his artistic persona. Fowlie characterizes Rimbaud as “the man who walked from city to city, from country to country, in search of an absolute or a happiness which he never found.” The phrase that Mallarme used for Rimbaud, “ce passant considerable” (this notable passer by), according to Fowlie, “might well be applied to Jim Morrison, a latter-day admirer of Rimbaud, who set off his poetic quest in the 1960s and who discovered that his own happiness was as elusive as Rimbaud’s” (34). As for all the Romantics, for Rimbaud and Morrison to be happy was not a matter of having a good life. Theirs was an endless search for an absolute, in a world where none any longer existed. Jim Morrison was like the popular culture image if not the reincarnation of the Russian Romantic Mikhail Lermontov, who also died at the age of twenty-seven, with an invited death in a fatal duel. What Pechorin, the hero of Lermontov’s novel *A Hero of Our Time*, accepted by many as the literary persona of Lermontov, says in his diary may well have been uttered by Jim Morrison:

And, perhaps tomorrow, I shall die! ... And there will not remain, on earth, a single creature that would have understood me completely. Some deem me worse, others better than I actually am. Some will say he was a good fellow; others will say he was a scoundrel. Both this and that will be false. After this, is it worth the trouble to live? And yet one lives—out of curiosity. One keeps expecting something new... Absurd and vexatious! (131)

There are many young people who believe that Jim Morrison is actually still alive. In the belief that he is still alive, another aspect of Jim Morrison’s heroic qualification appears. Hopkins adapts Edgar Morin’s ideas about James Dean to

Morrison: “The refusal to believe in the hero’s death. The death of every superman (good or evil) has been doubted and disbelieved, because the faithful were never able to believe these heroic figures were entirely mortal” (qtd. in Hopkins 12). “So it was for Jim Morrison” (Hopkins 12). Although there are many who believe that he is not dead, for those who believe that he is dead, in his death, in the self-destructive nature of it, there was something very heroic. “He was something of a blues singer, something of a crooner, something of a shaman. Twenty years later, he is still that figure for a new generation of young people. After his death, he appears even stronger as a rebel figure with a cause. Like Rimbaud, he became a legend who was larger than life” (Fowlie 99).

A similarity can be seen between the tragic ends of Jim Morrison and the Romantic and utopian 1960s generation. Both in Jim Morrison and the Romantic utopianists of the sixties we see a challenging search for the truth, at the expense of everything else. This Romantic quest is taken at the expense of self-destruction or a feeling of life’s emptiness. Marshall Berman, a member of that generation comments, “It was a culture of romantic expressiveness, of extravagant rebellion, of radical will; it defied all limitations, social, aesthetic, moral, and prided itself on its readiness to take great risks for the sake of deeper truth and more life” (43). The courage of this heroism leads, in Thorslev’s expression, to “the tragedy of epistemology” as this is a kind of heroism manifested through the getting and using of knowledge. This knowledge leads to tragedy in the sense that is reflected in the “Faustian idea that ‘Sorrow is Knowledge’” (Thorslev 167). Tragedy was inescapable since the world was not a world that someone with a perspective enlarged by knowledge could handle living in: instead this knowledge would lead to Romantic *Weltschmerz*, world-weariness, “the psychic state which ensues when there is a sharp contrast between a

man's ideals and his material environment" (Rose qtd. in Thorslev). "We found ourselves lit up with radical visions and ideas, but powerless to 'change external things,' to light up the world in which we had to live. The more our culture inspired us, the more our society dispirited us" (43). Dispirited as he was, Jim Morrison foreshadowed the tragic end both of himself and of his generation, a short while earlier than his death in a Paris bath-tub, when he sang his song *The End*:¹¹

This is the end
 Beautiful friend
 This is the end
 My only friend, the end
 It hurts to set you free
 But you'll never follow me
 The end of laughter and soft lies
 The end of nights we tried to die
 This is the end.

According to Berman, "The stars—Hendrix, Joplin, Jim Morrison—those whom the gods love have always died young" (Berman 37). Jim Morrison, like Rimbaud or Lermontov, died young. Jim Morrison as a Romantic hero assumed the characteristics of both the hero and the anti-hero. In his persona he took on the Romantic heroism of the outsider artist, of the artist as a rebel.

Jim Morrison represented the process of heroism becoming anti-heroism, as it appeared in the Romantic hero; he became a Romantic figure, both a hero and an anti-hero. Kurt Cobain emerged as a post-punk anti-hero who contrasted with Jim Morrison—a glamorous, powerful figure. But unlike the usual anti-Romantic, post-

¹¹ From the first album of The Doors dated 1967, which carried the name of the band.

punk anti-hero, Kurt Cobain bare some Romantic characteristics. In this sense, he seems similar to Morrison in some ways. This situation made them, on the one hand, appear to have come from the same vein, as affirmations of each other, and, on the other hand, as negations of each other: Paradoxically similar to and different from each other simultaneously.

3. NO MORE HEROES: KURT COBAIN AS THE ANTI-HERO OF GENERATION X

“I, I will be king

And you, you will be queen

Though nothing will drive them away

We can beat them, just for one day

We can be heroes, just for one day”

(David Bowie song)

If Jim Morrison emerged at a time of a Romantic revival, he responded to the need for a neo-Romantic hero. Kurt Cobain emerged in the post-punk era when there was distrust of the ideals of the '68 generation and its Romantic sense of heroism. Thus Kurt Cobain fit the anti-heroic demand of the times. He became an icon for Generation X while representing the characteristics of an anti-rock-star, an anti-hero.

According to Felder and Kellner, “American music subculture whose members identify with, and are the primary consumers of, the style of rock called grunge or alternative rock” are called “‘Generation X’ or ‘Slackers’” (qtd. in Epstein 18). “‘Slackers,’ the twenty-something members of ‘Generation X’,” were “born between 1964 and 1979” as the children of “baby-boomers the young adults of the sixties and early seventies.” Slackers “do not share their ideals” because they “think of themselves as being realistic and, conversely, view their parents’ generation’s activities in the sixties as having been highly unrealistic” (Howe and Strauss qtd. in Epstein 19). Grunge-style rock emerged through alternative rock. As “a ‘do it yourself’ attitude more clearly represents alternative music’s ideology regarding musicianship,” (Epstein 20) which is very reflective of Punk, grunge emerged as “a

direct offshoot of the punk rock ethic which radically changed rock music from the late 1970s onward” (Epstein 20).

Cobain was not a punk anti-hero like Sid Vicious or Johnny Rotten; he carried some sense of Romanticism that punk reacted against. After being “shut out by the media in the late seventies,” Punk “went deep underground through various permutations” such as “Hardcore, Straight Edge, then Grunge” and Kurt Cobain’s formula of Grunge was an “equation as punk+Beatles+Black Sabbath” (Savage 622). Cobain adopted the anti-star rhetoric of punk. The generation Cobain spoke for was in favor of punk, and he combined punk with his personal Romanticism, which derived mostly from his love for the Beatles and his admiration of John Lennon. Bringing the roughness of punk and Romanticism of the Beatles together in his music and in his persona, Cobain inevitably emerged as a confusing figure. Some found in him reflections of a modern popular culture troubadour, as Menocal had observed in Morrison’s identity. On the other hand, he never hesitated to shock his audience in the harsh manner of punk.

Kurt Cobain, whose biographer Cross calls “a Romantic at heart” (55) was, like Jim Morrison, into poetry, although he never became a poet. He had a similar lust for life as Morrison, which could at times be very destructive. He was into drugs like Jim Morrison, although he always tried to hide this. His death was even more destructive than Morrison’s, as it is more or less certain that he committed suicide. Both Morrison and Cobain reflected the Romantic’s isolated loneliness as they both carried on a Romantic revolt against authority. This made them heroes and anti-heroes simultaneously.

Jim Morrison, being an icon of the neo-Romantic 1968s, reflected the characteristics of a Romantic hero, thus assuming both heroic and anti-heroic

identities. Kurt Cobain emerged as an icon of the post-punk 1990s, reflecting the anti-Romantic, anti-heroic perceptions of the times. In his anti-heroism Cobain was a negation of Morrison's heroism as represented by Morrison's glamour and power over his audience. On the other hand, the Romantic characteristics of Kurt Cobain, unlike those of a typical anti-Romantic, post-punk anti-hero, indicated a parallelism with Morrison. The differences and similarities between these two figures can be traced back to the times that they lived in and the expectations of the youth that they represented.

3.1. "I'm a Loser, Baby, So Why Don't You Kill Me?"

As noted in the earlier chapters, from 19th century Romanticism to 20th century modernism the concepts of heroism changed dramatically. The Romantic hero who embodied the characteristics of the hero as well as the anti-hero gave way to the emergence of anti-heroic figures in literature. The characters who were paralyzed in existential anxiety, such as those of Sartre and Camus, mark a very important dynamic of the transition from the Romantic hero to the modern anti-hero. In Romantic times, the Romantic hero, with his complete disharmony with society, with all his conflicts, and with his personal rebellion, was a figure who was above society. This underlined the heroic dimension as well as the anti-heroic dimension. He was anti-heroic because he flouted society's morals, as Faust did not happen to be a good model for Gretchen to follow. On the other hand, his characteristics as a Romantic hero made him a progressive figure who saw beyond things, who saw what the rest of the society cannot see; thus with all his difference he was still a more progressive and courageous figure than the rest of the society. As the 19th century saw the beginning of the critique of modernity, these Romantic heroes, despite their melancholy, reflected a belief in the possibility of a different, alternative way of being than that imposed upon

them by the modern capitalist society. On the other hand, when we come to the 20th century, two world wars demolished any faith in a better world, or in an alternative way of being. At such a time of disappointment and the final victory of alienation, figures in a battle against alienation, unlike the Romantic heroes who were above society, fell outside of society. In Dostoevsky's *Underground Man's* desperate hatred of everyone around him, in Sartre's *Nausea's* protagonist's endless discomfort, in Camus' stranger's insensitivity there are all the marks of this outsider identity.

In the process from the neo-Romantic sixties to the post-punk nineties we see a similar transition. The neo-Romantic hippies were obviously not on the same wavelength as the rest of society. In their self-confidence there was the belief that they were going after the truth when the rest of the society preferred to believe in a lie. Thus their difference from society put the neo-Romantic hippies above society. On the other hand, in the punk and post-punk eras, the disappointment of the '68 generation who could not come near to realizing their utopian dream, the overwhelmingly depressive atmosphere of the neo-conservative eighties illustrated a pessimistic picture for those who still believed in an authentic way of self-realization and a struggle against alienation. Seeing only disappointment in the earlier examples of their struggle, and not having any utopia to believe in, these people fell through society's cracks and became outsiders. Youth of the post-punk era who were born on the ashes of the neo-Romantic optimism of the hippies, many of whom died as junkies, were parallel to the outsider characters of the anti-heroes of 20th century literature: the existential anti-heroes of Camus and Sartre in their isolated, neurotic existence.

Loser, a famous song of the 1990s written by Beck, an important figure of the '90s alternative rock explosion, went: "He hung himself with a guitar string/ [...] / My

time is a piece of wax/ Fallin' on a termite who's chokin' on the splinters/ Soy un perdedor¹²/ I'm a loser baby so why don't you kill me?" This 1994 song became an anthem for the Slackers in the 1990s after Kurt Cobain's death. It was released in the same year as Cobain's suicide; without any direct reference to Cobain's death, it fit the tenor of the times well when the spokesperson of the loser youth committed suicide. These losers had little or no ambitions for the future. Their lives were in ruins or about to turn into ruins because they had no belief, no hope for the future, no joy, and they often turned drugs as a result. In the song "Milk It" from the 1993 album *In Utero*, Cobain sang, "Look on the bright side/ there is suicide." To understand the reasons why he could not become a strong anti-hero, why, like the generation he represented, he carried a morbid perspective on life, and why he did not have any hopes for the future, we have to look at the cultural dynamics and the social conditions of the times in which this generation lived.

3.2. "Never Trust a Hippie"

The utopian vision of the '68 generation ended in disappointment as the radical youth and the hippies failed to beat the establishment. The sixties were a time of dreams and illusions, and as youth lost the battle, the seventies became years of disillusion. *The End* in The Doors' song came all of a sudden, and as the communes closed one by one some hippies became drug addicts, some went mad, some got meaningless jobs and eventually sold out their values. A small number of them could handle living a life that did not contradict the values that they believed in, and a few of them carried on as radicals, thus becoming marginalized completely.

¹² The Spanish lyric in the song's chorus, "Soy un perdedor," means "I am a loser."

The first half of the 70s passed numbly until 1976, when the first punk band The Sex Pistols appeared. “There were specific problems in the late 70s: the start of family break-up; the collapse of the 60s hippie dream; hard drug usage following patterns of supply; a new, harsh political and social environment” (Savage xiv). Thus, in the second half of the 70s punk, “a subculture best characterized as being part youth rebellion, part artistic statement,” having “its high point from 1976 to 1979, and [...] most visible in Britain and America” (Sabin 2), responded to the need for youth of a new, radical worldview.

Like most youth movements, punk had its main means of expression in its music, “and specifically in the disaffected rock and roll bands like the Sex Pistols and the Clash” (Sabin 2). Punk subculture, along with a harsh reaction against the establishment and values of the bourgeois society, included a criticism of the hippie subculture as well. Punk was a short movement, but its effects on the popular culture that emerged after it dissolved has been huge. Particularly in the first half of the 90s, the grunge subculture reflected many characteristics of punk. Grunge has been identified with the Seattle sound and the Seattle band Nirvana, with its singer Kurt Cobain. He became an icon of his age.

It is important to note that punks were not the children of the hippies; however, with approximately ten years of difference in age they could formulate a criticism of them. Generation X emerged as the children of the 1968 generation, and in their criticism of their parents they made use of punk rhetoric. Grunge was the expression of the generation gap between the '68 generation and their children (Howe and Strauss qtd. in Epstein 19). In Kurt Cobain's grunge attitude an antipathy for hippies is visible, as he wrote in his diary: “I have no desire to do an interview with Rolling Stone. We couldn't benefit from it because the average Rolling Stone reader

is a middle aged ex hippie-turned hippiecritic who embraces the past as ‘the glory days’ and has a kinder, gentler, more adult approach towards liberal conservatism” (269).

Sabin notes that “philosophically” punk “had no ‘set agenda’ like the hippie movement that preceded it, but nevertheless stood for identifiable attitudes, among them: an emphasis on negationism [...] and a belief in spontaneity and ‘doing it yourself’” (2). Punk carried on the radical political view of the 68-generation, but it did not have utopian dreams as they did. Lawley lists the “thematic concerns” of punk as “the rejection of hippy values, the politics of Anarchy, an anti-authoritarian thrust” (100). The icons of punk reflected the negation of hippie values, such as the Romantic belief in saviors and heroes. In the heroic/anti-heroic statuses of Morrison and Cobain the contrariety of the two movements is visible. Jim Morrison belonged to a generation who believed in a utopian society and could sing “We want the world and we want it now,” whereas Kurt Cobain belonged to a generation who did not have a vision of utopia or any optimism about the future for themselves or for the world. He sang, “Teenage angst has paid off well, now I’m bored and old” when he was only in his twenties. He was an icon of a generation who were born on the ashes of the hopes of the 68 generation.

Although punk and hippie subcultures shared the common ground of radical opposition to the capitalist system, punk’s themes were distinct from the earlier hippie themes, as its rhetoric did not depend on the *all you need is love* philosophy of the flower power movement. Punk was the opposite of that; angry and rough, it was an aggressive revolt. “Unlike the loose-limbed, hippie 60s, punk celebrated the rigours of restriction, constriction and sado-masochistic denial” (O’Brien 189). In contrast to the peaceful manner of the hippies, punks were frustrated with their society, and they

wanted to frustrate society as well. In a similar vein as the hippies, punks believed that they were supposed to transform themselves in order to transform the system: “The 60s rhetoric of the ‘The Revolution’ and punk’s rallying call of ‘Anarchy’ are not so far apart. Hippy hedonism, expressed in the slogan ‘Sex’n’drugs’n’rock’n’roll’, can be seen in punk too” (Lawley 101). Despite this common ground, in contrast to the hippie philosophy punk was based on “anti-hippy politics (which were perceived as including a belief in utopian revolution, achieved if possible by pacifist means)” (Sabin 4).

Since punks had the slogan “Never trust a hippie,” they did not trust hippies’ ideals either. Hippies acted like they could change the world, and they projected this heroism onto icons like Jim Morrison. On the other hand, in 1977, we hear from the punk band The Stranglers the song: “No More Heroes,” from the album with the same name, which goes: “Whatever happened to all the heroes? / [...] No more heroes anymore.” Punks did not believe in heroes.

Punk’s musical attitude was a *do it yourself* philosophy. A completely different form of rock music, punk did not sound like traditional rock’n’roll or progressive rock of the sixties. Punk was against the idea of big bands and their spectacle on the stage. The Rolling Stones concert at Altamont represented what the soul of rock lost in the sixties. Punk tried to rejuvenate rock. This attitude resulted in the anti-heroic position of punk icons, in contrast to the heroic status of the rock icons of the super bands of the ’68 generation.

The anti-heroic identity of the punk musician implied that anyone could be a punk musician, that to be a punk musician meant being an anti-rock star, thus an anti-hero. Although not as sharply as in original punk, this attitude influenced the post-punk movements, such as grunge, as well.

3.3. Against the Rock Hero and the On-Stage Spectacle

Santiago-Lucerna asserts that “Punk never actually died. The best evidence to support this assertion is the current popularity of alternative rock, which follows the same premises as punk rock” (192). He adds, “The roots of the present ‘alternative rock’ movement lie mostly in punk rock” (190), and “alternative rock, like its predecessor, punk music, continues the ideological critique the latter established within music in the late seventies” (Santiago-Lucerna 193).

Punk made a criticism of the hippie culture in which the rock bands of the times had gained an enormous power and image and the gap that had emerged between the musicians and the audience. Anderson explains this phenomenon with the following analysis:

Commercialization had massacred the tribes, for at Altamont the magic between the hip community and musicians had evaporated. The people no longer were the show; they simply were the audience, and that agonized many. The younger generation was acting like the older one. (281)

In punk’s radical musical attitude lay the agony that hip had become commercial, and so the music of the hippies. It turned into a big, commercialized spectacle. Punk reacted against this idea of spectacle. Punk despised the spectacular image of rock musicians on stage and the spectacular atmosphere of the rock show, such as appeared in the concerts of Pink Floyd. Blurring the gap between music and noise “through manifestos like ‘we make noise ‘cos it’s our choice’ and ‘we’re into chaos,’ punk rockers tried to establish a distance between themselves and rock and roll as an institution. Their ultimate goal was to regain the power and rawness that rock promised in its beginnings” (Santiago-Lucerna 192). With its main motto against the

music industry, with the musical creativity of the independent record labels, punk demolished the gap that appeared between the rock musician and the audience; thus it was in its very nature against the idea of the musician as the hero and the audience as the worshipper of the hero.

In the sixties' rock culture, big bands, super bands such as Beatles, Pink Floyd, and The Rolling Stones, with audiences of thousands, reflected the presence of the rock star on stage as the hero. Punk sharply criticized this concept of the rock band as super band and the rock singer as a super individual or a hero, and instead advanced the idea of the small band playing to a small number of people. The members of these small bands looked like standard punk youth with no extra glamour and no heroic image.

The contrariety between Jim Morrison's and Kurt Cobain's images in terms of glamour corresponded with this fundamental contrariety between hippie culture and punk culture in terms of the heroic existence of the rock star. Although Kurt Cobain's band Nirvana played to tens thousands of people, they displayed a punk attitude on stage.

Punk reacted against the idea of the big bands, against the inflated egos of the big rock stars. To be a punk musician meant being the opposite of the members of the big bands of the sixties who played in front of tens of thousands, appearing like Gods. Punk bands and the crowd in the gig would spit at each other, or the band might play out of tune. It did not matter; in fact this was part of the deal. The lyrics were harsh and disturbing and so was the music. Frith, in his article *Formalism, Realism, and Leisure: The Case of Punk* underscores that; "punk texts were clearly felt to challenge (by ridicule) pop and rock conventions of romance, beauty and ease: punk image (the safety pin) and sound (particularly of voices) had a shock effect" (Frith 169).

Inevitably, punk reacted against the entire heroic ideal of stardom. Thus, singers in the punk bands, instead of being heroes, were guys whom you could spit at and who would spit back at you, which really would happen in many punk concerts as part of the ritual. The members, even the front men of the best acclaimed punk bands, did not look or act other than as an ordinary misfit, an outsider, a drug addict, in other words, a loser. “Since heroes were frauds and poverty riches, both murderers and deformity were privileged: had Myra Hindley or the Hunchback of Notre-Dame entered the Roxy the crowd would have boosted them onto the stage” (Marcus 68). Punk icons’ outfits were not at all like those of stars. Punk’s heroes were anti-heroes.

Grunge was based on the punk legacy, thus it reflected punk’s anti-heroism. This point is crucial in understanding Kurt Cobain’s anti-heroic status as the singer of the most popular grunge band Nirvana. Savage defines Nirvana as “in the 90s, the nearest US equivalent to the Sex Pistols” (xvi). According to Santiago-Lucerna, “most of (the alternative rock) groups [...] place a lot of emphasis on the unskillfulness of the musicians and the display of raw power within their performances” (190). Thus an important characteristic of grunge, like its predecessor punk, was an anti-heroic approach to rock stars. “Grunge music is closely related to both heavy metal and alternative music [...] Like heavy metal, grunge is a guitar-based music that relies on relatively simple song structure, extreme volume, and a heavily distorted sound” (Weinstein, Walser, Friesen and Epstein qtd. in Epstein 19). “Unlike heavy metal, and despite its reliance on guitar for its overall presentation, grunge rock has no guitar heroes” (Epstein 19). In his journal Kurt Cobain wrote: “Punk rock is freedom. Expression and right to express is vital. Anyone can be artistic” (121). To be a rock musician did not mean to be a hero in punk and thus in the grunge attitude. In the

statement that Nirvana's member Krist Novoselic read at Cobain's funeral, the musician's anti-heroic image is obvious:

Kurt had an ethic toward his fans that was rooted in the Punk-rock way of thinking: no band is special, no player royalty. If you've got a guitar and a lot of soul, just bang something out and mean it. You're the superstar, plugged into tones and rhythms that are uniquely and universally human; music. (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith 211)

Kurt Cobain was not a hero. He "was a troubled person. He sang about his experience and it showed kids that even he [...] had the same problems" (personal interview with Tomie O'Neil). Kurt Cobain appeared in front of his audience as one of the losers of Generation X.

Courtney Love in an interview with Kurt Loder on MTV said that Cobain "had no rock star ego" (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith 159). She added that he would carry his own suitcase "because everything had to be punk" (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith 160). According to Cross, "there had never quite been a rock star like Kurt Cobain. He was more an anti-star than a celebrity, refusing to take a limo to NBC and bringing a thrift-store sensibility to everything he did" (2).

Kurt Cobain's public image was very different than Jim Morrison's. On stage, in the interviews, and in his photos he did not look powerfully proud like Morrison. In his most famous photo we see him with a hand-knitted jersey on, sitting down at the bottom of a wall, bursting into tears. On the other hand, we see Jim Morrison looking like a Greek statue in all of his photos; we cannot even imagine him crying desperately, especially not in a photo. We see Jim Morrison in leather trousers and fancy clothes while Kurt Cobain reflected the *low-profile* of the punk musicians:

The grunge image, so wonderfully exploited by Cobain [...] as a strong statement against the glam aesthetic of eighties heavy metal and the slick elegance of techno-pop. A return to some of the fashion objects of other eras confirms their image, as an attempt to emphasize their ideological stance: polyester from the seventies, the traditional sixties jeans, T-shirts, sneakers etc. The ways (these attributes) are used as part of the construction of a regime or truth proper to alternative rock recalls the same uses punk gave to them. (Santiago-Lucerna 191)

Cobain's visual image supported his well-constructed philosophy of the outsider and anti-heroic inspired by punk. Even when he won, he was a loser. When he became an international rock icon, he was struggling to hide his heroin habit, and fighting to get back the rights to be the father of his own child. Most of the millions of dollars that he made went to rehabilitation centers and lawyers. Kurt Cobain assumed the image of a loser until his suicide.

Fig. I. Jim Morrison. (Photograph taken from *The Lizard King: The Essential Jim Morrison*, by Jerry Hopkins.)

Fig. II. Kurt Cobain. (Photograph taken from Kurt Cobain Tribute, ed. Hasan Uygun.)

His suicide became the symbol of his identity as a loser. He had wounds in his soul that he could not heal. Until his parents divorced, he had a happy childhood and after that he became a loser. He kept traveling between the houses of his parents, relatives and friends, never able to settle down. His tragedy marked the tragedy of the unhappy children of the 68 generation, who spent their lives witnessing the disappointment and conflict of their parents, usually in broken families:

... Just as the title of the breakthrough *Nevermind* echoed *Never Mind the Bollocks*, so Nirvana- with their feral rage and and keening hurt—were seen as more than a rock group: harbingers of family break-up, teen abjection and economic meltdown. Kurt Cobain's suicide in April 1994 was in part—if we are to accept his final note—an ultimate enactment of the Punk Loser script (Savage 622).

Eventually, Kurt Cobain found a self-medication in drugs. He tried to get over the emotional and physical pains—as he had serious problems with his stomach that gave him great pain—through drugs. Drug dependence could only ensure the temporary survival of a loser.

An important characteristic of Kurt Cobain was his clash with the world around him. Generation X was apolitical. Seeing the way that their parents had sold out their values and adapted to the establishment, they did not have any ideals or a social consciousness. They saw their parents as opportunists. This was a generation born in the 1980s, the peak time of neo-conservatism, with Reagan in the U.S. and Thatcher in Britain. This youth's teenage years corresponded with the decline of the left all over the world.

Before his death by a self-inflicted shotgun blast at age 27, Kurt Cobain had become the publicly unwilling spokesperson for his

generation [...] His music was said to speak to a generation who are without hope and have no illusions about a brighter future. Slackers are the children of suburbia, raised on McDonalds, shopping malls, and MTV. (Howe and Strauss qtd. in Epstein 19)

Cobain, with his social conscience, translated the feelings of the youth who did not have the language to express themselves but remained numb in their apolitical despair. In the liner notes of Nirvana's *Incesticide* album he wrote: "If any of you in any way hate homosexuals, people of different color, or women, please do this favor for us—leave us the fuck alone! Don't come to our shows and don't buy our records" (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith 155). His strong anti-macho rhetoric was reflective of the punk legacy as punk "reacted against, yet at the same time re-defined 60s feminism, resurfaced in the 90s with grunge and Riot Grrl" (O'Brien 197-198). Reynolds and Press describe a bizarre moment of the band's public appearance: "When the band wore dresses in the video for 'In Bloom', Nirvana weren't just deflating/mocking grunge's hard rock masculinity, they were bringing out the original meaning of punk: a feminised, sexually passive boy" (97). Kurt Cobain's anti-heroic image was largely based on his anti-macho and even at times anti-male references.

Kurt Cobain's respect for women was visible in his personal life as well; he would say that girls "should start bands. There aren't enough girl musicians" (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith 156). He did not like the idea of sleeping with groupies either for himself or for the members of his band. After he married with musician Courtney Love and had a child he said: "I wanted a partner. I wanted security. I wanted a family. Everything else is totally irrelevant" (qtd. in 156). These words do not reflect a punk attitude, which opposes family bonds. This is one of the things that make Kurt

Cobain an exceptional post-punk figure. These words also imply an anti-heroic attitude because he does not try to appear to be a heroic, strong man on his own, content with being only himself. Instead, he makes it very clear that he needs psychological security, a security that comes from a woman. The differences of attitude of Cobain and Morrison about women and about male identity underline another fundamental contrariety between these figures in terms of the heroic and anti-heroic.

Jim Morrison belonged to a masculine tradition in rock culture. According to Chambers, “deeply endemic to the hippy and counter-culture life-styles had been a particular mode of male romanticism. It drew upon a masculine iconography of white rebellious Americana—Kerouac and Dylan, James Dean and Jim Morrison” (Chambers 122). Chambers puts Morrison into the “pantheon of male rock romantics (Keith Richards, Brian Jones, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, Van Morrison)” (248). Although “it was the 60s and early 70s counterculture movement [...] that opened up pathways for punk feminism” (O’Brien 187), Jim Morrison reflected a macho image on the stage and in his life-style. He was a regular at topless bars, and he never expressed a devotion to his partner Pam the way Cobain did to his wife. The anti-macho rhetoric in Kurt Cobain’s personality was more of a fundamental constructing element than it was for any other grunge cultural figure. This anti-macho characteristic added to Cobain’s anti-heroic image, whereas Morrison’s macho expressiveness motivated his heroic aura. Cobain, in accordance with his anti-heroic, anti masculine manner once said: “I’m already known as a crybaby whiner” (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith 170).

Kurt Cobain’s suicide note was the best indicator of his Romantic identity. His words underscored his love for humanity, which in a very Romantic manner became

destructive: “I can’t fool you, any of you... but I still can’t get over the frustration, the guilt, and the empathy I have for everyone. There’s good in all of us and I simply love people too much. So much that it makes me feel too fucking sad” (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith 212). He was not strong enough to fight in a heroic way, so he chose to leave the battle ground in an anti-heroic way. As he left, he left behind a Romantic apology, an anti-heroic farewell:

What else could I be

All apologies

What else could I write

I don't wanna fight

What else could I say

All my words are gray

What else could I be

All apologies.¹³

Kurt Cobain was a loser before he became a rock icon, and he stayed a loser until his suicide. He appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine after his suicide, and while he was alive the band graced the cover of *Rolling Stone* many times. While he was the lead singer of a very famous band, he defined himself in his journal as “a loser who shoots up in the back stage area just seconds before a performance” (205). In an interview with Cross, he once said, “We were the chosen rejects. We chose not to be a part of the popular crowd. [...] I would rather hang out with the people who didn’t get picked for the baseball team, you know, who smoke cigarettes and listen to

¹³ “All Apologies” from the album *In Utero* which was released in 1993.

rock music” (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith v). Kurt Cobain was a loser when the spokesperson-of-a-generation identity was loaded onto his shoulders.

According to Abayhan, when Cobain was saying that he was not the spokesperson for anyone but was as confused as anyone else, his generation identified themselves with him as a confused rock star, and he appeared in front of the public as an anti-rock star, in harmony with the grunge mentality (148). Kurt Cobain adopted the anti-rock star image, but he did not pull back from getting his albums released from major record companies, which inevitably brought him international fame and the identity of a celebrity. Thus, one of the fundamental conflicts of Kurt Cobain’s life stemmed from the combination of his loser and rock icon personae. St. Thomas and Smith underscore the “never-ending and unpredictable contradiction of Kurt Cobain,” pointing out his “unique duality—I don’t really want to be a rock star, I’m really glad I am a rock star” (5). Deniz defines Cobain as “a hero who was being divided, who was collapsing as he was turning into a role-model” (124). Kurt Cobain did not want to be a rock icon but to be who he was before he became a rock-star; however, the other half of his identity could not escape from its status as a rock icon. According to Cantor, “If one somehow gets one’s wish and becomes the desired Other, the positions of superiority and inferiority are reversed and one finds oneself jealous of one’s original self” (98-99). Cobain’s dilemma could have been that sort of jealousy of his earlier self. His dilemma resulted in an endless feeling of guilt. He felt guilty of becoming an international celebrity instead of remaining a cult musician who released his albums from independent record companies. He wrote in his diary, “I feel so incredibly guilty for abandoning my true comrades the ones who were into us a few years ago, the ones who are devoted” (191). Cobain never felt at ease with his status as a youth icon. In an interview he gave to Circus magazine in 1993, after Nirvana

had sold millions of albums, he said, “The only reason I would’ve deliberately put out a really aggressive, raw album would have been to piss people off, to get rid of half our audience and more” (qtd. in St. Thomas and Smith165).

Cobain’s attitude about being a rock star indicated his anti-heroic self-realization. As Jim Morrison had, Kurt Cobain refused to be a leader, a guide for his followers. Laing’s views on the singer’s heroic identity are helpful in analyzing the inevitability of the leader and heroic statuses that were loaded onto Cobain and Morrison:

A primary form of identification is with that which occupies the central point of a representation, the place of the *hero*¹⁴, where that term applies not just to a character but to a function which moves the ‘narrative’ (story or song) along and in doing so establishes itself as something more perfect than the listener him or herself. In the song, this position is most frequently occupied by the lead vocal, which as has already been remarked is conventionally mixed ‘to the front’ of a recording. (417)

As both Morrison and Cobain were lead vocalists of their bands, the youth who listened to them identified themselves with them rather than the rest of the band. No matter how much Cobain and Morrison rejected their status as guide, the spokesperson for their generation, it was impossible to escape the heroic identity. In their case, they pushed the limits of heroism to anti-heroism, by not being good examples, in the society’s perceptions, for the youth that they represented. For a majority of parents they became bad models for the youth they represented. Still, they were models, guides, spokespeople and, although anti, still heroes.

¹⁴ Italics belong to Laing.

In both Cobain's and Morrison's tragic ends there is a nihilistic heroism. According to Brombert, "freedom associated with a chosen death" is "an essentially heroic notion" (79). Kurt Cobain's suicide and Jim Morrison's self-destruction surpass heroism and reach to anti-heroism, as ending one's own life means that one can't play the game any more and accepts defeat. In a heroic way they used their freedom to die a chosen death while at the same time, in an anti-heroic way, they accepted a defeat by life with their self-appointed deaths.

The other dimension of anti-heroic behavior here is the "acceptance of failure" (Brombert 89) as it marks the end of Cobain. Cobain accepted failure in an unheroic way, but to accept his own self would have been heroic as "to accept oneself [...] requires the most vital of life forces. [...] only this self-acceptance can set one free" (89). In this sense Cobain and Morrison are quite different from each other. Jim Morrison did not have problems accepting himself as he was. When he had trouble with the police or with his band, he never appeared to pity himself or regret what he had done. On the other hand, Kurt Cobain was never at peace with himself. Once he wrote in his journal, "Everything I do is an overly conscious and neurotic attempt at trying to prove to others that I am at least more intelligent and cool than they think" (qtd. in Cross 155), and on another page of his journal he wrote, "I use bits and pieces of others [sic] personalities to form my own" (105). Dave Reed, father of a friend in whose place Kurt stayed for a while, said after Cobain's suicide, "He had the desperation, not the courage, to be himself. [...] for Kurt, it didn't matter that other people loved him; he simply didn't love himself enough" (qtd. in Cross 351). Once Cobain wrote in his journal: "I lack sincerity, these are not opinions. These are not words of wisdom, this is a disclaimer, a disclaimer for my lack of education, for my loss of inspiration, for my unnerving quest for affection" (109). Kurt Cobain never

trusted himself because of various weaknesses that he had suffered ever since his childhood, such as being skinny and uneducated. He wrote in his journal, “I am obsessed with the fact that I am skinny and stupid” (134). On the other hand, Jim Morrison always took himself and what he produced seriously. As a well educated man, he seemed to think what he wrote or what he produced was important and precious. This was an aspect of heroic identity, whereas Cobain’s self-distrust marked an anti-heroic image.

According to Uzeltuzenci, media, “this cruel machine” with which both Cobain and Morrison had trouble, “just like the system it symbolizes is based on consuming.” Thus the culture that we dwell in “is a culture made up of fake heroes” (169). Kurt Cobain was not a fake hero in the age of fake heroes; he was an anti-hero in an age when it was too late for heroes. Kurt Cobain’s portrait fits very well in the frame of the hero of our day, which is an age of anti-heroes. Segal makes a useful analysis of the hero of our day as he says:

The present-day hero is often lowly even within the human community—more the outsider than the insider, more the loser than the winner, more the villain than the savior. The contemporary hero is not a once great figure who has fallen but a figure who has never risen” (Segal 8).

Even when he was an international rock star, Kurt Cobain never rose in terms of self-acceptance and self-love. Cobain was an outsider all the way. Shortly before his suicide, he wrote to his diary, “God help, help me please. I want to be accepted. I have to be accepted. I’ll wear any kinds of clothes you want! I’m so tired of crying and dreaming, I’m soo soo alone” (qtd. in Cross 284).

For an anti-hero who was not strong enough to laugh in the face of all that is wrong, the end was tragic. For a too sensitive soul like Cobain, the only defense could be to ridicule all the bad things around him, and to base his criticism on that. Then he could carry on his life as an anti-hero, just as “old-fashioned heroic virtues like courage and duty give way to new ones like irony and detachment” (Segal 8). If he could have clung to the virtues of irony and detachment all the way, he would probably not have ended up in committing suicide. In fact, as a child and as a teenager he was able to do this; it was an aspect of his character that was establishing his identity as an anti-hero: “Being a small boy his method of surviving within the adolescent male culture was to joke his way out of conflicts and belittle any tormenters with his superior intellect” (Cross 29). As an adult, to a certain extent he survived by taking strength from these anti-heroic virtues of irony and detachment. He ridiculed the media and made fun of machismo. Charles R. Cross underscores this aspect of his personality in the introduction to the most respected Cobain biography:

As a rock star, he always seemed a misfit, but I cherished the way he combined adolescent humor with old man crustiness. Seeing him around Seattle—impossible to miss with his ridiculous cap with flaps over his ears—he was a character in an industry with few true characters. (x)

Unfortunately, Kurt Cobain could not survive by holding onto these values; instead, he relied on heroin, a branch that could not support anyone for very long. Kurt Cobain was not a strong anti-hero as much as he was a loser anti-hero; he lost against drugs, he lost against the media, and he lost against his genes that contained tendencies toward depression and suicide.

Kurt Cobain and Jim Morrison were similar to each other in the sense that they were both victims of fame and of having to bear the load on their shoulders of being the spokesperson of a generation. On the other hand, Jim Morrison, representing a youth which was above society in its beliefs and passions, appeared as a figure that pursued these ideals to the ultimate end and died a hero. Kurt Cobain represented the pessimism and the trapped situation of a hopeless youth who was doomed because of his opposition to capitalist ideology. Thus, Kurt Cobain's suicide marked a defeat and he died as an anti-heroic victim.

CONCLUSION

At Nirvana's 1993 Halloween show, "in a spontaneous gesture that recalled the days of Jim Morrison, Kurt whipped out his penis onstage" (St. Thomas and Smith 188). This gesture of Cobain, which looked like a reference to Morrison, intended or unintended, underlined the parallelism of the two figures. According to popular culture critic writer Murat Beşer, "both of them became heroes based on the model of the anti-hero and adapted the concept of heroism to modern times. They both attacked the established morals and sometimes reflected their hate through self-destruction" (personal interview). On the other hand, Beşer adds, "while Morrison was a product of an era when marginal youth were hopeful and their faces were turned to leftist politics, Cobain belonged to an era where the marginal cultures were reactionary and less dangerous" (personal interview). This may be the reason why Morrison received a jail sentence for what he had done on stage while nothing happened to Cobain. Morrison's act of aggression marked a dangerous heroic manner that challenged society's morals, whereas Cobain's was seen just as the tantrum of a spoiled child.

Cooper defines Cobain as "a gifted if obviously tormented man with high ideals, original ideas, and a beautifully erratic way for expressing himself" (qtd. in Santiago-Lucerna 190), and on this comment Santiago-Lucerna argues that Cooper's characterization of Cobain as "a gifted if obviously tormented man with high ideals, original ideas, and a beautifully erratic way of expressing himself" (qtd. in Santiago-Lucerna 190), "tend to reinstate in Cobain's name some of the characteristics that molded the image of the 'rock and roll hero' in its second golden age, the sixties. At the same time, they stress the characteristics that made Cobain a true troubadour" (Santiago-Lucerna 190). As was noted earlier, this resemblance to a troubadour was made by Menocal about Morrison. Illustrating the Romantic similarity between the

two figures, we might note that at Cobain's funeral his wife Courtney Love "read passages from the Book of Job and some of Kurt's favorite poems from Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations*" (St. Thomas and Smith 211). As noted earlier, Rimbaud was Jim Morrison's favorite poet as well. The line that binds Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain here is, apparently, the Romantic notion of melancholia and infinite sadness: melancholia that is the very essence of the worldviews of these two figures and determined their lives; an infinite sadness essential to all their feelings.

Another important point regarding Santiago-Lucerna's comments on Cooper's words is the parallel rock'n'roll hero statuses of Kurt Cobain and Jim Morrison. Mert Emcan defines Cobain as "the last deity of rock'n'roll music that we have seen" and "a hero who died young like many of his predecessors, such as James Dean, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, and John Lennon (153). Cobain represented a different sense of heroism than Morrison, the anti-heroism of a loser identity. In 1996, in his song "Blew" from the album *From the Muddy Banks of Wishkah*, he sang: "If you wouldn't mind/ I would like to lose." His fans did not mind that he lost, because he was not a hero that they were expected to guide them to the utopian land behind the mountain. In this sense, a comparison and contrast between the two is interesting, because of the very contradiction that Cobain appeared as another ring in the chain of rock'n'roll heroes while he seemed apart from it in his anti-heroism and the loser mentality that he stood for.

The common ground for the Romantic hero and the anti-hero is that ultimately he is a victim. Since heroes who rescued the beautiful princesses from the flames of dragons no longer exist, modern heroism exists in the icons of popular culture. Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain were similar in that both became the victims of their own iconic status as heroes of popular culture because their fans expected from them an

identity beyond that of a human being. According to Kenne, “celebrities like Marilyn Monroe or Kurt Cobain” are “driven by their own shadow energy to sacrifice themselves to the system” (132):

The Shadow energy projected onto them by the public is too much of a burden for anyone to bear constantly, day in and day out, particularly by a psyche that has projected itself onto the public as a cultural icon and is continually threatened by the dark realities that lie at the root of the projection. (Kenne 132)

This heavy burden can be realized too late by these figures of envy, and when it is, there may not be any way back from the self-destruction that it creates. According to Estes:

Certain persons, such as film actors and actresses, statesmen, musicians, and other sociometric stars, both large and small, can easily be caught up in the psychological equivalent of the “sacrificial victim role,” especially if they are young and/or naïve, and have in some cases, grown too self-important without realizing it—until much later, or, in certain cases, until it is too late. (Estes 19)

Both Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain were worn out at an early age by the burden of their fame and the fanatic interest in their personal lives. “The evocative hero worship of rock’n’roll singers” (Estes 20) led them to a life with millions of admirers, but with a difficulty in knowing who their real friends were. Morrison’s loneliness resembled a Romantic sense of loneliness like that of Pechorin or Faust, being loved but not being able to respond with an equal love, as they never admired those who loved and admired them. Cobain’s loneliness resembled the loneliness of existential figures like

Camus' *Stranger*, or the Underground Man of Dostoevsky, the loneliness of a person who cannot accept the love given by others because he does not love himself enough.

According to Estes, "The 'stars' are chosen by the larger culture. They may be selected based on their unusual gifts, talents, or perhaps, by whatever seems most needed to balance a one-sided culture" (36). Cobain and Morrison were forced to live not as themselves but as what their fans wanted to see in them.

Jim Morrison was seen as a shaman by his generation, someone who could guide others beyond the invisible: a Dionysian figure. On the other hand, Kurt Cobain was seen as a healer, someone who, while telling about his own sorrows, could make others think that they were not alone.

Elvis Presley trod the same tragic pathway as [...] Janis Joplin, Sylvia Plath, [...] Jimi Hendrix, and many other generations of massively artistic souls. They all were captured in the headlights of the culture which longed for the archetype most desired at the moment, most especially the dreaming about, and the yearning for, a messiah, a savior, a healer, *a saman*- the understandable desire for experiences that would place them in an ecstasy and draw close a sense of Godliness. (Estes 46)

The archetypes that Morrison and Cobain had to fit in eventually led to a similar tragic end for them as they did not have the opportunity to live a life of their own.

As stars they became scapegoats as well. We must note how both Morrison and Cobain suffered from the attacks of the press and in a similar way had court cases where they were left on their own with millions of fans who could do nothing to help them. In addition, they were despised by many who only saw a degenerate youth in their personas:

When these larger-than-life figures fail in their function as life-givers, they are threatened with becoming sacrificial victims.

For when the public recognizes in them its own corruption, then the love it has projected onto them turns to hatred and they view their own idealized selves turned into monstrous forms of the unconscious: angels turned to demons and shining gods become hideous, shadowy figures. (Kenne 132)

When this hatred is combined with the power of authority, figures like Morrison and Cobain, who in the beginning seemed to have the power to rebel against the authority or at least to ignore it, find themselves helpless and eventually become victims. Estes points out, “One might think that human sacrifice has vanished from ‘civilized’ cultures. [...] It still exists—and in highly stylized forms” (33). In both Morrison’s and Cobain’s stories, examples of human sacrifice can be seen. For Morrison it was a controversial stage show that many could have performed without being faced with such an accusation. For Cobain it was his drug consumption that created a court case resulting in his child being taken away from him and his wife. The line between a worshipped celebrity and a sacrificial victim can get very blurred, as it did in the lives and deaths of Morrison and Cobain.

In these two stories it is possible to see a picture similar to the mythos of the dying God:

In the mythos of the successful hero, one may suffer, but who ultimately masters his destiny, and who wills out at the end, a castle of repose and honor is often set aside for him. However in the mythos of the dying God, when the avatar has completed the transformation of individuals and/or culture, it is then time

for them to be deposed, or else, to die from neglect or excess, or both. (Estes 39)

In our case, the anti-heroes of popular culture resemble the dying God rather than the successful hero. From such an angle, Cobain and Morrison are similar to each other. Both of them died at a very young age and both of them suffered dramatically, especially towards the end of their lives. It was as if, after four or five years at the peak of their fame, they were consumed by the popular culture because they had completed their mission. Because the popular culture creates disposable heroes, they had to be disposed of when their time came.

As a last point, I would like to add that throughout this work, I deliberately used the pronoun “he” when I was speaking about the concepts of heroism and anti-heroism, although I certainly was aware of the fact that in literature there have been and will be many female heroes and anti-heroes. In this research, however, I took the concept of the hero as a male image. I searched for traces of the wounded boy as the hero and the hero as the wounded boy: a type of human being like Peter Pan, who never became a man nor stayed a child but, who pursued his own illusions in this world of illusions and ended up a disillusioned victim. Fowlie’s words on the stereotype of this wounded boy as a poet are worth quoting at length:

A sense of being “different” automatically turns a boy into a victim, and this character of the victim is the first mask of the poet. He is the hyena, the animal of the night to be tracked down. Rimbaud’s wild beast recalls Vigny’s wolf, Musset’s pelican, Gautier’s hippopotamus, Baudelaire’s albatross. They are all names for the artist, the sacrificial scapegoat. (Fowlie 55)

Fowlie's definition of the artist, with his solitude the inevitable outcome of his being different from others, is truly a reflection of the Romantic sensitivity. The way that he portrays the artist here underscores the common ground for Morrison and Cobain that formed the basis for this work: Romantic hero's melancholia and infinite sadness.

Times are changing, and from ancient times to the beginning of modernity to our era of post-modernity, the relationship between the individual and society has undergone various stages of evolution. However, a fundamental fact remains: life produces its own critiques of its cruelty, routine, boredom, and absurdities. It creates figures who are born into this life as ordinary but end up larger than life. The artist is the hero of modern and high-modern times who can rise above life, see the whole picture, and offer a criticism of it with the poem of his own life. The anti-hero is the hero of our times that arose from our need. More than anyone else youth needs these anti-heroes, who represent the anti-theses of their society's role models with whom they cannot identify, nor have any wish to emulate.

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