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Introduction

1   Progressive rock has always been seen as a mainly British phenomenon. This is no surprise, since the major classic bands of the genre – such as King Crimson, Genesis, Yes, ELP and many others – are indeed British. The same story tells of prog rock dying at the end of the 1970s: one of the most colossal flops in the history of rock, considering that prog was to be remembered for decades as a bombastic and excessive self-referential version of psychedelia. However, this is only one perspective on the history of prog. If we are interested in understanding what prog may be in general (and how the labyrinthic contemporary scene might be mapped), we cannot ignore the alternate tales, especially because they can lead us directly to questions that are paramount in positioning contemporary progressive music within a more general frame – a task that seems even more difficult than defining classic prog alone, given the variety of contemporary progressive music.

2   If it is true that any historical narrative is just a *selection* of facts[1] that can sometimes be determined by the will to give ideological claims more credibility,[2] we can always work to deconstruct such narratives using a Nietzschean-Foucauldian genealogical approach. In other words, understanding that the narrative around British prog is just one of many possible stories to be told is just the first step towards a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon. We must then relocate the discourses that lent credibility to that narrative, to understand what this can tell us about why that one story – and not others – won a favoured spot within mainstream historiography.

3   In this article, I aim to understand why the idea of progressive rock's death has been so widely accepted, why from a certain moment onwards the genre's major successes were re-interpreted as failures (the 'inversion of values' proposed by John Sheinbaum),[3] and why all new albums that showed continuity of intent with classic prog flopped or, when they did not, were never associated with progressive rock. Yet progressive music *did* come back to life, as today's resurgence in interest can testimony. *When*, *how* and *why* are all questions that can get answers from the analysis of the context in which the narrative of prog's death (and rebirth) was created, and later confirmed by other narratives and, to some extent, scholarly research.

Of a Death

4   18th November 1978. *Love Beach*, ninth studio album by Emerson, Lake & Palmer, is released. On its cover art we can see the three musicians – model-like poses, enthusiastic faces, exaggerated necklines – in the shade of a palm tree, at dusk, with the sea on the horizon. Nothing could better represent how far from the ideals of progressive rock the band had gone by then. As far as I know, nothing positive has ever been said about *Love Beach*:[4] if any album was the nail in the coffin, sending the already mortally wounded progressive rock to its Mellotron-shaped grave, this is it. I will use *Love Beach* as a synecdoche for a historiographic construction that needs to be deconstructed: the idea of the "death of prog", which supposedly occurred somewhere between 1976 and 1978, depending on the account we take into consideration.

5   As this narrative goes, prog would quickly decline and eventually succumb to punk, a genre willing to take rock back to its roots, the same roots that prog had betrayed with its elitist sophistication. This idea can mainly be found in journalistic retrospectives on prog,[5] but is also often implied – although not necessarily without any attempt of problematisation – in the classic academic references for the history of prog.[6] The most generous versions of this tale at least admit the existence of a 'rebirth of prog' taking place around 1980-1983[7] and, once again, set in the UK, where prog came back as a new but weakened version of itself in the form of neo-progressive music. There is usually a "latency period" located roughly between 1976 and 1982, in which there was apparently no space for prog at all.

6   However, there are also economic reasons for the supposed death of prog: starting in 1973, the recession made life difficult for many British people, who previously had put funds into buying records.[8] In addition, the progressive (no pun intended) taxation introduced by the British government pushed many of the most famous (and richest) musicians to live in exile, alienating themselves from their audience. Indeed, this exile proved not only physical and geographical but also ideological and social, as with it came the growing individualism, the gigantism of shows and the wealth of increasingly self-celebrative musicians.[9] Moreover, at the end of the decade, a crisis in the record industry (which in 1979 lost about 11% of its income in the USA and 20% in the UK, compared to the previous year)[10] would convince labels to invest in music that was cheaper, more easily controllable,[11] and more suited to an era that promised considerable cultural changes – maybe also because of the end of counterculture and the subsequent loss of optimism.[12] Chris Anderton has offered a synthesis of these and other factors, arguing that the healthy prosecution of the progressive adventure was interrupted by a combination of economic, business and cultural factors.[13] While many

journalists had been critical of the old progressive bands since the early 1970s, as Anderton shows from comments in *Melody Maker*, new progressive bands faced significant hurdles in emerging from the underground: labels favoured their biggest artists, who were requiring more and more resources; many clubs were closing down; and the BBC was cutting rock music programs for financial reasons, even though they were vital to the emerging bands. Meanwhile, the music industry was stagnating, and music labels were cutting back on the number of artists in their catalogue, while looking for new music that would turn the tide. Major progressive bands, often able to create their own label, survived… but new progressive bands were of no interest to the industry.

7   It could be said that, rather than dying, prog underwent a sort of "assisted suicide". The definition of "mediatic death" articulated by some authors is also relevant.[14] In this article, I would like to focus on two factors in the mechanism by which the idea of prog's death became, in my view, a cultural symptom: the "Anglo-symphonic stereotype" and the curse of punk critics. Both factors worked against the sustainability of progressive music and its aesthetic ideology.

Of Two Ashes

8   There is generally a lot of confusion about the "ashes of prog", i.e. the remnants of this deceased music genre from the 1970s, somehow still burning to this day. In this section, I will present the protagonists of the "afterlife" of prog by referring to musical examples, so that readers not familiar with this type of music will have all the elements necessary to understand my argument. Indeed, *two* sorts of ashes were scattered in the air: those that were superficially akin to progressive rock (or at least its more famous incarnation, as we shall see) and those that differed quite substantially, yet were faithful to its aesthetic ideology.[15] What emerged were two subgenres resembling the original prog through past and distant legacies, taking two very different forms: neo-progressive and post-progressive.

9   Let us briefly compare two songs from the two progressive worlds: "East Coast Racer" by Big Big Train and "Way Out of Here" by Porcupine Tree.[16] The first song is quintessentially neo-progressive, in the sense that it faithfully reproduces the stylistic traits of symphonic progressive rock, which is – as we shall see – the most famous incarnation of progressive rock from the 1970s. Indeed, the song features a lot of "style flags",[17] such as significant use of keyboards like the Hammond organ and the Mellotron, rich harmonies, emphasis on melodic lines, sections featuring odd time signatures, long instrumental sections and even some symphonic instrumentation (actual or emulated via the Mellotron), while the vocal style of the singer clearly resembles that of Peter Gabriel. The song is more than fifteen-minutes-long and structured quite unpredictably, not following any specific standard form. Many of these features (and others as well) are listed as relevant for the genre in well-known contributions on progressive rock[18] and are often the main objects of interest for the neo-progressive revival, apparently seeking to bring back to life the music "killed by punk". As I will argue later on, these features are only typical of *one* of the possible versions of progressive rock: British symphonic prog. When listening to "Way Out of Here", on the contrary, we can hardly find any of those features, despite Porcupine Tree being one of the most widely recognised contemporary progressive bands. There

are a lot of keyboards, but their sounds are very far from the symphonic context and very close to ambient and electronic music. Some sections feature polyrhythms, but they are very different from those present in Big Big Train's song, resembling compositional procedures typical of minimalist music (the guitar breakdown) and free jazz (the outro). There is a fair amount of heavy riffing that is not very typical of classic prog, while the harmonies are usually very straight-forward. The pastoral and far-reaching character of "East Coast Racer" is replaced with melancholic and claustrophobic atmospheres, resulting in a completely different listening experience. It is interesting that the same could be said when comparing Porcupine Tree's song with virtually any other track recorded by other contemporary progressive bands like Anathema, Iamthemorning, Leprous or Periphery, because the situation is really very diversified. I suggest using the label "post-progressive" to refer to this wide and variegated type of contemporary progressive music and to differentiate it from the more derivative neo-progressive music. I will say more on this distinction later, but it is important to have the basic premise in mind from the outset of the argumentation.

10   Both kinds of "ashes" are widely accepted as "progressive" music nowadays,[19] causing a lot of confusion. They have to be re-understood from a perspective in which stereotypes and "official" historiographical constructs can be put aside, in order to better understand the contemporary situation of progressive music. This is one of the motivations for this research work, which does not pertain only to the past, but has much to say about the present as well.

Of Methods and Discourses

11   The attempt to find another kind of narrative, to connect the dots in a way that explains the contemporary situation, remains a discursive operation and as such is subject to further deconstruction. The aforementioned archaeological-genealogical method elaborated by Michel Foucault[20] emphasises the fact that every historical narrative makes a selection of events, the rationale of which has to be understood in light of the cultural context, practical necessities and power dynamics. Narratives do not speak for facts, but are products of discourse and are symptomatic of specific traits of their native contexts. History is located at the level of words and not that of things, which are (against common sense) after all modelled by discourses (words) themselves.[21] Alternative narratives can be inspired by the strains that did not make it into the institutionalised version of history, yet historians should not use them to build yet another "human all too human" narrative, since any attempt to do so can only lead to results born ready to be deconstructed.

12   Nevertheless, such constructs are useful for understanding how culture and, in the case of genres, categorisation work. This must be said keeping in mind that scientific interests (knowledge interests) and indigenous interests (e.g. aesthetic interests, symbolic struggles) are very different and do not have the same aims nor are they situated on the same level. I will try to offer an alternative interpretation of the historical accounts, emphasising some of the clandestine roads of history, which do not speak aloud so frequently. The deconstructive (or destructive) method proposed by Foucault may need a *pars costruens* which, without forgetting the discursive dimension of its object, could try to go beyond pure deconstruction, which can do little but leave us without any point of reference. Musicologist Emilio Sala[22] speaks of

"reconstruction", that is, to carry out a deconstruction without losing the grip on the cultural symptoms that emerge during the operation. The concept at the core of his idea is that of *après-coup* – originally a psychic process elaborated by Jacques Lacan and derived from Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, namely the ability to subconsciously re-organise one's own memories according to present necessities. Although a psychoanalytic idea might seem useless when talking about historiography, Sala argues that the concept of *après-coup* can be recontextualised in an historiographical milieu, since there is a sort of "retroactive historicisation" at work whenever we try to draw a historical narrative. Facts are always interpreted in a specific way because of a reason, and it can be interesting to understand those interpretations in terms of "symptoms" of a cultural situation we can try to describe – just as certain memories are changed retroactively by the *Nachträglichkeit*, thus becoming symptoms of a certain state of mind or disease. Such an operation can, for instance, tell us something about prog's flop and give us a framework for interpreting the contemporary situation – a framework, however, that cannot transcend the level of discourse, and thus will be no more "valid" than the "official" one, yet may possibly make more sense when creating the background for a historical reconsideration of prog that can take the wider contemporary context into account.

13   So, the first step for the reconstruction process will be to understand what the discourses about the death of prog might be symptomatic of. Before doing so, let me introduce the importance of discourses not only in the definition of something like the "death" of a genre, but in basically everything concerning the birth and life of genres. According to Franco Fabbri,[23] the act *par excellence* that sanctions the social recognition of a genre is the agreement by a community on the name to give it, as a ratification of the conventions that, according to his theory of musical genres, are at the core of the genre's definition itself. In this perspective, for instance, the very term "progressive rock" is of course a product of discursivity. Let me say a bit about some aspects of that specific discursive process, since the necessity of a definition for prog will (unexpectedly?) be one of the main issues of this article, and since it may be useful to have an idea of one way in which discourses can impact the definition of genres.

14   The first uses of the term date back to the late 1960s, when magazines such as *Melody Maker* started to promote a new kind of rock: it was called "progressive", but also "symphonic" rock, as well as "classical" or "art" rock,[24] because of its references to art music.[25] From the very beginning, prog was associated with the "symphonic" label, and we should bear this in mind for later. Apparently, in the mid-1960s the term was used in the radiophonic world in reference to psychedelic rock in general, and was then linked to a more specific kind of music – aimed at expanding the limits of rock on a stylistic basis (extensive and complex forms) and conceptual (unusual themes, use of the concept album) – after 1969, when the term appeared with such connotations in the liner notes of the first Caravan album.[26]

15   Recent research by Chris Anderton and Chris Atton,[27] however, shows that there was a lack of consistency in the use of the term: until 1974, the British press did not refer to the most famous bands of the genre in the way we would expect today. For this reason, the two scholars speak of an "absent presence" of the term. A similar situation also applies, for instance, to the Italian scene (one of the most lively scenes from the classic prog era), as proved by Jacopo Tomatis's research, highlighting how the label was used only sporadically, and more often in relation to the generic term "music", rather than

"rock", and with shades of meaning different from the most common today.[28] This instability also concerns the canon: for instance, in the first studies on prog,[29] the authors try to define progressive rock starting from analyses of songs by Cream, Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, Procol Harum and Pink Floyd – all groups that are referred to as the quintessence of progressive, but which today are often considered more alike to precursors (apart from Pink Floyd) than actual prog-heroes. Canons and definitions are not stable and are (again) the products of their cultural contexts, being discursive entities themselves.

Of Punk Assassins

16   Let us start delving deeper into the historiographical "symptomatology". As stated earlier, the role of punk critics has to be addressed as one of the main factors responsible for the crystallisation of the idea of "death of prog". The presence of such a factor can already be seen in the classic accounts of prog's history,[30] but it is not so easy to get access to other empirical sources. For this reason, in this section, I will primarily draw on the research of other scholars, while also keeping in mind the historical accounts about that period, especially those from the first scholarly monographs on prog published in the late 1990s, which were paramount for the development of prog research. These monographs are important as they shape our conception of the timeline of rock history, producing an "institutional" version of facts, while the historical accounts are interesting since they focus on first-hand sources (only few of which I will address here) from the 1970s, especially from the British press, which was the most important actor in the story I am telling.[31] All of the following statements must of course be understood bearing in mind that what people were mainly criticising was the symphonic progressive music played by bands like Genesis, ELP and Yes.

17   Given the stylistic difference between punk and prog, it was a nice and easy narrative choice to point at punk as the villain in prog's tale. Of course, it is legitimate for critics to fight against a genre perceived as old and increasingly elitist,[32] but soon the critics' fury hit prog with exceptional force, as journalists dogmatically stressed that everything, after the "death of prog", had changed.[33] Soon enough, the old ratings from the magazines were lowered retrospectively, since the critics argued that prog classics had not aged well[34]; meanwhile – as noticed by John Sheinbaum[35] – there were cases in which the sections of the "perfect rocker's manuals" dedicated to what *not* to do looked very much like a list of the main features of prog. Although they have to be at least partially contextualised in a humorous frame, the words by Jimmy Guterman and Owen O'Donnell quoted by Sheinbaum are quite assertive:

> Rock-and-roll songs with an orchestral choir are bound to be horrible [...]. Rock lyrics are not poetry [...] The quality of a rock-and-roll song is inversely proportional to the number of instruments on it [...]. Formidable technical proficiency is never sufficient. This rule explains why art rock is always bad.[36]

18   In the eyes of punk critics, rock needed to return to the authenticity that prog had destroyed, refining and gentrifying the music until it imploded.[37] As emphasised by Anderton, the urge for something new was being felt since the beginning of the decade. Critics were asking for something "outrageous" and "dirty",[38] while the "rock establishment" was perceived (also by members of the audience replying via letters addressed to *Melody Maker*) as "bored", "uninspired", "lazy". Of course, this is not true

for everyone who was involved in this debate: there were also readers trying to defend a kind of music that "cares for composition" and "exploits the full range of instrumental sounds and textures available to them".[39] Whoever was the material executor of the "genrecide", prog ended up being remembered as a spoiled and excessive offshoot of psychedelia – fortunately dead and buried – destined to long-lasting oblivion, while the most famous British bands were "forced" to simplify their style, convert it to pop, or simply split up.

19   This critics' "curse" would haunt progressive music for at least two decades: it is probably no coincidence that the first scholarly accounts trying to re-evaluate prog were published exactly twenty years after its supposed death, in the same years in which artists like Dream Theater and Porcupine Tree were becoming increasingly popular. In the 1990s, old classics were reissued on CD and new independent labels were founded, reigniting interest in prog.[40] The fact that, for the previous twenty years, prog was mainly remembered for its flaws, helped the Anglo-symphonic stereotype to become stronger and stronger, as the many foreign versions of progressive music – so different in their features and not necessarily in a phase of decadence back then – were basically removed from common accounts of rock historiography, and their importance was understated even in the classic academic studies on prog published in the late 1990s. But what is this "Anglo-symphonic stereotype"?

Of Symphonic Hippies

20   This question leads me to the second factor in the flop of prog: the "Anglo-symphonic stereotype", as I call it. My main reference here is another paramount article in which Chris Anderton[41] reports that the widespread conception of prog as typically British music characterised by a certain set of features (e.g. musical complexity, sophisticated arrangements often featuring orchestral sounds achieved using the Mellotron or actual acoustic instruments, fantasy lyrics, and references to classical, jazz and folk music) is in fact quite reductive: in describing only one particular incarnation of prog, British symphonic prog, it fails to describe the deeply diverse nature of progressive music as a "meta-genre".

21   This therefore excludes all non-UK prog produced at the same time as the "golden age" of symphonic prog, as well as music considered "progressive" after the supposed death of prog, but also much of the progressive music produced in the UK during and just after the classic prog era. In fact, even the most famous prog bands from the 1970s entered a new creative phase in the 1980s,[42] and it seems it is often difficult to understand what their music, or that played by new acts such as Kate Bush or Peter Gabriel, might have to do with classic prog. In sum, the Anglo-symphonic stereotype needs to be deconstructed, as it prevents us from understanding prog as a "many-headed beast" (to use Anderton's expression).

22   From the very first studies on prog, considerable attention has been paid to its connection with counterculture on the one side, and with classical music on the other – as a survey of the titles in this article's bibliography will corroborate. Soon enough, the identification of progressive music with British symphonic prog – the incarnation that was both the most internationally famous *and* the most hated by punk critics – was ratified by scholars as well. This also meant that later (re)incarnations of prog were not contemplated (or at least not appreciated) by most of the first historic accounts on

prog. For instance, Paul Stump's discussion of neo-progressive music implies that the entry of prog into the postmodern era led to a somewhat inauthentic incarnation of the original sound,[43] modelled on the British archetype. Neo-prog is criticised for being derivative of classic prog,[44] but at the same time it becomes clear that Stump identifies progressive music precisely with its "Anglo-symphonic" specific sound.[45] So, from this perspective, prog *tout court* is indeed quite dead.

23   This prevents Stump from identifying those potential strains of prog music that survived the end of counterculture in other countries, or even in the UK, maybe disguised as something different in appearance but still fairly close to the original progressive aesthetic ideology. Neo-prog is the only kind of post-progressive music contemplated by Stump because it is the only one superficially resembling British symphonic prog, though in a simulative and (mainly) derivative way. In a sense, Edward Macan's history of prog, released a few months before Stump's, was much more inclusive and neutral when it came to post-progressive, neo-progressive and non-British prog. Notably, an entire section of the book[46] is dedicated to "apocryphal" versions of prog produced in the UK and in the USA during the age of punk (e.g. symphonic pop, AOR),[47] and the author admits that the production of progressive music went on quite fluently in several "national schools" outside the UK.[48] Nonetheless, the definitions offered by Macan in the book, are quite clearly deduced from British symphonic prog.

24   Another limit of the early studies on prog is the excessive focus on its links with counterculture – which, if understood in a less ideological frame, could have led to much more promising conclusions. Although the diversity of prog was already addressed in the aforementioned seminal pages on progressive rock written by Richard Middleton and Sheila Whiteley in the early 1990s, the association we can find there between the variety of prog's features and the variety of counterculture manifestations can help us only to a certain extent. So, instead of legitimising the variety of incarnations of progressive music, the link to counterculture only reinforced the idea of the "death of prog" after the death of counterculture. Indeed, in the same years Allan Moore emphasised the fact that the association between prog and counterculture can sometimes be problematic, because those ideals were felt more vividly in the US than in the UK, and very few prog bands were interested in social change or put into practice what countercultural theory prescribed.[49] If this is true for classic prog, it is even more so if for all progressive music (including contemporary prog).

25   However, even if we wanted to accept a strict link between prog and counterculture, the death of the latter could be called into question, just as we are now calling into question the death of the former – indeed, one does not suffice to justify the other. One could argue that rather than "dying", the countercultural approach just went more underground, and at least a part of prog's legacy remained very close to it. The movement called "Rock in Opposition" (RIO) is often seen as related to prog because of its interest in art music (not the classics anymore, but instead avant-garde music) and its eclectic approach largely interested in national folk traditions.[50] RIO, as a movement, included bands with quite explicit political interests, trying to promote independent music production by moving away from major players and refusing the excesses of hyper-capitalist show-business. Also for this reason, it always remained a niche sector, often unknown to even prog fans. Despite being countercultural to the

core, RIO met with much of its "success" after counterculture was apparently gone for good, even through the 1980s and beyond.

26   Maybe for similar reasons, Bill Martin[51] later proposed a looser association of prog with counterculture, arguing that prog basically borrows from counterculture the prerogative of "having a project". This characterisation is surely a step forward, but still does not emancipate prog from a strong ideological connection with counterculture, and becomes even more problematic as it brings back the "Englishness" of prog as a defining feature that is apparently exploited with the only aim of excluding Frank Zappa from the canon.[52] So, Martin identifies prog with British traits (although he does not deny that they can be acquired by non-British artists as well, and in addition to this they are not necessarily connected with the symphonic sound) *and*, again, with counterculture, thus contributing to the association of prog in general with dead things... However, the idea of "having a project" can actually be very useful in understanding prog's current situation.

27   The latter concept is developed by John Covach,[53] who tries to associate prog with a certain "hippie aesthetic" seeking to push the boundaries of rock, and in so doing, binding together the two main references for early studies on progressive rock: classical music and counterculture, both characterised by a certain kind of ambition.[54] Although it seems somehow true that "ambition" is a common feature for prog, some of the concrete musical and lyrical features associated by Covach with this aesthetic putting classical music and counterculture together do not make much sense for the majority of contemporary progressive rock, which is sonically and ideologically speaking even less unitary than it was in the 1970s; the examples mentioned earlier should work as first evidence of that. Indeed, those features point once again to the Anglo-symphonic stereotype. Other conceptual tools are needed to escape the crystallisation of symphonic prog's features with the help of a meta-characterisation of prog.

Of Several Rebirths

28   Such tools can begin to emerge as we try to set apart the ideas of death (and rebirth) of prog, in order to consider the phenomenon as a somewhat organic (and on-going) conception of music. After all, when we take a closer look at the situation of progressive music during the "latency period" (1976-1982), we find many alternative tales that are usually relegated to the outermost confines of prog history, because they do not fit with the symphonic mannerism. *Kosmische Musik* (DE), *Zehul* (FR) or *Rock Progressivo Italiano* (IT) are among the most famous national declinations of progressive rock, which continued producing inspired music without significant interference by the supposed death of prog.

29   An extreme example is that of Rush, since the Canadian band actually released their most famous albums from 1976 onwards, but relevant bands, many of which released their most important albums during the latency period, can be found basically everywhere in the world (e.g. East West Family Band, Aerolit, Area, Eloy, José Cid, Kaipa, Tangerine Dream, Picchio dal Pozzo, Klaus Schulze, Samla Mammas Manna, Focus, Kraftwerk, Ekseption, Locanda delle Fate, Magma, Ashra, Ange, Dün, Goblin). New bands were also born during the latency years. These included the Alan Parsons Project, Electric Light Orchestra, Kansas and Journey, which were already loosely tied

to the genre in Edward Macan's historical account of prog, when he tackled symphonic pop and AOR.[55] Sometimes one need not even look beyond the UK to find old and new bands still capable of keeping prog alive (e.g. U.K., National Health, Kate Bush, Peter Gabriel, Gong, Pink Floyd, new King Crimson). Even during the "golden age" of British symphonic prog, there were British bands working on totally different aesthetic premises, like The Soft Machine, Hatfield and the North and all the other bands associated with the so called "Canterbury Scene".

30   Many prog masters moved away from the symphonic sound, trying to treat new musical sources in ways that could be linked with their previous aesthetics. Often, they had to drastically change their sound to avoid the complete flop, and some of them managed to build a successful pop career, such as Genesis (who were quintessential symphonic, until then). After all, as John Sheinbaum has convincingly argued,[56] often the same principles of "sophistication" and "ambitiousness" that can be found in classic prog songs are also found in hit songs released by former symphonic prog bands, such as Yes in the 1980s. Moreover, most of the bands that were soon to be labelled as "neo-prog" were formed during the latency period and were often associated with heavy metal events, labels and artists,[57] waiting for the right moment to emerge as a revival of the symphonic progressive sound. No "death of prog" in sight, here.

31   Just as, in this regard, it makes little sense to talk about a "death of prog", the same can be said of the "rebirth of prog" that is usually associated with the neo-progressive movement. Since everything associated with prog was doomed to flop, it is perhaps no coincidence that the only neo-prog artist of the 1980s to achieve consistent success was Marillion, a band that started out as a pure symphonic prog sham but quickly developed a personal and much more "pop" sound, unlike that of their less fortunate peers Pallas, Twelfth Night or Pendragon. According to Anderton, the British press started to write about the resurgence ("revival" or "movement") of prog – also using the acronym NEOBPR, similar to the more famous NWOBHM – in the early 1980s, with *Kerrang!* notably publishing a long article presenting the new bands and connecting them to specific classic prog bands, thus endorsing the link with the "symphonic orthodoxy".[58]

32   Indeed, finding the very name of neo-progressive within the "official" narrative is another confirmation of the Anglo-symphonic stereotype, since neo-prog is that kind of contemporary progressive music that simulates the style of British symphonic prog (I will get back to this soon). As a consequence, the evaluation of neo-progressive music by fans is constantly linked with a confrontation with classics.[59] If the model were, say, the sound by artists belonging to the Canterbury Scene or the Scandinavian "Progg", probably no such term to identify the subgenre would exist. There are several events that qualify as potential "rebirths" of prog, but it was primarily *one* of them that entered history because of its resemblance with British symphonic prog. However, if we relativise the death of prog, there is no need to even look for a rebirth.

33   Another possible rebirth moment – or, maybe more accurately, another non-death moment – concerns progressive metal. Although the label was not widespread until the 1990s, Jeff Wagner[60] has pointed out that prog and metal crossed paths very often from the start, and possibly even more frequently from the latency period onwards. The sustained delegitimisation of prog was probably one of the factors that determined the time was not right to speak openly of "progressive metal" in the 1980s, although, as

Wagner points out, prog/metal crossovers were actually very frequent in that decade. Another path of salvation for an apparently dying genre.

34   Discourses about prog – at least within the scholarly context – started abandoning the old stereotypes just a few years after the classic studies on prog. Essays like those by Chris Anderton and John Sheinbaum mentioned in these pages are only the most important examples of a tendency that has become particularly dynamic in recent years, thanks to the "Progect" international research group, founded by Allan Moore with the aim of offering new perspectives on the study of prog, with particular regard for all those incarnations that were largely ignored until now.[61] Some of the "repressed" historic lines are then free to re-emerge and tell us different versions of the story.

Of Simulated Afterlives

35   Of course, all of these are just discursive matters, a way of seeing history that is determined by certain prejudices and values: they all are reasons that helped determine the long age of prog flops. But let us try to listen to other versions of the story as well, to take another discursive path and witness that from the ashes of prog – still warm and breathing – two potential ways of approaching progressive music and its historiography were born. These cannot be anything more than alternative discursive constructs, but maybe they can help us understand the contemporary scene more clearly.

36   As we saw at the beginning of the article, on the one side there is neo-prog: a mostly British simulacrum of symphonic prog that was perfect – in the reductionist perspective promoted by the Anglo-symphonic stereotype – to fit within the "official" narrative as a reborn weakened version of prog. On the other side, there are artists that would probably have been seen as the natural progeny of prog's evolution, if only the narrative of its death had not changed everything. Successful artists of this kind were only later (*après-coup*) associated with prog, like Kate Bush or Peter Gabriel: at the time (in the late 1970s), there was no space for or interest in such a label, although there may have been exceptions.[62] Through their artistic choices, these artists demonstrated that symphonic prog was but one incarnation of progressive rock's potential, and that prog could be seen – instead of as a *mannerism* – as a *manner* of making music, to use Angel Quintero Rivera's terminology.[63] If a mannerism is a passive reproduction of a crystallised set of features, a manner is a more dynamic way of creating music with the same purposes as that we are starting from, but in a different outfit, employing different elements. Stylistic continuity is not as important as ideological continuity, here.

37   In this spirit, those artists applied what we could call the "progressive attitude" to new musical materials,[64] in ways not very appealing to those who identified progressive music as symphonic prog only, yet more able to avoid the "curse" of the critics for the very same reasons. Today, there are many artists put under the "prog" label who seem to have nothing more in common than an interest in "progress". Some of the most famous are Steven Wilson, Dream Theater, Tool, Anathema, Opeth, Devin Townsend, Pain of Salvation, Katatonia, Leprous, Haken and The Pineapple Thief. They are not inaccessible like much experimental music, and they often do not crystallise their sound for too long; they are interested in breaking the barriers of the traditional song,

yet not totally destroying it. They do not revolutionise music, yet try to reform it with a "softer" approach.

38   This music, which some call "post-progressive", is as much a son of postmodernism as neo-prog is, but it is a different kind of *simulacrum*. I have purposely used a term fit to a postmodern context, by recalling the theories elaborated by Jean Baudrillard.[65] Before delving deeper into this statement, let me explain this reference to the work of Baudrillard and its importance in the contextualisation of progressive music within the frame of postmodern art. The idea of *simulacre* concerns the loss of connection between signs and their signified in the postmodern age, leading to the creation of a "hyperreality" forged by media, business and scientific claims (among all the other possible factors); this very idea would not have much to do with prog nor with music in general, were it not for the fact that it has been translated into the realm of art by Fredric Jameson.[66] According to Jameson, in the postmodern age authors can only borrow elements from pre-existing art, shifting from the role of artists to the role of librarians, or keepers of a museum filled with art from the past. Such borrowed elements are, once again, simulacra: puppets devoid of meaning which only superficially resemble something from our past and are used in the daily commerce of aesthetic meaning. Much postmodern art borrows elements from pre-existing works and genres, without necessarily seeking to make fun of it nor revive long-lost values and ideas connected with those elements.

39   This is something that both sorts of "ashes of prog" do: they borrow elements from pre-existing music. Yet they follow very different *simulative* paradigms:[67] while neo-prog is an integralist (and nostalgic) revival that wishes to embrace a maximum of codes/features related to British symphonic prog,[68] post-prog is not a mono-thematic simulacrum, but an eclectic one, radically trying to shift away from the symphonic style, although not really changing the rules of the progressive game. It is rather a *manner* of making music, trying to push the boundaries of popular music in a reformist (not revolutionary) way, always changing the formula and the elements of the simulative process that is behind it all – as opposed to experimental music, with which such a broad conception of prog might be confused.[69] It is simulative because one of the main means of pushing boundaries is borrowing elements from diverse sources.[70] This could be a broader definition of progressive, one that does not stick to any (Anglo-symphonic) mannerism and always stays open to the kind of "progress" that seems so important for the community, as well.[71]

40   So, during and after the "golden age" of prog, lesser-known musicians were using not classical music, but avant-garde (see RIO), electronic (see Krautrock), world (see Bush or Gabriel) or minimalist (see King Crimson's *Discipline*) music to push the boundaries of popular music. This process is still ongoing, and today we can enjoy the results of the same attitude combining different kinds of metal, folk and even pop music. It is almost impossible to define prog in a positive way, if not referring to concepts as abstract as these, since features like virtuosity, extended lengths, concept albums, odd time signatures, unusual song structures and so on are once again derived from the Anglo-symphonic stereotype and do not apply to a lot of music labelled as "progressive" today. Such features might help the canonisation process but are not essential.

41   This idea helps us understand progressive music as a continuative process, renovating from the inside and transcending its supposed death. It would not have been possible to come up with a comprehensive solution to such a problem if we had not first

deconstructed the idea of prog's death – with all of its main implications. Starting from the consideration of a flop, we can rebuild history in a totally different direction. Of course, this is but one alternative way of reconstructing the history of prog, no more valid than the "official" one; it is not a normative vision of the story, but simply another way of telling the same tale from a different perspective, highlighting different facts that are possibly better at explaining what is going on today, in all its diversity and complexity. After all, is this not what historiography always does – to try to write a comprehensive and meaningful narrative of facts, hoping to explain the present through a confrontation with the past?

Conclusion

42   Everything seems to suggest that prog never died, and therefore never needed to be reborn. Rather, it has been forced to stay in the grave and has been covered with dirt for ideological reasons or for aesthetic prejudices derived from undue generalisations – the same reasons that have led to the denial, for years, of the links between the new music and the old "progressive dinosaurs". The weight of symphonic prog's flop had a huge impact on what was happening outside the UK, and on what was still to come. There was no death or rebirth, no real period of "latency" – only the long shadow of a flop, cast from one incarnation of prog onto all the others, through the value judgements expressed by critics, which were still palpable in the first paramount studies dedicated to progressive rock. Even today, there is still much work to be done to completely lift the curse. What was perceived by new post-prog artists as authentic, as an application of the same approach used in the 1970s but starting from different musical sources and with different outcomes, was perceived by the fans – bearing the Anglo-symphonic stereotype in mind – as inauthentic. After all, it might be true that "much of progressive rock fandom is not interested in music that 'progresses' at all".[72] For such fans, prog is perhaps really dead.

43   Sometimes, histories can be told in such a way that, focusing on certain details and ignoring others, they can be used to support specific positions and theses, prejudices and agendas.[73] Historiographic constructs, with the help of concepts such as the death or rebirth of a musical genre, can be used to crystallise conventions accepted by journalism or mainstream musicology.[74] On the other hand, even periodisation is by no means a neutral chronology of musical changes, but rather carries specific values,[75] just as the process of structuring any history does, as it is based on a selection of facts considered most relevant on the basis of a specific value judgement[76]. Genres themselves – and their histories – are codified by the discourses of the social actors involved in the creation of their meaning,[77] and it is up to us to understand how and why a specific interpretation emerges and is then institutionalised.

44   From this account it should be clearer in what sense punk critics and the Anglo-symphonic stereotype "conspired" against the progressive genre, motivating the community's discourses about the death of prog. Although a rigorous historiographical deconstruction, as theorised by Foucault, would not tie back together the disassembled pieces of discourse into a new and maybe more comprehensive narrative of progressive music, I think that at least trying to understand what kept some very diversified kinds of music together under the same label (in the discourses of all those who somehow relate to prog) might help us to better grasp what this "manner of making music"[78] is

about.[79] After all, the classics did no more than set the rules, because, as Jean-Jacques Nattiez argues:

> [...] There is something that is experienced as such [as a norm] by the actors of the generation, which receive it in a 'hotbed' [...], but with respect to which everyone belonging to the new generation retains a certain degree of freedom. [...]. Change, indeed, is in the first place the result of an individual action that deviates from the norms that are acquired and experienced, and which contributes to establishing a style that will later be perceived as new, if the composer's innovative proposals are followed by a certain number of other composers, who will in turn contribute to the construction of a new norm.[80]

45 No death nor rebirth: only a specific incarnation that kept underground new results of a "manner of making music" that still had a lot to say. To understand what came next, we must keep in mind the Arab proverb quoted by Marc Bloch: "Men resemble their time, more than their fathers".[81] Now that the Anglo-symphonic stereotype no longer casts its prejudice on our theorisation work anymore, and now that we can understand neo-progressive as an integral (even "regressive", one could ironically say) simulacrum of symphonic prog, we can try to imagine a better definition of prog starting from post-progressive music, which can now be understood simply in the terms of "progressive" music. Taking all other incarnations into account is the only way to understand which elements tie together the discourses of communities, labels, event organisers, artists and critics, thus constructing another narrative that might be more illuminating than the one that has been casting its shadow on "floppy" music that deserved more attention until now.

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4. e.g. MACAN Edward, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 187; STUMP Paul, *The Music's All That Matters: A History of Progressive Rock*, London, Quartet Books, 1997, p. 218. Not even the three musicians look very proud of the record, in the interview available on: https://youtu.be/Fc5yo_1tTQo. Accessed 13 January 2022.

5. e.g. RIZZI Cesare, *Progressive & Underground in Gran Bretagna ed Europa, 1967-1976*, Firenze-Milano, Giunti, 2004; SNIDER Charles, *The Strawberry Bricks Guide to Progressive Rock*, Lightning Source, 2008.

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8. FABBRI Franco, *Around the clock: Una breve storia della popular music*, Torino, UTET, 2008, p. 160.

9. HEGARTY and HALLIWELL, *Beyond and Before*, p. 164-165.

10. These data can be found in WEIGEL David, *The Show That Never Ends: The Rise and Fall of Prog Rock*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2017; But other authors wrote about the crisis as well: STUMP, *The Music's All That Matters*; MACAN, *Rocking the Classics*.

11. STUMP, *The Music's All That Matters*, p. 255-256; MACAN, *Rocking the Classics*, p. 189; SHEINBAUM John J., "Periods in Progressive Rock and the Problem of Authenticity", *Current Musicology*, vol. 85, 2008, p. 31.

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13. ANDERTON Chris, "Re-evaluating the 'death of progressive rock': critical reception and journalistic narratives in Melody Maker magazine, 1971-76", *The 4th Biennial International Conference of the Progect Network for the Study of Progressive Rock – Progressive Rock & Metal: Towards a Contemporary Understanding*, University of Ottawa, 19-21 & 26-28 May 2021. At the time of writing, the conference presentation is the only source available, but a traditional publication is planned.

14. STUMP, *The Music's All That Matters*; BARBAGLI, *After the Flood: Progressive Rock 1976-2010*.

15. I understand there is no such thing as a shared notion of "prog ideology", but the reader will be able to find more information on what I mean in the closing sections of the paper, where I will describe prog as a "manner" or an "attitude".

16. Big Big Train, "East Coast Racer" (track 1), *English Electric, Pt. 2*, English Electric Recordings, EERCD0012, 2013; Porcupine Tree, "Way Out of Here" (track 5), *Fear of a Blank Planet*, Roadrunner Records, RR 8011-2, 2007. The two examples can be listened at https://youtu.be/LOuaGm6Ef30 and https://youtu.be/-6psOf1B79w (both accessed 18 May 2021).

17. According to Philip Tagg, a "style flag" is a sign type that "uses particular sounds to identify a particular musical style and often, by connotative extension, the cultural genre to which that musical style belongs" (TAGG Philip, *Music's Meanings: A Modern Musicology for Non-Musos*, Larchmont, The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2012, p. 522). Such stylistic features can help establishing a "home style" in the track, thus becoming "style indicators", or refer to a "foreign style" from a track that employs a different style – and in that case they are called "genre synecdoche".

18. The most relevant in this respect probably being MACAN, *Rocking the Classics*, the main assumptions of which were later re-systematised in SHEINBAUM, "Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values".

19. As we can easily see from the awards, critics' picks and readers' polls in *Prog* magazine, or the discussions in online communities like progarchives.com and the Facebook group "Prog Snob".

20. FOUCAULT Michel, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969.

21. The same goes with the creation of music genres, which, according to this perspective, are completely discursive constructs.

22. SALA Emilio, "La 'trilogia popolare': Genealogia, ricostruzione, performance", *Studi Verdiani*, n°. 29, 2020, p. 121-147.

23. FABBRI Franco, "How Genres Are Born, Change, Die: Conventions, Communities and Diachronic Processes", in HAWKINS Stan (ed.), *Critical Musicological Reflections*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, p. 179-191. For a wider introduction to popular music genre theories see MERLINI Mattia, "A Critical (and Interdisciplinary) Survey of Popular Music Theories", *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology*, n°. 20, 2020, p. 79-94.

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25. ATTON Chris, "'Living in the Past'?: Value Discourses in Progressive Rock Fanzines", *Popular Music*, vol. 20, n°. 1, 2001, p. 31-32; WHITELEY Sheila, *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture*, London-New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 6. An emblematic example: "Symphonic Rock Rave at Croydon", *Melody Maker*, 16/08/1969, p. 15.

26. MACAN, *Rocking the Classics*, p. 26.

27. ANDERTON Chris and Chris ATTON, "The Absent Presence of Progressive Rock in the British Musical Press, 1968-1974", *Rock Music Studies*, vol. 7, n°. 1, 2019, p. 12-13.

28. TOMATIS Jacopo, *Storia culturale della canzone italiana*, Milano, Il Saggiatore, 2019, p. 396.

29. MIDDLETON Richard, *Studying Popular Music*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1990, p. 50-57; WHITELEY, *The Space Between the Notes*, p. 6-37.

30. e.g. ATTON, "'Living in the Past'?"; HOLM-HUDSON, "Introduction"; HEGARTY and HALLIWELL, *Beyond and Before*; WEIGEL, *The Show That Never Ends*; STUMP, *The Music's All That Matters*.

31. And, last but not least, it is once again the most studied context: it would be very interesting to learn what the German, French, Swedish or Polish press was writing on the same topic.

32. ANDERTON, "Re-evaluating the 'Death of Progressive Rock'"; FABBRI, *Around the Clock*, p. 161; SHEINBAUM, "Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values", p. 29.

33. HEGARTY and HALLIWELL, *Beyond and Before*, p. 165.

34. SNIDER, *The Strawberry Bricks Guide to Progressive Rock*, p. 297.

35. SHEINBAUM, "Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values", p. 22-23.

36. GUTERMAN Jimmy and Owen O'DONNELL, *The Worst Rock'n'Roll Records of All Time*, New York, Citadel Press, 1991, p. 13-15.

37. FABBRI, *Around the Clock*, p. 161; SHEINBAUM, "Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values", p. 29.

38. ANDERTON, "Re-evaluating the 'Death of Progressive Rock'".

39. *Ibid.*

40. ANDERTON Chris, "Clutching at Straws? Progressive Rock Revivals of the 1980s and 1990s", in HILL Sarah and Allan F. MOORE, *The Oxford Companion to Progressive Rock*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

41. ANDERTON Chris, "A Many-Headed Beast: Progressive Rock as a Meta-Genre", *Popular Music*, vol. 24, n°. 4, 2010, p. 427-435.

42. SHEINBAUM, "Periods in Progressive Rock and the Problem of Authenticity".

43. STUMP, *The Music's All That Matters*, p. 233-235, 254, 265.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 277-279 is a fierce critique of Marillion's music, as opposed to IQ's.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 257 is a comment on the music of Rush, which distance from the canonical sound seems to compromise its progressiveness.

46. MACAN, *Rocking the Classics*, p. 178-187.

47. AOR stays for "Album-Oriented Rock". In GAROFALO Rebee and Steve WACKSMAN, *Rockin' out: popular music in the U.S.A.*, Boston, Pearson, 2014, p. 202, it is described as a FM format willing to mark a difference from the single-oriented "Top 40" format, thus promoting alternative music (hard rock, prog, metal).

48. *Ibid.*, p. 183-185.

49. MOORE, *Rock, the Primary Text*, p. 64.

50. COSTA Jacopo, "Rock in Opposition: A Case of Methodological Intermixing", GONIN Philippe (ed.), *Prog Rock in Europe: Overview of a Persistent Musical Style*, Dijon, Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2016, p. 99-113.

51. MARTIN, *Listening to the Future*, p. 103-127.

52. This serves Martin's argument about the resolution of what he calls the "Zappa Problem". That is: if we accept virtuosity as a trait of prog (should we?), how can we explain the fact that Zappa is usually not considered the quintessential prog musician? In addition to this, Martin seems to dislike Zappa's "juvenile" sense of humour and finds Marxist interpretations of his music inappropriate. Thus, excluding him ends up looking almost like a kind of personal punishment...

53. COVACH John, "The Hippie Aesthetic: Cultural Positioning and Musical Ambition in Early Progressive Rock", in SPICER Mark (ed.), *The Ashgate Library of Essays on Popular Music: Rock*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, p. 65-75.

54. The idea of "progress" to be intended as a sort of ambition is recurrent in online discourses on prog as well. I have presented elsewhere some of the results from an ethnographic survey of mine on that topic MERLINI Mattia, *Le ceneri del prog: quel che resta di un genere della popular music*, Milano-Lucca, Ricordi-LIM, 2021, p. 73-132. An English version of the section in the form of article is currently underway (see note 71 for more information on this).

55. MACAN, *Rocking the Classics*.

56. SHEINBAUM, "Periods in Progressive Rock and the Problem of Authenticity".

57. ANDERTON Chris, "Fire in Harmony: The 1980s UK British Progressive Rock Revival", in *Prog Rock in Europe: Overview of a Persistent Musical Style*, Dijon, Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2016, p. 151-164.

58. ANDERTON, "Clutching at Straws?".

59. AHLKVIST Jarl A., "What Makes Rock Music 'Prog'? Fan Evaluation and the Struggle to Define Progressive Rock", *Popular Music and Society*, vol. 34, n°· 5, 2011, p. 639-660.

60. WAGNER Jeff, *Mean Deviation: Four Decades of Progressive Heavy Metal*, Brooklyn, Brazillion Points Books, 2010.

61. A full list of the group's main missions can be found here: https://rock-progressif.u-bourgogne.fr/component/content/article/37 (accessed 1 November 2020).

62. MOORE, *Rock, the Primary Text*, p. 145. Here it is reported that it was not so unlikely to define "progressive" an album by Kate Bush back in the 1980s.

63. QUINTERO RIVERA Angel, *Salsa, Sabor y Control: Sociologia de la Música 'Tropical'*, Mexico, Siglo Veintiuno, 1998, p. 22.

64. The idea of a "progressive attitude" is all but new, see for instance: ANDERTON Chris and Chris ATTON, "The Term 'Progressive': Art, Politics, Commerce and the Ideology of Musical Progress", published online: https://rock-progressif.u-bourgogne.fr/work-in-progress/the-scope-of-qprogressive-rockq/56-attonanderton-the-term-progressive-art-politics-commerce-and-the-ideology-of-musical-progress.html, accessed 24 May 2021; HEGARTY and HALLIWELL, *Beyond and Before*, p. 224, 284-285; MARTIN, *Listening to the Future*, p. 254; SHEINBAUM, "Periods in Progressive Rock and the Problem of Authenticity".

65. BAUDRILLARD Jean, *Simulacres et Simulation*, Paris, Galilée, 1981; GAMBLE Sarah, "Simulacra, Simulation", SIM Stuart (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, London-New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 305.

66. JAMESON Frederic, "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", *New Left Review*, vol. 1, n°· 146, 1984, p. 53-92.

67. I have presented a draft theory employing five simulative paradigms in MERLINI Mattia, *Le ceneri del prog*, p. 197-254. An English summary is available in MERLINI Mattia, "Dr. Prog and Mr. Post: Or, A (Draft) Theory of (Postmodern) Music Genres", *ICTM/SMI Postgraduate Conference 2020*, University of Limerick, 17-18 January 2020 (see References for a link to the paper).

68. ANDERTON, "Fire in Harmony: The 1980s UK British Progressive Rock Revival".

69. Explaining thoroughly what this manner of making music might be about would require a book of its own, which actually happens to exist, see MERLINI, *Le ceneri del prog.*

70. The link between progressive and musical past has also been examined in MĄDRO Andrzej, "Sins of Unforgetting: 'Re(tro-pro)gression in Rock and Metal Music", *The 4th Biennial International Conference of the Progect Network for the Study of Progressive Rock – Progressive Rock & Metal: Towards a Contemporary Understanding*, University of Ottawa, 19-21 & 26-28 May 2021. This view is to some extent complementary to the one proposed here, enriching it with more concepts and categories that might be helpful for a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon.

71. This is one of the main results of the ethnographic research I presented in MERLINI, *Le ceneri del prog*, p. 73-132. A compact English version of that section of the book in academic article format is currently underway, but the most important findings can already be read in MERLINI Mattia, "Is This Prog? Defining post-progressive as a creative attitude", *The 4th Biennial International Conference of the Progect Network for the Study of Progressive Rock – Progressive Rock & Metal: Towards a Contemporary Understanding*, University of Ottawa, 19-21 & 26-28 May 2021 (see References for a link to the paper). In brief, from a survey I posted in strategic locations on the internet, it came out that the most valuable feature for progressive music is a certain kind of "progress" we might interpret as that very "attitude" I mentioned above.

72. ATTON, "'Living in the Past'?", p. 43.

73. SCOTT, "Invention and Interpretation in Popular Music Historiography".

74. ROBISON Brian, "Somebody is Digging my Bones: King Crimson's 'Dinosaur' as (Post)Progressive Historiography", in HOLM-HUDSON Kevin (ed.), *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, London-New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 232.

75. SHEINBAUM, "Periods in Progressive Rock and the Problem of Authenticity", p. 46.

76. CARR, *What is History?*

77. LENA Jennifer C., *Banding Together: How Communities Create Genres in Popular Music*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 1-3.

78. QUINTERO RIVERA, *Salsa, Sabor y Control: Sociologia de la Música 'Tropical'.*

79. Which is basically what MERLINI, *Le ceneri del prog* is all about.

80. NATTIEZ Jean-Jacques, "Alcuni concetti fondamentali di storiografia della musica: Periodizzazione, spirito del tempo, Successione di generazioni", *Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale*, vol. 13, n°. 1, 2007, p. 24-26. My translation from the Italian: "[...] esiste qualcosa che viene vissuto come tale [come norma] dagli attori della generazione che la riceve in seno ad un 'focolaio' [...] ma rispetto alla quale ogni individuo della nuova generazione conserva un certo grado di libertà. [...] Il cambiamento, infatti, è in primo luogo il risultato di un'azione individuale che devia rispetto alle norme acquisite e vissute, e che contribuisce ad instaurare uno stile che sarà, in seguito, percepito come nuovo se le proposte innovatrici del compositore sono seguite da un certo numero di altri compositori che contribuiranno, a loro volta, alla costruzione di una nuova norma".

81. BLOCH Marc, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien*, Paris, Librairie Armand Colin, 1949.

ABSTRACTS

Progressive rock was among the most successful genres of the 1970s, yet only recently has it partly regained the respect it once had. Indeed, for almost three decades, the prog genre has often been disparaged and condemned as a bombastic and excessive version of psychedelia, thus obliviating its importance and cultural value. Many rebirths of prog can be traced back to the 1980s and the 1990s, but none were able to restore the genre's lost respect or success. The 'traditional' historiography of rock points to the emergence of punk as the moment at which prog was killed, but a deeper analysis can demonstrate how progressive music did not die at all, if we are willing to leave behind the reductive and stereotypical idea of prog as a merely British and "symphonic" phenomenon. Indeed, if we look outside the UK, it is easy to see that prog was far from over. The attempt to explain why a certain historiographical view has been widely accepted can provide insights into the ongoing struggle to define progressive rock as a genre. Indeed, such an analysis can explain why new post-progressive artists (e.g. Kate Bush, Peter Gabriel, Robert Fripp) were not recognised inside the prog canon, and why new albums by classic artists have been reinterpreted as flops, thus influencing aesthetic judgement for decades with a peculiar inversion of values. This study will mainly focus on the role of critics and of the Anglo-symphonic stereotype, seeking to give an alternative account of the death (and rebirth) of prog from a contemporary and postmodern perspective (capable of interpreting the two main breeds of contemporary prog in light of Baudrillard's concept of *simulacrum*), and to give some of the forgotten histories the relevance they deserve.

Si dans les années 1970 le rock progressif comptait parmi les genres les plus populaires, ce n'est que récemment qu'il a en partie retrouvé le respect dont il bénéficiait autrefois. Pendant près de trois décennies, le « prog » a en effet souvent été méprisé, attaqué comme une version grandiloquente et excessive du psychédélisme, ces critiques conduisant à relativiser radicalement son rôle et sa valeur culturelle. Certes, de nombreuses renaissances du prog ont eu lieu dans les années 1980 et 1990, mais aucune n'est parvenue à regagner le respect ou le succès perdus. Par ailleurs, l'historiographie « traditionnelle » du rock considère l'émergence du punk comme le moment même où le prog a été tué. Cependant, une analyse plus approfondie peut démontrer que la musique progressive n'est pas morte, à condition d'abandonner l'idée réductrice et stéréotypée du prog en tant que phénomène purement britannique et « symphonique ». En dehors du Royaume-Uni, la partie était en effet loin d'être terminée. Comprendre pourquoi un certain point de vue historiographique a été si largement accepté permet de poser de nouvelles hypothèses interprétatives concernant la lutte actuelle pour définir le rock progressif en tant que genre. Cette analyse peut expliquer pourquoi les nouveaux artistes post-progressifs (comme Kate Bush, Peter Gabriel ou Robert Fripp) n'ont pas été reconnus à l'intérieur du canon du prog, et pourquoi les nouveaux albums des artistes classiques ont été réinterprétés comme des flops, influençant ainsi le jugement esthétique pendant des décennies via une étrange inversion des valeurs. Notre interrogation se concentre principalement sur le stéréotype anglo-symphonique et le rôle des critiques, en proposant un récit alternatif de la mort (et de la renaissance) du prog dans une perspective contemporaine et postmoderne (capable d'interpréter les deux principales branches du prog contemporain à la lumière du concept de simulacre de Baudrillard), et de donner à certaines histoires oubliées la pertinence qu'elles méritent.

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Mattia Merlini holds a B.A. in Philosophy and an M.A. in Musicology from the University of Milan. He has taught philosophy and human sciences in secondary schools and is now pursuing further graduate studies at the University of Pisa. His current research, carried out within the framework of the University of Milan's SpotiGeM project, focuses on the redefinition of musical genres in the age of streaming. He recently published the monograph *Le ceneri del prog* ("The ashes of prog") with Ricordi/LIM. He is also a composer of film music (e.g. "Il Dominio della Lacrima", "Enemy") and active in community outreach to promote appreciation of philosophy and the arts.