

# **ROCKING ROMANTICISM**

## **Romanticism and Rock Music**

### **International Conference**

#### **Université d'Artois, Arras, France**

Textes et Cultures (UR 4028), équipe interne "Translittéraires", en association avec l'ENS, la SERA, et LOOP

**Thursday 28th-Friday 29th March 2024**

Organised by Adrian Grafe (Université d'Artois) and Marc Porée (ENS/PSL)

Over the decades, and right up to the present, rock musicians have shown a marked interest in Romantic poets and poetry. In the wake of previous scholarly examinations of the topic—one which the conference organisers believe may best be explored in a live, intermedial setting—this conference seeks to delve into the reasons for this, and to consider how these musicians' creativity is inspired by Romantic poetry and imagery lyrically, musically and other ways. The closeness of Romantic poetry to the art of song could hardly be greater, from Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* to Keats's odes and sonnets and Byron's "We'll Go No More A-Roving" (sung by Leonard Cohen, among others, in a rock mode) and explains, in part, the attraction which these poems, among many others, hold for rock artists. The subject has constantly proved its dynamism, and even since the publication of James Rovira's 2018 *Rock and Romanticism: Blake, Wordsworth and Rock from Dylan to U2*, rock musicians have continued to display their interest in Romantic tropes.

How do the two cultural worlds – Romantic poets and poetry, and the modern rock business – apparently quite unlike each other, come together?

While the answer, my friend, might be blowin' in the wind, there are several explanations which come to mind. It might be thematically, or quite literally, that (dis)"Satisfaction", to give it its title (but *ennui*, *Weltschmerz*, *taedium vitae*, anxiety, longing, would also do the trick), acts as an enduring line of inspiration. Or, again, it may have to do with the cult of celebrity, famously launched by Lord Byron (cf. Fiona MacCarthy's 2002 biography). It will be found that love is another binding, albeit hardly original, force. A more trenchant political line of Opposition (which, in the eyes of William Blake, is "True Friendship"), re-enacted and updated in the various Rock against, say, racism (RAR) movements, will also come to mind.

Our contention is that, while all of these notions may be relevant, they hardly touch upon what we find to be central to the "Romantic Connection", as it were,

namely the resilience of the written poetic word when electrified (electricity, a key romantic notion if one goes by the views of Tristan Garcia, *La vie intense: Une obsession moderne*, 2016), when sung, when set to the pulsations—to the beat—of Rock. This Rom-Rock Conference intends to shed light on the persistence, on the musical scene, of romantic tunes.

We welcome papers on, without being limited to:

- Close readings/close listenings of rewritings, borrowings and adaptations of Romantic writings
- Questions of intermediality: transfers of poems from the page to the stage, recording studio, screen or digital resources
- Rock-culture allusions to Romantic writers (cf. the Italian band “The Quincey” naming themselves after the author of *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*)
- Musicological and poetological approaches to setting poems to music and to the musical performance of such works
- Rock iconicity and personae as a post-Romantic inheritance
- Romantic painting and rock album covers, posters, films, etc
- Hauntological perspectives: romanticism as haunting rock music
- ...

Last but not least, for sheer fun and enjoyment, we would love to foster interest in musicians and singers willing to come and perform live versions/adaptations of Romantic works.

Please send 150-word abstracts for twenty-minute presentations in English or French and a brief biobiblio by **September 15th 2023** to Adrian Grafe ([adrian.grafe@univ-artois](mailto:adrian.grafe@univ-artois) <mailto:adrian.grafe@univ-artois> ) and Marc Porée ([marc.poree@ens.psl.eu](mailto:marc.poree@ens.psl.eu) <mailto:marc.poree@ens.psl.eu>).

Scientific Committee

- \* Raffaella Antinucci (Parthenope University, Naples)
- \* Dr Laure-Hélène Antony (Université de Bourgogne)
- \* Caroline Bertonèche (Université Grenoble Alpes)
- \* Adrian Grafe (Université d’Artois)
- \* Matthew Graves (AMU)
- \* Dr Claire Hélie (Université de Lille)
- \* Dr Marion Leclair (Université d’Artois)
- \* Dr Andrew McKeown (Université de Poitiers)
- \* Dr Emily Taylor Merriman (Amherst College)
- \* Marc Porée (ENS/PSL)