

## Call for Papers

### Conference 'The Lost Romantics', University of Vechta (Germany), 11-14 May 2017

There have been various attempts to subject the period of Romanticism to a substantial re-mapping: the result being an extension of the traditional canon of the big six (male) Romantic poets and a (re-)discovery of numerous authors, male and female, hitherto considered to be irretrievably lost.

Apart from these unknown Romantics mushrooming in anthologies, the Vechta conference will focus on names that both the 19<sup>th</sup>-century readership and the canonical poets were familiar with and that for inexplicable reasons have fallen into oblivion. Biographies such as Richard Holmes's two-volume book on Coleridge, *Early Visions* (1989) and *Dark Reflections* (1998), underline that Coleridge was well-acquainted with and often inspired by poets such as Samuel Palmer, Samuel Rogers and Charles Lamb, three writers who are nowadays only known to a small circle of connoisseurs and who are remembered as being tangential to the careers of other Romantics. It was Byron who was not reluctant to praise Rogers's poem *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792) and to point out that there was "not a vulgar line in the poem." Accusing Wordsworth of gross vulgarity, Byron was always waiting for Rogers to be restored as a modern Apollo to the vacant throne of poetry. Among the questions that this conference will address is that of what happened to these poets, what caused them to be relegated to the footnotes of literary histories and what made them so important to the canonical writers.

The conference will also deal with well-known writers and poets who, in the eyes of modern criticism, are now reduced to just one major work. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) has found its way on to many university reading lists, but her novels such as *Valperga*, *Mathilda*, *Lodore* or *Falkner* are still Romantic *terrae incognitae* that have not been sufficiently explored. Even her travelogue *Rambles through Germany and Italy*, which was published in the same year as Dickens's widely read *Pictures from Italy* (1844), is waiting to be retrieved from the margins of literature. The same is true of writers such as Matthew Gregory Lewis, who is only remembered for his sensational novel *The Monk*, but whose dramatic works *The Castle Spectre*, *The Bravo of Venice* or *Adelgitha* are completely forgotten and scarcely worth a fleeting reference in recent studies on Romantic

drama. This list could be indefinitely extended and should certainly comprise authors such as John Polidori, Robert Southey or Leigh Hunt, the last of which was partially restored to memory by Nicholas Roe's eminent biography *Fiery Mind* (2005). But the question of what made one of their works eclipse their entire oeuvre has so far not been answered satisfactorily.

The conference invites papers dealing with, but not restricted to

- almost completely forgotten Romantic writers
- the "neglected geniuses" (Byron on Rogers) who were widely acclaimed and inexplicably fell into disrepute later (Samuel Rogers, Samuel Palmer, George Crabbe, John Hamilton Reynolds, Walter Savage Landor etc.)
- Romantic 'one-hit wonders': Matthew Gregory Lewis, John Polidori, Mary Shelley etc.

Confirmed keynote speakers are: Duncan Wu (Georgetown), Ian Duncan (University of California, Berkeley), Michael O'Neill (Durham), Fiona Stafford (Somerville College, Oxford), Tom Mole (Edinburgh), Fred Burwick (University of California Los Angeles) and Christoph Bode (LM University of Munich).

300-word abstracts should be sent to the convenor of the conference by 31 January 2016.

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