

Call for Papers The Pilgrims of the Rhine

International Symposium
(Université de Haute-Alsace, Mulhouse, France)
Les Voyageurs du Rhin
21-22 April 2016

The purpose of the symposium is to understand the complexity of the Rhine. There are several Rhine(s). The German Rhine is very different from the Swiss Rhine, or from the Alsatian Rhine; the Romantic Rhine is very different from the Humanistic Rhine. Moreover, the Rhine is as well a place of creation and thought as a literary and artistic motif. We would like to study the artistic, literary, intellectual, social and political history of the Rhine. Here are some of the topics we would like to discuss (of course, a lot of other topics may interest us):

1. The Rhine of (pre-)Romantic Anglo-Saxons seems to be an interesting topic. The river, which originates in the Grisons, Switzerland, and empties into the North Sea, in the Netherlands, is one of the Tourists' favorite roads. Ann Radcliffe travels along the Rhine in 1795. She is deeply impressed by the sublime and Gothic castles, and is delighted with the mysterious power of the Rhine's waters. In her diary, she writes that she has the feeling to dive into the immensity of the afterlife (Ann Radcliffe, *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany with a Return down the Rhine*, 1795). Byron too magnifies the river. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he evokes the "maternal nature" that surrounds the "majestic Rhine." And Mary Shelley evokes the Rhine landscape, its impenetrable forests and its pleasant hills (*Frankenstein*, 1818).

2. The representations of the Alsatian Rhine are also interesting. The French Romantics are fascinated by the Rhine myth, but Alsace does not really hold their attention. In the *Picturesque Travels in Ancient France* by Justin Taylor and Charles Nodier (24 volumes, 1820-1878), Alsace seems to be forgotten. The cause of this omission might be the fact that the national and linguistic identity of the region is difficult to define.

3. Alsace, however, is not absolutely forgotten. Nerval and Hugo evoke Strasbourg in their travel narratives. Strasbourg Cathedral becomes a Romantic Ideal. It is interesting to observe how the traveler is trying to understand the ambivalent identity of a border region. Cities, cathedrals, travel narratives: everything seems to be reflected in the waters of the river. *The Rhine* (1842), by Victor Hugo, is both a *border-narrative* and kind of a *roman-fleuve*. Hugo compares the river Ill to the river Rhône. As to Nerval, he sees in the waters of the Rhine the reflection of the religious state of the countries the river flows through. In Basel, the river's waters are pure, but in Strasbourg, the "Christian metropolis", "the Rhine waters are degraded." (*Letters from Germany*, p.895.)

4. The Rhine is both the backbone of Europe and a conflict zone. The Rhine attracts French travelers, who want to cross it to discover "the land of Goethe and Schiller, the country of Hoffmann, the old Germany, our mother! ... Teutonia" (Nerval). The Rhine, the "Occidental Nile" (Lamartine), is an axis of symmetry: to be on the French side leads to dream of Germany, but once in Germany, the traveler dreams of France, and tries to

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understand its fate, its identity. The inhabitants of the French border towns speak German, and those of Baden speak French. According to Nerval, Kehl (“like all foreign cities near our borders”) is a French city, and Strasbourg is a German one. This in-between area even interested Fenimore Cooper, who wanted to examine how different peoples coexist, in order to prepare the future of the United States. But the river, which links and unites the nations, has become an area of conflict. The “Quarrel of the Rhine” is a literary conflict as well as a political or a military one. Hugo deplors it: “The Rhine is the river which links [Germany and France]; now it is the river which separates them.”

Besides the purely Romantic representations of the Rhine, here are some topics which would be particularly interesting:

1. The Rhine region is one of the cradles of Humanism. But how do Humanists represent the river?

2. Do Humanistic representations of the Rhine inspire Romantic writers?

3. What about the Rhine in the 17th and 18th centuries?

4. Apollinaire’s poems that celebrate the Rhine are well-known, but deserve to be re-read. And almost nobody knows André Breton’s, Louis Aragon’s or Henri Michaux’s texts that evoke the river. We would be happy to know more about the modern representations of the Rhine.

5. The novels that evoke the Rhine (*The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) by Eleanor Sleath, *F sharp* (1834) by Alphonse Karr, *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* (1834) by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Kickleburs on the Rhine* (1850) by Thackeray, *Jean-Christophe* (1904-1912) by Romain Rolland...) could form an interesting corpus.

6. Papers about the pictorial representations of the Rhine (Turner, Macke, Henri Fantin-Latour...) as well as papers about musical evocations of the river (Wagner, Bizet, Schumann and many others) will be very welcome.

We also would like to discuss the following theoretical topics:

1. What are the links between travel and nomadism? A French traveler traveling in France is kind of a nomad, since he moves without leaving his territory (Deleuze). Gautier’s travels in France are particularly interesting. Gautier is not really enthusiastic about the Alsatian Gothic: he prefers the “pure masterpieces of Greek genius gilded by the sun of Attica!”. His enthusiasm for the cathedrals turned into “painful admiration.” He particularly deplors the “glacial rigidity” of Strasbourg’s *Münster* (*Quand on voyage*).

2. What about the “committed trip”? Gautier changed his mind about Strasbourg cathedral when artillery pounded Alsace. He evokes his “old friend the Strasbourg’s *Münster*” (*Tableaux de siège*, 1871), he celebrates the storks and the “new Madonna, the Strasbourg statue.”

3. The middle class traveler sometimes acts like a pseudo-wanderer. But the poet is sincere. His travel is spiritual as well as geographic. He travels along the Rhine in search of myths and legends. *Die Lorelei* fascinates not only Heinrich Heine’s boatmen but also Nerval and Apollinaire. The poet’s discourse, which is “essentially wandering [...]”, which is “always out of itself” (Maurice Blanchot), enters the Lorelei’s field.

Of course, many other topics may interest us. Our idea is to organize a symposium on

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the Rhine, and particularly on the travels in the Rhine region, on their historical, political, mythical, literary and artistic grounds. All areas, all eras and all disciplines may interest us. The symposium will be both academic and artistic: a musical event is planned. Other artistic proposals would be very welcome.

Colleagues are invited to submit proposals to Nikol Dziub, at the following email address: nikol.dziub@uha.fr. Proposals (about half-a-page long) should take the form of a short abstract (in English or French) and of a brief biography. Abstracts should be received by 31 January. The Proceedings of the symposium will be published in 2016. Authors should therefore be prepared to send completed papers by 22 May.

Scientific Committee:

Laurent Berec (Lecturer, University of Upper-Alsace)

Guy Ducrey (Professor, University of Strasbourg)

Nikol Dziub (PhD Candidate, University of Upper-Alsace)

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