

Jan Plug

**Futures—Of Romanticism,
Or, Romanticism Then and Now**

About the “burden of the past” (Bate), anxieties of influence and history (Bloom, Levinson, Liu), even a lyrical structure that insists upon revisitation—of time and place, of consciousness first and foremost, perhaps—we have heard a great deal. This course will seek to come to terms, rather, with Romanticism’s anticipation, perhaps better, its prefiguration, of the future, its own not least. Thus, we will be concerned with how that future relates to Romanticism, in particular with how Romanticism is taken up in by later periods, especially in the 20th century (and beyond). Even more, it will ask how Romanticism only becomes fully Romantic in that reading, just as those reading it are only able to conceive of themselves (as Modern, say, or even postmodern, or . . .) by way of a reading of Romanticism. Thus, for instance, Kleist will write a play “after” (both in the manner of and as a successor to) Molière and both Kleist and, through him, Molière will be written into the future and past by contemporary novelist John Banville. Less directly, but no less importantly, we might examine how Wallace Stevens takes up Romantic figures—of nature and art. A similar gesture will be made by much contemporary criticism, and one of the “thens”—or perhaps “nows”—we will attempt to trace in the course will be the development of theory, deconstruction and New Historicism, in particular, in their relationship to Romanticism. Whether we are concerned with how Celan takes up Büchner, for instance, or how de Man reads Wordsworth, one of our concerns, no doubt our primary one, will be with language—and thus to read the texts, critical, poetic, and dramatic alike, as carefully as possible.

Possible Readings:

Kleist, *Amphitryon*, “On the Gradual Completion of Thought While Speaking,” “The Earthquake in Chili,” *Prince Friedrick of Hamburg*
Büchner, *Lenz*, *Woyzeck*
Celan, Meridian lecture
Walser, “Kleist in Thun”
Banville, *The Infinities*
Coleridge, “Frost at Midnight,” “Dejection: An Ode,” *Biographia Literaria*
Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, *Lyrical Ballads* (selections)
Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, “Defense of Poetry”
Keats, Keats, *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion*
Wallace Stevens, selected poems (including, “The Idea of Order at Key West,” “The Snow Man,” “The Man with the Blue Guitar”)
Yeats, selected poems
Theoretical texts by Bloom, de Man, Hartman, McGann, Levinson, Liu, Wang, and others.