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Sprache / Literatur
überregional**Romanticism as distinctive global phenomenon****DFG funds research training group 'Romanticism as a Model' at the University of Jena until 2024 /
Research approach and training concept with worldwide resonance**

What connects the Australian poets David Malouf and Samuel Wagan Watson with Jena? Where is the overlap between Romanticism, colonialism and the African country Cameroon?

Since 2015, the research training group on the topic 'Romanticism as a Model. Variation – Scope – Relevance' at the University of Jena in Germany has been studying the influence of Romanticism on current forms of world interpretation, self-reflection, aesthetic design and ways of living. Topics of political discourse or the history of ideas are dealt with, as well as forms of religiosity, scientific aspects, art inspired by Romanticism or phenomena of subculture and mass culture. Academics from the fields of literary studies, language studies, musicology and art studies, as well as history, theology, computational linguistics and sociology, work with partners from Jena, Germany and the wider world to study Romanticism as a distinctive phenomenon in Europe – and also beyond Europe.

Second funding phase with 4.5 million euros from the DFG

In summer 2019, researcher Dr Ruth Barratt-Peacock from Tasmania gained her doctorate on the romantic interpretation of the world in contemporary Australian poetry, as shown in the examples of well-known writer David Malouf and Aboriginal poet Samuel Wagan Watson. Currently, Pascal Ongossi Assamba, whose country of origin, Cameroon, was a Germany colony from 1884 to 1916, is working on his doctoral research project 'German Romanticism – Colonialism – National Consciousness in Cameroon'. These are two examples of the international resonance of the Jena research training group, which has now started its second funding phase.

In 2015, the German Research Foundation (DFG) approved funding for the research training group totalling 3.8 million euros up to 2020. This enabled, for the first time, research in Jena on Romanticism as a model of interpretation, representation and conception, as well as a model for action. The new funding by the DFG runs until September 2024 and totals 4.5 million euros.

Recognition for research approach as well as supervision and qualification concept

Research training group spokesperson Prof. Stefan Matuschek sees the continued funding as recognition of the group's research approach to Romanticism as a model-building process and also of the innovative supervision and qualification concept developed in 2015 for the group members. The second cohort of 14 doctoral candidates and two postdocs are now doing research in the group. In addition to their doctoral research, the study programme also offers them practical training periods in houses of poets, foundations and museums, as well as in city marketing and cultural journalism. In addition to larger and smaller cultural institutions in the region, Prof. Matuschek can point to many other partners of the group, including the publisher C. H. Beck Verlag, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper, the Walden Woods

Project in Lincoln, Massachusetts, and the German Historical Institute Warsaw. Some doctoral candidates are involved in the conceptualisation of the first central German Museum of Romanticism currently being built at the Freies Deutsches Hochstift in Frankfurt am Main.

This broad composition enables doctoral candidates to gain experience in professional fields outside the university or to meet one another in workshops. The research training group attracts notable figures to workshops, such as Uwe Ebbinghaus, features editor at the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. He was a guest in Jena in May and June 2017 and will run a journalism workshop again this year.

Jena as authentic birthplace of Romanticism

Last, but not least, it is of course the city of Jena as the authentic birthplace of Romanticism that focuses international attention on the research training group, says Prof. Matuschek. In Jena, in November 1799, Friedrich von Hardenberg, known as Novalis, Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, as guests of the household of the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, together with Caroline Schlegel, who later married Schelling, and Dorothea Veit, who married Schlegel, lived an entirely new form of free, intellectual social concept and created new impulses for philosophy, religion, literature, and art. They not only spread new universalistic concepts in the areas of aesthetics and religious philosophy but also in natural philosophy and politics. At the same time, texts influenced by Romanticism react by showing that such concepts can have no universal validity in the modern world. The modern awareness of contingency leads to aesthetic structures which attempt to correctly represent both a holistic worldview and the fragmentary movements of Modernity. This short, legendary meeting in Jena, has given Jena a prominent place on the cultural-historical map of modern Europe – with an impact beyond Europe, as we have seen.

Two centuries later, Romanticism is a ubiquitous part of daily discourse and culture. Even a marketing slogan such as 'Romantic hotel' picks up on the longings for harmony and fulfilment associated with the term. The ideas of the Romantics have a profound effect on current perceptions of the role of the individual, partnership, love and happiness. What is more, contemporary literature is rooted in Romanticism. The 'Romanticism as a Model' research group has shown how this manifests itself on many occasions through 'practical examples', inviting well-known authors such as Ingo Schulze, Felicitas Hoppe and Clemens Meyer to give public lectures.

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Prof. Stefan Matuschek is the spokesperson of the research training group 'Romanticism as a Model', which has now started its second funding phase.
(Photo: Jan-Peter Kasper/FSU)