

Swiss Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies

Book series:

Travaux sur la Suisse des Lumières

Call for Papers

Contributions for the anthology:

Rousseauian Celebrations – Celebrating Rousseau: On the Reception of Jean-Jacques Rousseau since the 18th Century

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Concept/Aim

The planned anthology will explore different aspects of the cult surrounding Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In this way, it will focus on phenomena that have recently become the object of increased attention in different (interdisciplinary) branches of cultural studies – namely, the forms and practices of celebrations, cults, rituals and the performative world.¹ In the field of literary studies, for example, scholars have recently been examining the processes by which literature becomes fetishized² as well as the various ways we honor great writers.³ Cultural historians, for their part, have investigated the broader picture of bourgeois celebratory culture in general,⁴ while historians of education have discussed the protagonists in the world of pedagogy who have portrayed themselves as redeemers.⁵

In all of these “cult” exercises (in the broadest sense), we can observe a certain tension in the relationship between, on the one hand, personal enthusiasm for a thing or an individual and, on the other hand, officially sanctioned or managed homage. Individual veneration can assume forms or attach itself to objects that may not seem opportune from an overall societal viewpoint. In his major study about Rousseau’s reception in Germany, Herbert Jaumann indirectly illuminated this situation when he stated that in the history of Rousseau’s reception, we can observe manifestations of a “split between the work and the person” which was a product of the content of his writings and which was perceived by Rousseau solely as a “model of the exemplary life.”⁶ Pedagogy has taken quite the opposite tack: it has questioned Rousseau’s character even while recognizing the innovative and insightful nature of his pedagogic theories.⁷

¹ See: Performanz. Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften. Hg. v. Uwe Wirth. Frankfurt a. M. 2002 (stw 1575).

² See: Christine Weder: Erschriebene Dinge. Fetisch, Amulett, Talisman um 1800. Freiburg im Breisgau 2007 (Rombach Wissenschaften, Reihe Litterae, 149).

³ See: Verehrung, Kult, Distanz. Vom Umgang mit dem Dichter im 19. Jahrhundert. Ed. v. Wolfgang Braungart. Tübingen 2004 (Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte, 120).

⁴ Bürgerliche Feste. Symbolische Formen politischen Handelns im 19. Jahrhundert. Ed. v. Manfred Hettling, Paul Nolte. Göttingen 1993.

⁵ Zur Inszenierungsgeschichte pädagogischer Erlöserfiguren. Hg. v. Patrick Bühler, Fritz Osterwalder. Bern 2012 [forthcoming].

⁶ Rousseau in Deutschland. Neue Beiträge zur Erforschung seiner Rezeption. Ed. v. Herbert Jaumann. Berlin, New York 1994, p. 9.

⁷ “There are few men who have exerted a greater influence upon education than the celebrated author, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. [...] Throughout his career he was subject to petty misfortunes and persecutions, but his immoralities repress our sympathy for his sufferings.” (F.V.N. Painter: A history of education. New York 1896, p. 249).

Thus, when we inquire about the cult of Rousseau, about the practices of veneration with which people encountered Rousseau, then we should anticipate the development of diverse and sometimes agonal constellations of reception, and it is here that we must attempt to situate Rousseau and his work. Whereas in Zurich, for example – and of course, only in educated society – people discussed Rousseau’s political theories with great animation,⁸ in Germany, people were mostly interested in Rousseau the “media celebrity.”⁹ The anthology aims to embrace these wide-ranging and contradictory elements in Rousseau’s reception and attempt to cast light upon different “images of Rousseau” from as many different vantage points as possible. The self-portraits that Rousseau “painted” or enacted also belong to this landscape. Four topical areas thus emerge:

Structure

1. How Rousseau Portrayed Himself

In this area, we can imagine a range of elements for study, which look at Rousseau as a person, as an author, and as a first-person narrator. In Rousseau’s self-portrayal, the following characters deserve to be examined:

- A Republican without a homeland
- The cloak of the hero
- Rousseau and the dramatization of suffering
- Rousseau the correspondent
- Rousseau as artist
- Rousseau as lover
- etc.

2. Celebrating Rousseau

Key biographical dates in Rousseau’s life have inevitably called forth multiple celebratory events, and similarly, we can observe that at certain historical moments, a nation will pay homage to those particular individuals who reflect its contemporary situation. In this section as well as in Section 3, “Rousseauian Strongholds,” it would be appropriate to direct the focus of inquiry toward aspects of communication and media history, and to the institutional historical conditions that may have had an impact upon Rousseau’s reception. For example, one wonders whether we can detect idiosyncratic patterns of reception within the context of a comparative perspective that contrasts different national viewpoints and languages. Additionally, we might ask: seen from a historical perspective, can we uncover different approaches to Rousseau (comparing the 18th to the 19th century or juxtaposing posthumous reverence with how Rousseau was regarded during his own lifetime)?

⁸ Also see in this regard: Jesko Reiling: *Die Genese der idealen Gesellschaft. Studien zum literarischen Werk von Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698-1783)*. Berlin, New York 2010, p. 281-291, und Daniel Tröhler: *Republikanismus und Pädagogik. Pestalozzi im historischen Kontext*. Bad Heilbrunn 2006. Also see: Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer: *Johann Jakob Bodmers Rousseau-Lektüre*. In: *Les écrivains suisses alémaniques et la culture francophone au XVIII^e siècle. Actes du colloque de Berne 24-26 novembre 2004*. Ed. v. Michèle Crogiez Labarthe, Sandrine Battistini, Karl Kürtös. Genf 2008, p. 209-272.

⁹ Jaumann: *Rousseau*, p. 9; in the same reference, there is also an important survey of research regarding the history of Rousseau’s reception, which should be supplemented by the following additional studies: Heide von Felden: *Die Frauen und Rousseau. Die Rousseau-Rezeption zeitgenössischer Schriftstellerinnen in Deutschland*. Frankfurt a.M. 1997 (Campus Forschung, 749), *Rousseauismus. Naturevangelium und Literatur*. Hg. v. Jürgen Söring, Peter Gasser. Frankfurt a.M. 1999 und Uwe Hentschel: “...da wallfahrte ich hin, oft mit der neuen Héloïse in der Tasche...”. *Zur deutschen Rousseau-Rezeption im 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert*. In: *Euphorion* 96 (2002), p. 47-74.

In this second section, “Celebrating Rousseau,” it would make sense to thoroughly and comparatively examine the conditions, forms, and the aims of the greatest diversity of Rousseauian celebrations. For example:

- Rousseau 1812, 1878, 1912, 1978 in multiple contexts
- Rousseau during the French Revolution
- Rousseau celebrations in comparison to the celebration of other great writers (for example, Montesquieu, Diderot, Voltaire, Abbt, Pestalozzi, Schiller, etc.)
- etc.

3. Rousseauian Strongholds of Reception

In this section, we hope to focus especially on specific epicenters of Rousseauian veneration. Do these correspond to the sites for ‘official’ celebrations? What special social, intellectual, societal or other conditions and structures must be present in order to provoke a ‘managed’ reception for Rousseau? What conditions have led to Rousseau being rejected? In this regard, it is important not to limit one’s consideration to geographical places, but to also include social and ideological contexts. For example:

- Rousseau and Zurich
- Rousseau during times of turbulence and upheaval
- Rousseau and women
- etc.

4. The Rousseau of Different Disciplines

In the fourth section, we primarily intend to illuminate Rousseau’s reception in the academic world. By exploring the different ways Rousseau has been received by various academic disciplines, we hope to call attention to those areas in which an interdisciplinary approach would prove especially fertile. In this regard, we can detect a range of different “Rousseaus.”

- The Rousseau of the theologians
- The Rousseau of the philosophers
- The Rousseau of the literary critics
- The Rousseau of the pedagogues
- The Rousseau of the musicologists
- etc.

Organizational Information

Contributions may be submitted in English, in French or in German. Please submit the synopses (maximum one A4 page, along with a brief bio-bibliographic note for the publisher) to the editors **by the end of October 2011** at the latest.

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