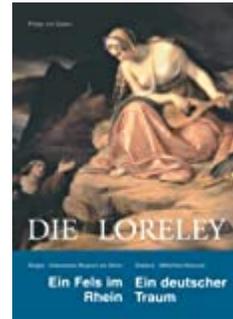




Mario Kramp, Matthias Schmandt. *Die Loreley: Ein Fels im Rhein. Ein deutscher Traum.* Mainz: Philipp von Zabern Verlag, 2004. XV + 214 S. EUR 39.90 (paper), ISBN 978-3-8053-3369-6.



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A German Erbe as International Erbe?

The cliffs at the narrowest bend and deepest point of the Rhine between the German cities of Bingen and Koblenz have long harbored a legacy that has been and continues to be personified as the Loreley. What defines this national legacy? Can it justly be deemed an international legacy as well? What role do literature and the arts play in its definition and development? The present volume deals with how nature, art and commerce have grown together into a German national legacy and arguably an international one as well. In the introduction, the editors note that the publication is a result of the designation of the Loreley and its immediate surroundings as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site (p. ix). But can one really say that it is more than a German legacy—one enchanted by early myth and courted in romantic literature, music and painting? Is it actually a *Welterbe*, stirring intrigue of other Europeans (such as French authors, Italian painters, and English travelers), Americans (after the Second World War) and Far East scholars and tourists alike (such as Japanese, Korean, and Chinese)?

The overall aesthetic quality of the book itself is self-evident upon first glance. The cover of the book is a

reprint of Carl Joseph Begas's beautiful 1835 painting, *Die Lureley*. The book is decorated with diverse, consistently high quality visual examples (from text covers and excerpts, to geographical sketches, paintings, pictures of sculptures and so on). The first written page of each article is accompanied by an appropriate visual example. Furthermore, it is relatively easy to reference each contribution through the many subtitles and the German and English summaries that conclude each article.

In terms of content, the volume is primarily organized along lines of geography and chronology. Although the Loreley is the primary focus, the cities of Bingen and Koblenz—the cities between which the portion of the Rhine singled out by UNESCO flows—serve as a frame. The Bingen section is subtitled “Ein Fels im Rhein,” and the Koblenz one is called “Ein deutscher Traum.” The Bingen section is vastly smaller and concentrates predominantly on pre-1800 themes. Rahel Hohlfeld and Jörn Kruhl begin with coverage of the geological processes and rock strata. Axel von Berg then introduces the advent of human history in the area, which dates back one million years, spanning developments from the Stone and

Bronze Ages to Roman influence. This first section is artistically less diverse than later ones. Yet it is interesting and lays the natural, physical foreground from which the artistic and commercial activity of the second section derives its motivations.

Here, a transition from a descriptive, scholarly themes to the discussion of heightened human communication and expression is made when Matthias Schmandt writes of knights (the *Ritterpreis* of 1300), traveling singers, the beginnings of the Loreley as a family and business name (recorded c. 1197 C.E.), the amazing echoes of the cliffs and developing stories and myths of dwarves. Christoph Daxelmüller continues with this theme. He also addresses the linguistic background of the term Loreley itself—possibly originating from Middle High German *lei[e]* (cliffs) and *luren* (peak/spy) (p. 37). Hereafter Mario Kramp and Matthias Schmandt re-focus on the “deepest” point of the Rhine at the Loreley, discussing St. Goar, the counts of Katzenelnbogen, the Hansenbecher and salmon fishing. Many of the early references are well written and interesting, but do not substantially contribute to our understanding of what would become the Loreley. However, the cliffs’ echo at this precise bend in the Rhine, which enchanted and mystified sailors (and later travelers), is significant. The myth nicely lays the foreground for the later Romantic interest and metaphoric use of this terrain and its myth.

The second section of the book is the quantitatively dominant part and develops the Loreley within a much broader and significant cultural perspective. Mario Kramp begins the section with a delightful summary of Clemens Brentano’s female figure Lore Lay, a sort of nymph echo, in his 1801 ballad “To Bacharah from the Rhein,” located in the second part of his novel *Godwi* (p. 57). Here the men hear the *Zauberin* as she falls off the cliffs on her way to the cloister—yelling “lore lay, lore lay, lore lay” (pp. 60). Kramp finds in Brentano’s figure a cultural and artistic balance between a Romantic re-living of previous echo myths and an intimate, almost lyric sensitivity (p. 60). By employing a quote from Friedrich Schlegel that urges readers to remember “what the Germans once were and what they could be was never so awake as with a view of the Rhine,” Kramp brings both politics and art into the discussion of the Loreley (cited on p. 58).

Joseph Kruse continues with this early and significant development of the Loreley as part of past myth and early eighteenth-century Romantic prose by referencing Heine’s 1823 poem, “Ich weiÃ nicht, was soll es

bedeuten,” as perhaps the most well-known and major literary presence of the Loreley. It represents a mix of both Heine’s personal mood and Rhine romanticism (p. 67). Heine’s poem further serves as a reference and a pivotal moment in the development and establishment of what would popularly become the Loreley. In later articles, Heine’s poem serves as the basis of discussion of the Loreley outside of Germany, most notably in Eun-Kyoung Park’s article on the Far East.

In this second section, genres are clearly divided between articles, although the exact implications of the idea of the Loreley are at times dubious. Perhaps the most tangible and in my opinion most impressive aspect of this publication is the artwork. Rita Mallejans-Dickmann’s article features the image from the book’s cover, “Lureley,” by the Rhinelander Begas. This painting is presented as the first major milestone in the pictorial representation of a personification of the Loreley myth. Dickmann mentions further paintings, notably by Philipp von Foltz (1850), Wilhelm Kray (1878) and later Eduard Jakob von Steinle (1864) and Karl Friedrich Fries (1857). However, Begas’s Lureley figure—his sensual depiction of a voluptuous female figure sitting upon the cliff’s plateau with lute, bare shoulder and long braided, blond hair who overlooks the cliff and is, in turn, looked upon by the falling (yet enchanted) male figures (*Fahrmanner*) with outstretched arms—is proof that painting trumps words. The myth (with its central theme of female beauty), its eroticism and temptation teamed with death evolve into a sort of model for the German female (p. 89). This combination leads to the perception of the Loreley as a Germanic female ideal type, contrasted and presented in comparison with Germania in a later article by Marie-Louise von Plessen. This middle section of the book has the greatest (artistic) cohesion and convincingly establishes the Loreley as a German cultural legacy.

After oral traditions and Romantic-inspired preoccupations of the Loreley, the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries take on a more pragmatic stance, for example, in travel and tourism. These topics are the subject of Marianne Gechter and Elmar Scheuren’s article, which discusses the cliffs in travel journals, travel literature and their representation. Earlier Romantic associations slowly fade with Roland Have’s negation of any real connection between the Loreley and the Rhine gold (the sunken treasure of the Nibelungen). Gertrud Cepl-Kaufmann considers Weimar critiques of the myth (by writers such as Thomas Mann and Leon Feuchtwanger). Paul Georg-Custodis then turns to the Nazi revival of the myth and construction of a Rhine theater grounds near

the Loreley.

The postwar section places the Loreley in the most international perspective. Rüdiger Muller discusses the marketing of the Rhine and the Loreley as not only a German, but also an international travel destination and source of souvenirs. He considers as well the tides of commerce and kitsch associated with the Loreley in the latter part of the twentieth century. Eun-Kyoung Park writes of the reception of the Loreley in the Far East, where Heine served as the main link to the Loreley. In Korea, Heine was honored as a Romantic love poet, while in China he was studied as a political author. In the final article, Anton Neugebauer revisits the theme of the in-

roduction and the reasons for the exhibition in Koblenz and the publication itself.

The articles convincingly present the Loreley as a significant part of a German legacy; however, its international significance has not yet been established. More articles from an international perspective would be desirable. This publication will be of great interest for any Loreley aficionados, however, as well as those with passion for German geology, tourism and art. Otherwise, due to the great number of contributors and limited space for each, the volume is not an attractive or in-depth endpoint of academic discussion.

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