



The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism

Robert Pattison

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The Triumph of Vulgarly is a thinker's guide to rock 'n' roll. Rock music mirrors the tradition of nineteenth-century Romanticism, Robert Pattison says. Whitman's "barbaric yawp" can still be heard in the punk rock of the Ramones, and the spirit that inspired Poe's *Eureka* lives on in the lyrics of Talking Heads. Rock is vulgar, Pattison notes, and vulgarity is something that high culture has long despised but rarely bothered to define. This book is the first effort since John Ruskin and Aldous Huxley to describe in depth what vulgarity is, and how, with the help of ideas inherent in Romanticism, it has slipped the constraints imposed on it by refined culture and established its own loud arts.

The book disassembles the various myths of rock: its roots in black and folk music; the primacy it accords to feeling and self; the sexual omnipotence of rock stars; the satanic predilections of rock fans; and rock's high-voltage image of the modern Prometheus wielding an electric guitar. Pattison treats these myths as vulgar counterparts of their originals in refined Romantic art and offers a description and justification of rock's central place in the social and aesthetic structure of modern culture. At a time when rock lyrics have provoked parental outrage and senatorial hearings, *The Triumph of Vulgarly* is required reading for anyone interested in where rock comes from and how it works.

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