

Work-in-Progress SEMINAR SERIES

1 - 2.30 pm, Friday 20 November, 2009

Theatrette, Old Canberra House

CONVERSIBLE WORLDS: LITERATURE, GENDER AND SOCIABILITY 1760-1800
Professor Jon Mee, Romanticism Studies, University of Warwick

In 'Of Essay Writing' David Hume declared women 'the Sovereigns of the Empire of Conversation'. Women were certainly identified with social talk in the eighteenth century. They were able to wield power and influence, at least, but not only, in cultural and literary fields, via their management of conversation. Informed by the recent work of the Australian National University's Professor Gillian Russell, this seminar looks at the issues of female participation and the gendering of discourse, the proliferation of conversable worlds across London after 1760, and the 'retreat' into the domestic in response. The question of gender was an important factor in the period's commitment to 'select company' as a category that defined social talk as 'conversation'. As part of a complex range of factors at work in defining what constituted conversation, it functioned as a regulatory limit on the democratic implications of the eighteenth-century's concern with the conversibility of truth and the 'flow' of information across society..

Jon Mee is Professor of Romanticism Studies at the University of Warwick. He was previously a Senior Lecturer at the Australian National University, the Margaret Candfield Fellow in English at University College, Oxford, and Professor of the Literature of the Romantic Period at Oxford University. His publications include Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s (1992) and Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation (2003). He holds a Philip J. Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship from 2006-2009. The project is concerned with relations between literature, conversation, and contention in the Romantic Period.

All Welcome

Convenors: Ken Taylor and Stephen Foster

ALL WELCOME

Venue: Old Canberra House, Lennox Crossing, ANU

Inquiries: Email: administration.rsh@anu.edu.au. Phone: 6125 2700

