

The Romanticism Research Group at The University of Western Ontario invites paper and special session proposals for an international conference,

romanticism EVOLUTION

12-14 May 2011

Windermere Manor, London, Ontario

PLENARY SPEAKERS:

GILLIAN BEER

TILOTTAMA RAJAN

ROBERT RICHARDS

SEMINAR LEADERS: Alan Bewell, Noah Heringman, Thomas Pfau, Matthew Rowlinson, Joan Steigerwald

Though Romanticism is often imagined as the “age of revolution,” recent criticism has seen renewed interest in the general theme of “Romantic Evolution,” including the resurgence of such topics as organicism, vitalism, natural history, and natural philosophy. The objective of “Romanticism & Evolution” is to defamiliarize prevailing notions of evolution by tracing their origins to literary and scientific discourses of the transitional period 1775-1850, a time that witnessed the genesis of the modern idea of “literature” alongside the emergence of specialized disciplines, such as geology, biology, physiology, chemistry, psychology, and anthropology. Disenchanted with mechanistic science and Enlightenment rationalism, Romanticism also introduced a new organic image of the world, which displaced the older atomistic and static idea of nature with one that was dynamic and evolutionary. However, whether the organic mode of explanation replaced the mechanical philosophy as a radically incommensurable paradigm, or whether both coexisted in creative tension during and beyond the Romantic period, remains a matter for debate. Revisiting important events and developments in the history of evolution prior to the publication of *The Origin of Species*, “Romanticism & Evolution” will focus critical attention on earlier, less recognized theories of change and transformation emerging in the cultural, literary, philosophical, and scientific debates of the Romantic period. Instead of searching through eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century science for “forerunners” to the Darwinian revolution, this conference aims to explore British and European Romanticism’s liminal position between the classical idea of an immutable “great chain of being” and the rise of modern discourses of historiography.

SEND PROPOSAL (500 words; 20 minute presentations; include name, e-mail address, institutional affiliation) TO: romanticism@uwo.ca. DEADLINE: **1 OCTOBER 2010**.

FURTHER INFORMATION & CONFERENCE UPDATES:

www.uwo.ca/english/evolution