

The Department of English, University of Delhi

organises

A 3-Day Seminar Series on

Romanticism and the New Political

by Professor Jennifer Wawrzinek, Potsdam University, Germany

Course description:

The end of the long eighteenth century in Britain is generally understood as a period of increasing political agitation for the rights of the working classes, women, slaves, and even the humane treatment of animals. The French Revolution had inspired writers such as Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft to write sustained political treatises on the rights of man (Paine) and the rights of woman (Wollstonecraft), whilst others such as Wordsworth and Coleridge felt that they were living at the dawn of a new, more politically just age. Yet the violence of the French Revolution, and its aftermath in Robespierre's Reign of Terror, the Napoleonic Wars and, back at home, the government repression of political radicalism and the suspension of Habeas Corpus, also meant that writers and thinkers were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the promises of the new age and its empowered, sovereign subject. Whilst Romanticism has traditionally been seen as the champion of the sovereign subject, self-determined and assertive, this seminar series will examine a range of Romantic writers who can be seen to disrupt, destabilise or otherwise 'decreate' the self that is usually thought to stand at the centre of Romanticism and its claims for political freedom. For these other Romanticists, the withdrawal from self, and its claims upon the world, seemed to offer a more ethical way to engage with that world and its others. It therefore offered a means of subjecting the political to the demands of the ethical, thus refiguring the very idea of the political altogether. Over the course of three seminars, we will discuss works by modern French philosopher Simone Weil, whose theories of decreation specifically call for a withdrawal of the self as a political act, alongside literary texts by William Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Percy Shelley, in order to consider the extent to which the decreeted subject allows Romantic writers a means of thinking new forms of politics and ethics in the socio-political climate of post-Revolutionary Europe. These seminars will be discussion-based. They require participants to have read the set texts in advance of each seminar. All texts, and the seminar program, will be distributed in advance as a course reader.

Date: 18th September -20th September, 2018

Time: 2:00 pm - 04:00 pm

Venue: Room. 60, Department of English, University of Delhi, Main Campus

Interested students are required to register by sending a mail to webmaster.engdu@gmail.com on or before 27 August, 2018.

Attendance mandatory for all three days