

# *Smith the Critic: Mimesis, Sympathy, and Satisfaction*



Thursday March 26, 2009

3:30–5:00 pm

3rd Floor Conference Room

Richter Library

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Though not best known for his work in criticism and aesthetics, Smith thought and wrote a great deal about such matters. He spent much of his later life on a major treatise on the “imitative arts,” which may have included the “*Essay on the Imitative Arts*,” posthumously published in 1795. Wordsworth, for one, had no use for Smith as a critic, or for any of the Scottish Enlightenment writers on literature and the arts. But Robert Burns was deeply influenced by Smith’s writing and so were other leading literary figures. Moreover, Smith was certainly one of the leading moral theorists of the eighteenth century, and his critical arguments are closely imbricated with the sorts of arguments he makes in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. To understand Smith’s complex challenge to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, it is necessary to see why Smith quarreled with Rousseau’s account of the imitative arts.

Professor Chandler is the author of *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (1998) and *Wordsworth’s Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (1984). He is editor of *The New Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature* (2009) and coeditor of *The Cambridge Companion to Romantic Poetry* (2008), *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene in British Romanticism, 1780-1840* (2005), and *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice and Persuasion Across the Disciplines* (1994).



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