

AINO HAATAJA

Alone in the World? Sociability, worldliness, and interpersonal relationships in Maria Edgeworth's *Ormond* (1817)



Edgeworth as portrayed by John Downman, 1807.

Aino is a doctoral student at the English department studying the works of the Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849). In this PREMIS session Aino will introduce Edgeworth (Jane Austen's rival!) as an author, and the concept of worldliness in the texts of Edgeworth, her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth, and some contemporaries. The *world* had the meanings of society, the public, or even just a crowd in Edgeworth's period, and characters and individuals were divided as to their attitudes towards it: some were called men or women of the world, while others firmly denied any interest in the world. In some French and German accounts of the late eighteenth century, people of the world are distinguished from people of letters, and even the protagonist of Edgeworth's *Ormond*, Harry, faces pressures to divide his time between learning about books and learning about men. Harry's guardian, the worldly Sir Ulick, has a country mansion called Castle Hermitage, but the house is in fact far from a serene solitary sanctuary, rather the scene

of constant socializing and gaiety, and Sir Ulick seems to shun his close personal relationships at the cost of polished company. In a second part of this session,

Aino will present an analysis of worldliness and the different modes of sociability in the novel set in the context of studies on Romantic-period sociability and a Habermasian public sphere more generally.

For you to get a taste of Edgeworth and to fuel discussion in the seminar, Aino would kindly ask you to read chapters 14 and 15 of *Ormond* online (*The Literature Network*): <http://www.online-literature.com/maria-edgeworth/ormond/14/>. The passage recounts the arrival of Black Connal, an archetypal French gentleman, to the Black Islands, the isolated abode of Sir Ulick's less courtly cousin Cornelius (King) Corny. Black Connal has been promised the hand of Cornelius's daughter Dora, due to an oath Corny gave after an evening of heavy drinking. However, reading is no prerequisite for joining the seminar, so please do come along regardless of whether you have had the time to read the passage.