

Call for Papers

Symposium: The Unliterary Eighteenth Century: Gender and Marginal Texts

Where: The Australian National University, Acton campus, ACT

When: Friday 11 April, 2025

In *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* (2020), Gillian Russell demonstrates the value of attending to the proximately, rather than definitively, literary as genres of their own. This panel invites consideration of eighteenth-century texts that, despite their popularity and cultural centrality in their own time, have been marginalised because of their resistance to contemporary categories of literary genre, and, whatever else they might be called, are rarely if ever considered to be literary. Such texts might include: commonplace books; tourist guidebooks; theatre bills and broadsides; visiting cards and advertising material; catalogues; newspaper and occasional poetry. Their marginalisation has implications not only for our understanding of literary history but our knowledge of the history of gender and sexuality. Not only did women and anonymous writers work within “unliterary” forms, but these ephemeral and sometimes pornographic texts challenge contemporary understandings of bodies and gender. How might we better understand and appreciate the impact of these texts on eighteenth-century culture? How do they invite, and how might they resist methods of close reading? What does eighteenth-century literary studies do with the disjunction between contemporary definitions of our discipline, based around “literature” as a category, and what “literature” was understood as being in the eighteenth century? This one-day symposium hosted by the Gender Institute at the Australian National University invites proposals for 20 minute papers that offer, via the “unliterary”, new methods in literary studies, and new forms of interdisciplinary engagement with history and cultural studies.

Keynotes: Professor Kathleen Lubey, St. John's University; Professor Gillian Russell, The University of York.

Please submit a proposal of 250 words plus a brief bio before **16 December** to the symposium organisers: Amelia Dale (amelia.dale@anu.edu.au); Nicola Parsons (nicola.parsons@sydney.edu) and Claire Knowles (c.knowles@latrobe.edu.au).

The symposium will be preceded on Thursday 10 April by an HDR and ECR masterclass, “Reading in Parts,” led by Prof Kathleen Lubey. The masterclass will explore the value of reading texts in parts (as opposed to wholes) as a way of approaching the archive of sexuality.