

Dr. Norma Clarke
Kingston University London
Professor in English Literature & Creative Writing
Gender Studies Program
Distinguished Visiting Professor

‘What is it our mammas bewitches ...?’

Tradition, the female poet, and her children in the early eighteenth-century.

It is a commonplace that marriage and family interfere with the workings of the poetic muse. Cyril Connolly’s influential formulation, ‘the pram in the hallway is the enemy of art’ was a warning to men, but what about the woman poet? Two important female poets in the early eighteenth-century had children and in different ways those children were significant in their poetic careers. This talk will introduce Mary Barber (c1690-1757) and Laetitia Pilkington (c1708-50) and consider how far gender and motherhood shaped their lives and writings in Dublin and London in the 1730s and 1740s.