

Mrs Pilkington's Memoirs: Sex, Scandal and Celebrity

A Life of Laetitia Pilkington

Chawton House Library Fellow's Lecture
12th December 2008

'If ever a woman wanted a champion, it is obviously Laetitia Pilkington.'
Virginia Woolf

Norma Clarke, Professor of English Literature and Creative Writing at Kingston University talks about her new biography

Poetess, fallen woman and wit, Laetitia Pilkington spent her life as close to fame as she was near to ruin. Favoured by, among others, the newly celebrated Jonathan Swift in Ireland in the 1730s, she collected the stories and developed the brazen femininity that would be her only currency in London a decade later. Divorced by her husband after she was exposed as an adulteress, she led a life of precarious self-sufficiency. Through humour and intelligence - and her skilful use of scandal, most notably in her Memoirs - she survived on the very fringes of respectability.

Norma Clarke's hugely rich and enjoyable biography tells of a woman determined to be known as a writer on equal terms with men - in spite of Swift's dismissal of her as 'the most profligate whore in either kingdom'. It brings to life a remarkable character, which embodied the scandal, energy and sadness of a time when literature, gossip and the lives they described were inseparable.



Lecture Tickets: £10 & £7.50 for friends/students (includes wine)

6.30pm Reception with wine

7.00pm Lecture

Chawton House Library



To book, or for more info, call 01420 541010 or email info@chawton.net.

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