

**Call For Papers:**  
***Writ from the Heart? Women's Life Writing in the Long Eighteenth Century***  
**29th January 2011**

The John Rylands University Library, The University of Manchester, is hosting a one-day conference focusing on women's life writing, 1660-1815. This event celebrates the cataloguing of the Mary Hamilton Archive, a project made possible by the receipt of funding from the National Cataloguing Grants Scheme. Our keynote speaker will be **Claire Harman**, author of several major literary biographies, including *Fanny Burney: A Biography*, and *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*.

Taking a broad approach to the theme, we welcome papers focusing on life-writing in different forms and written for different purposes during the Long Eighteenth Century, including autobiography, biography, memoirs, letters and diaries, testimonies and travel narratives, of which women are the subjects or authors. As the conference celebrates the cataloguing of a woman's archive, and because so much women's life-writing survives only in unpublished forms, we are particularly interested in papers that explore documentary and unpublished sources. We hope papers will reflect a wide range of women's experience – in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, class, occupation, age and family relations. We invite submissions for papers of 20 minutes both from researchers working in this area, and curators of collections relating to women's life writing.

Possible topics to be addressed might include:

- How life writing of the period reflects the varied experiences of wives, mothers, widows, single women, daughters.
- How social class and other cultural differences affect the life-writings of women during the period.
- How the surviving documentary record affects our interpretation of women's lives.
- The interplay between public and private in women's life writing of the period.
- The relationship between documents, manuscripts, other pre-publication texts and published life-writings.
- Issues of subjectivity and bias in relation to women's life writing of the period.
- The recovery of 'lost' lives; biographical reconstructions of writers who remained unpublished during their lifetime; the creation of reputations and shaping of canons.
- Issues relating to the editing of women's life writing from this period.

- Audiences and readers of women's life-writing, including consumers of published texts, recipients of unpublished circulated manuscripts, correspondents or others.
- How women of the period read and used the lives of other women for their own purposes.
- Life-writing as a literary form and the role women played (either as subject or biographer) in creating literary biography as a genre.
- Overlaps between life writing and historical writing; and the different perspectives on history which women's life-writing of the period can provide.
- Spiritual autobiography, and the relationship between life-writing and religious identity.
- Group lives: family narratives, networks of friends or kinship groups.

Please submit abstracts of c.250 words to [fran.baker@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:fran.baker@manchester.ac.uk). The deadline for submissions is **Wednesday 30 June 2010**.