

**Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences
Research Seminar Program 2022**

Tuesday 4th October (12-1pm)

**To be held in person
Melb Room 460.3.01,
and via Teams Meeting**

Associate Professor Lisa O'Connell

Lisa O'Connell is Associate Professor of English Literature in the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Australian Catholic University. She is the author of *The Origins of the English Marriage Plot: Literature, Politics and Religion in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge 2019), co-editor of *Libertine Enlightenment: Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century* (Palgrave, 2004) as well as the journal special issues, 'Spaces of Enlightenment' (*Eighteenth-Century Life* 2021), 'Catalysts of Change: Colonial Transformations of Anglo-European Literary Culture' (*Postcolonial Studies* 2020). She specializes in 18th-century British literature and currently works on the history and theory of the novel and its relation to early global literatures.



'Secret springs' and 'intricate negotiations': Richardson, Roe and the Global Order

Samuel Richardson's moral fiction formed a cornerstone of the early English novel and was widely admired for its unswerving inspection of the 'secrets of the human heart'. Today, his work functions as a byword for psychological realism and can appear stubbornly resistant to global or 'worlded' accounts of eighteenth-century culture. His formal breakthroughs focus on individual, intimate and highly localized conceptions of selfhood and ways of being in relationship with other people. His settings are almost all domestic, even 'carceral' as one critic has noted, and his characters tend to be preoccupied with specifically English problems arising from social and legal complexities around marriage, seduction and inheritance.

However, Richardson's first major literary endeavour was the editing of diplomat Sir Thomas Roe's papers for the Society for the Encouragement of Learning. Ranging across the Americas, India, continental Europe and the Ottoman Empire, Roe's missions had helped to implement England's global expansion in the Stuart period. This talk argues that the capacity for 'negotiation' revealed in Roe's papers formed a model both for Richardson's own business dealings as a printer in London and for the literary projects in which he reshaped world literature, (i.e. his novels *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*). It suggests we understand English domestic fiction as, from the beginning, articulating the capacities required to position Britain as a global power.