The Early Modern Essay and the Emergence of Impartiality

Dr Kathryn Murphy
Faculty of English, Oriel College
Oxford University

Prof Dr Anita Traninger
Institute of Romance Languages and Literatures
Freie Universität Berlin

Over 1,000 works were published in English by 1700 which claimed the title ‘essay’. They range from a single sheet to hundreds of pages, addressing topics from the frivolous to the philosophical: from drinking, cocking, dancing, and tea, to God and the immortality of the soul. The variety of topics and styles, confessional, controversial, and impersonal, poses a problem: can the essay be considered a single form?

This lecture views this problem in the light of the emergence of impartiality in the same period, in order to illuminate what is commonly shared in the formless form of the early essay.

All are welcome.

These lectures are a co-operation between the Centre for British Studies and TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities).