

**IASEMS**



Italian Association  
of Shakespearean and  
Early Modern Studies

*Early Modern Identity: Selves, Others, and Life Writing*

**The Ninth IASEMS Conference**

**Università degli Studi di Cagliari, 13-15 June 2018**

‘There is no description so hard, nor so profitable, as is the description of a mans owne life. Yet must a man handsomely trimme vp, yea and dispose and range himselfe, to appeare on the Theatre of this world. Now I continually tricke vp my self; for I vncessantly describe my selfe’ (Montaigne, ‘Of Exercise or Practise’).

Montaigne’s statement expresses a concern about ‘the description of a mans owne life’ that raises a question about the nature of description itself. Is a successful description to be found in the careful ‘disposition and arrangement’ of one’s self, with attention to public appearance? This is a crucial question in the current debate about the meaning of selfhood and the forms of self-representation in early modern literature and culture.

In order to explore this and other issues relating to the notions of ‘self’ and ‘life’, as incorporated in early modern British narratives, the broad category of life writing enables us to engage with a range of texts which include not only autobiography and biography, but also autobiographical and biographical fiction, diaries, memoirs, letters, depositions, wills, oral testimony and other kinds of ego-documentary material in which fact and fiction often mingle. Whatever form they may take, life narratives shed light on identity formation and its construction, on the relationships between the individual and society, the local and the national, past and present, the public and the private experience.

The ninth IASEMS conference will focus on the different ways of inscribing the self in early modern British literature and culture. It will explore representations of the self in all forms of writings produced in the British Isles, and rethink critical paradigms on the analysis and interpretation of early modern selfhood, subjectivity and life.

Topics will include, but not necessarily be restricted to:

- Writing the Self and Others
- Reading the self and private life
- Subjectivity and imagining the self
- Self-fashioning and performances of the self
- Life writing as subjective narratives
- Marginalised subjects and life writing
- Gender construction in early modern life writing
- Ego documents: life stories in depositions, interrogations, confessions, appeals for royal pardon in court law, wills, etc.
- Memoirs, diaries, journals, personal letters, travel narratives and identity construction
- The self on stage: theatrical representations of early modern identities
- The self on the page: multiform referents of the first-person pronoun in early modern texts
- Religious and social identities
- The construction of a national identity: literature and propaganda, dissent, controversy
- Contemporary critical appropriations and definitions of the notion of early modern self

We welcome proposals for twenty-minute papers. Please send a 500-word abstract and 200-word curriculum vitae by 14 January 2018 to:

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