

Early Modern Autobiographies: Writing the Self in Renaissance Italy

Renaissance Society of America (Boston, March 20–22, 2025)

Organizers: Maria Sole Costanzo (Boston College)

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Chair: Deanna Shemek (University of California, Irvine)

Deadline for proposals: July 20, 2024

As David Marsh stated, Quattrocento humanists were keen on literary self-portraits, and, following the example of Petrarch, wrote about themselves in two literary genres: the dialogue and the epistle. Leon Battista Alberti offered a detailed account of his life in his anonymous Latin “Vita,” and is considered the first humanist to compose a modern autobiography. Alberti’s prose and other early modern examples of autobiographies present scholars with a dilemma: on the one hand, these texts provide detailed accounts of their actual times – as opposed to Medieval instances of self-representation where all referentiality must be questioned; on the other, they are the result of a rhetorical construction which draws on themes and tropes from the classics. This panel seeks contributions which investigate the forms, styles, circulation, and rhetorical tools deployed in building credibility of autobiographies in Italy during the 15th and 16th centuries.



Example of possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Reuse of classical tropes and *topoi* in humanist autobiography
- Gendered perspective on autobiography: self-portraying women writers
- Invention of new autobiographical forms
- Interaction of Latin and vernacular in autobiographical texts
- Translation of autobiography from and into Latin, and from and into Romance languages
- Code-switching and other phenomena of language contact in autobiographical texts
- Autobiography and humanism
- Confessional styles and autobiographies in religious practices
- Questioning the canon of autobiography: investigating the constitutive texts of this genre
- Autobiography and exilic production: geographically or morally displaced authors of self-portraying texts
- Autobiography and visual arts: ekphrasis, inscriptions, and other manifestations of intermediality
- *Prosimetra* and other instances of interaction and juxtaposition of autobiographical poetry and prose
- Oral and written transmission of autobiography
- Autobiography and political power: relationships with the signorie, comuni, corti...
- Autobiography and rhetoric
- Autobiography and philosophy
- Influence of or reaction to Tre Corone in 15th- and 16th-century autobiography

Please send a proposal to Maria Sole Costanzo (costanmh@bc.edu) and Luca Zipoli (lzipoli@brynmawr.edu) by **July 20, 2024** including:

- full name, current affiliation, and email address
- paper title (15-word maximum)
- paper abstract (200-word maximum)
- resume (.pdf or .doc)
- PhD or other terminal degree completion year (past or expected)