



Institute of Medieval
& Early Modern Studies

Self-Commentary in Early Modern European Literature

26-27 February 2016

Writers the world over have often accompanied their texts with a variety of annotations, marginal glosses, rubrications, and explicatory or narrative prose in an effort to direct and control the reception of their own works. Such self-exegetical devices do not merely serve as an external apparatus but effectively interact with the primary text by introducing a distinctive meta-literary dimension which, in turn, reveals complex dynamics affecting the very notions of authorship and readership. In the Renaissance, self-commentaries enjoyed unprecedented diffusion and found expression in a multiplicity of forms, which appear to be closely linked to momentous processes such as the legitimation of vernacular languages across Europe, the construction of a literary canon, the making of the modern author as we know it, and the self-representation of modern individual identities.

The Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies at Durham University (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/imems/>) invites **proposals for 20-minute papers** on any aspect of self-commentary and self-exegesis in Early Modern European literature, broadly defined as ca. 1400 – ca. 1700. The conference will be aimed specifically at bringing together both established scholars and early career researchers working on diverse Renaissance literary traditions (including Neo-Latin and Slavonic languages), and promoting cross-cultural dialogue.

A number of fundamental questions will be addressed, including:

- How do authorial commentaries mimic standard commentaries?
- If commentaries ordinarily aim to facilitate textual comprehension and bridge the gap between a text and its readership, in what ways can this be true of self-commentaries as well? What further motivations and strategies are at work?
- How do writers of the Renaissance position themselves in respect of the classical tradition?
- How do they progressively depart from the medieval scholastic practice of glossing texts?
- How do self-commentaries interact with the primary text and contribute to its reception?

For consideration, please send a title and abstract of ~300 words as well as a one-page CV to francesco.venturi@durham.ac.uk no later than 15 October 2015.

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Society for Renaissance Studies (SRS), a limited number of bursaries (contribution towards travel/accommodation) will be available for postgraduate and early career researchers.

Confirmed speakers: Carlo Caruso (Durham), Hannah Crawforth (King's College – London), John O'Brien (Durham), and Federica Pich (Leeds).