

**Department of Germanic and Romance Studies  
University of Delhi, Delhi - 110007**

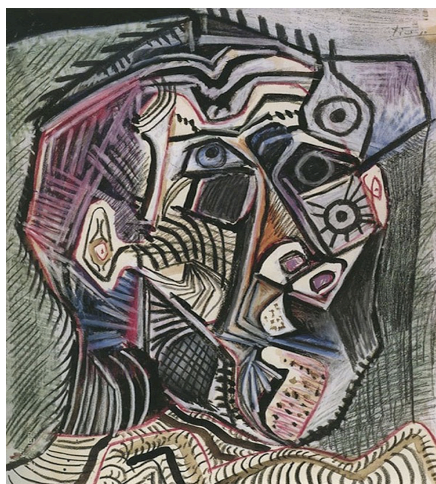


Image: *Self-Portrait*, Pablo Picasso  
<https://mymodernmet.com/pablo-picasso-self-portraits/>

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Unravelling lives: literary encounters and life-writing**

**5 -7 March 2020**

Self-writing would be that attempt, ever renewed and ever failing, to give voice to that which does not speak, to bring what is dead to life by endowing it with a (textual) mask.  
Sylvia Molloy, *At Face Value*

The proliferation of different forms of life-writing in contemporary times can perhaps be explained by the desire to examine questions of identity, ethnicity, gender as well as individual or collective representations of the past, while emphasizing the need to narrativize lives and experiences as 'lived' and not 'created'. Although the tradition of life-writing practice has existed in a variety of forms, it has evolved as a distinctive genre particularly with the collapse of traditional auto/biographical boundaries and with the rethinking of the concept of the self in relation to the world. The unique and unified subject of the Romantic self stands challenged by representation, and is forced to conjure up a self that is never a whole. Such writings could include "conventional" forms such as memoirs, diaries, autobiography, biography, autobiographical and biographical fiction, personal essays, documentaries, and some newer forms accepted within its fold such as travelogues, *testimonios*, letters, self-portraits, graphic and written autofiction, blogs, tweets, Facebook entries.

Many of the recent forms of self-representation resist generic definitions and /or contest hegemonic history(ies) with the representation of realities, facts, truths through dissonant discourses. Referentiality, accepted as the central defining aspect of autobiographical or life-writings, has been displaced with the growing recognition that life-writings and fictional texts both constantly negotiate the conventionalities of genre in the process of being written. Notwithstanding the problems involved in generic definitions and the place of such writing within the literary canon, life-writings as a field of critical inquiry have succeeded in challenging literary hierarchies and have come to be regarded as important expressions of self-figuration, national identities and cultural self-awareness, while making space for the hitherto marginal and silenced voices of history. Such works have also invited cross-disciplinary attention, thereby, allowing for new interdisciplinary possibilities of exploration of contexts and the lives and social forms of existence that emerged out of these contexts.

This Conference proposes to examine, from an interdisciplinary perspective, questions related to how the self has been conceptualized and issues related to the representation of the self have been articulated in various forms of life-writing across the ages. How are issues of uniqueness and universality expressed in such narrative forms? How do these forms capture and address contemporary concerns related to representations of identity, ethnicity, gender, caste, etc. while offering new perspectives on our relationship with the past? Is self-knowledge possible at all, especially in contexts of trauma as the reality of experience is filtered through memory and is a life narrative then a genre of memory? Are "falsifications" inevitable aspects of representations of the self? Are the newer forms of life-writing such as autofiction, blog-writing, vlogs, etc. attempts to flaunt its fictionality and its bold transgression of conventionalities associated with genres? More importantly, what is the impact of the new medial forms on the construction of the self in times of insularity and fragmented identities?

We invite papers from across disciplines on issues related to life-writing and its development covering aspects outlined above, but not necessarily limited to these.

[Abstracts of not more than 300 words that include the paper title, your academic affiliation, and contact information, must be submitted to Rama Paul ([paul.rama@gmail.com](mailto:paul.rama@gmail.com)) and /or Vijaya Venkataraman ([vijaya.venkataraman@gmail.com](mailto:vijaya.venkataraman@gmail.com)) by 15 January 2020]