



# Auto/Biography and Reputation Politics

International Symposium

February 6–7, 2020

In the earliest documents of the genre transmitted from antiquity, biography and its reception are already associated with the creation of positive or negative personal reputations of politicians, artists, scientists or military leaders. Autobiography, in turn, whether spiritual since late antiquity or generally secular since the Enlightenment, has also been used to publicly create and negotiate reputations of its narrators and protagonists. The relation of such reputations created in biography and autobiography to the author figures and historical persons has produced long-standing scholarly and popular debates in terms of fictionality or nonfictionality, semiotic constructedness, and reliability.

In the past decades, however, life writings – including biography and autobiography as much as diaries or letters and, more contemporarily, life narratives and egodocuments in media such as painting, cinema, graphic novels, digital formats and photography, for example – have been critically discussed in terms of cultural and national significations, affective patterns, psychologically and legally coded constructions – relating to trauma studies, witnessing and testimonials – or narratological conventions including perspectives, temporalities or individual and collective memory. The discussion of life narratives and their genre conventions, patterns and protocols as established means of creating and destroying reputations appears to have recently met with only minor interest in the field.

Interdisciplinary and methodologically explicit papers address such critical questions across an international variety of works, genres, media and practices, with attention to theoretical premises of both Auto/Biography Studies and Reputation Politics Studies.

## Conference Venue

Department of English and American Studies

Hof 8.3, Campus, Spitalgasse 2–4, University of Vienna, 1090 Wien

Supported by the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies, University of Vienna

Organizational Assistance:  
Sophie Engelbrecht-Schnür

## Convenors

Nadja Gernalzick (Department of English and American Studies, University of Vienna)

Edwina Hagen (Cultural History, Free University Amsterdam)

Martijn Icks (Ancient History, University of Amsterdam)

Jennifer Keohane (Communications Design, University of Baltimore)

Eric Shiraev (School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, Arlington)



“I’ve character assassinated the target.”

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# Conference Program

## Thursday, February 6

09:00 **Registration**

09:10 **Welcome and Introduction**  
Nadja Gernalzick, Edwina Hagen, Martijn Icks,  
Jennifer Keohane, Eric Shiraev

### Session 1

Chair: Nadja Gernalzick

09:30 **Kathrin Engelskircher** (French and Italian Language and Culture, Mainz)  
The Case of Édouard Louis: Autobiographical Writing between *litterature engagée* and Search for Identity

10:10 **Jennifer Keohane** (Communication Design, Baltimore)  
Narrating the Authentic Self: Campaign Speeches as Political Autobiography

10:50 **Refreshments**

### Session 2

Chair: Edwina Hagen

11:10 **Richard Toye** (History, Exeter)  
Political Memoirs in the United Kingdom since 1900: Problems of Genre and Reputation Management

11:50 **Katarzyna Waligóra** (Theatre and Drama, Kraków)  
Intimate Diary of a Political Campaign: *A Citizen* by Manuela Gretkowska

12:30 **Lunch**

### Session 3

Chair: Martijn Icks

14:20 **Edwina Hagen** (Cultural History, Free University of Amsterdam)  
Political Autobiography and the Post-Revolutionary Self: Political Reputations in the Netherlands during the Early Nineteenth Century

15:00 **Katrin Horn** (American Studies, Bayreuth)  
A Nineteenth-Century Case Study in Reputation Management: Charlotte Cushman

15:40 **Refreshments**

### Session 4

Chair: Jennifer Keohane

16:00 **Bettina Huber** (American Studies, Passau)  
*My War*: Self-Writing on Political Reputation, Personal Morals and the War on Terror

16:40 **Thomas Fritz Maier** (Independent Researcher, Comparative Literature, Novosibirsk)  
Restoring the Imperial Writer: On the Mobilization of Authors' Military Reputation and Ethos in Zakhar Prilepin's *Vzvod (Platoon)*

17:20 **Final Discussion**

## Friday, February 7

09:00 **Opening**

### Session 5

Chair: Eric Shiraev

09:10 **Nisha Ghatak** (Comparative Literature, Auckland)  
Reclaiming Chastity and Literary Repute in Maitreyi Devi's Twentieth-Century Autobiography

09:50 **Treena Orchard** (Health Studies, Western University, London, Ontario)  
Spinning Their Straw into Gold: How Feminist-Hating Trolls Helped Fashion Me a Public Reputation

10:30 **Refreshments**

### Session 6

Chair: Julia Lajta-Novak

10:50 **Florian Krüpe** (History and Cultural Studies, Marburg)  
Flavius Josephus's *On My Life*: Explanations, Justifications, Reputational Damage

11:30 **Martijn Icks** (Ancient History, University of Amsterdam)  
The Demon and the Prostitute: Justinian and Theodora in Procopius's *Secret History*

12:10 **Lunch**

### Session 7

Chair: Florian Krüpe

14:00 **Farah Latif** (Media and Public Affairs, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia)  
Narrative (Un)Writing of the Trump Presidency: Seeking Catharsis Through Political Satire

14:40 **Eric Shiraev** (School of Government, George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia)  
Character Attacks in US Presidents' Biographies: Psychological Mechanisms

15:20 **Refreshments**

### Session 8

Chair: Nadja Gernalzick

15:40 **Nadjiba Bouallegue** (Letters and English Language, Guelma)  
The Exilic Discourse as a Subversive Force: Samia Serageldin's *The Cairo House* and Cristina Garcia's *King of Cuba*

16:20 **Chang Liu** (Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg)  
On Madonna's Chinese Biography and the Negotiation of Reputation Politics

17:00 **Irina Tsukerman** (Independent Scholar, New York)  
Multimodality and Medial Materiality of Reputation: Manal Al-Sharif's Memoir *Daring to Drive: A Saudi Woman's Awakening* and Ferial Masry's Biographical Documentary *An Ode to My Mother*

17:40 **Conclusion**

