**Shaping the Self: print culture and the construction of collective identity (1460-1660)**

The inspiration behind the conference Shaping the Self stemmed from a desire to explore the ways in which early print culture influenced the creation and development of identity. How did the advent of the printing press influence collective or individual identity? And how did communities or specific individuals use this medium to preserve or shape distinct characteristics? In order to answer these broad questions, it seemed essential to share them with researchers from a range of different disciplinary backgrounds. Our conference, which took place on 5th March 2016, brought together postgraduate students, early career researchers and established scholars working in Modern Languages, English, History, and Art History, all of whom shared an interest in the social impact of early print.

The conference opened with a panel that explored the relationship between print and urban identity, with two papers exploring William Caxton’s *Recuyell of the historyes of Troy* (Colin Davey) and the paratextual presentation of Girolamo Savonarola's works in relation to contemporary Florentine readers (Dr Jennifer Newman). The second panel then presented a juxtaposition of the construction of individual and collective identities, with a focused study of the use of printed texts by different religious communities within the Spanish Empire (Diego Rubio) and an

in-depth analysis of the English author Thomas Churchyard's identity in his publications (Dr Lawrence Green). Both panels were followed by lively discussion.

After a pause for a plentiful lunch, our keynote speaker, Dr Luc Racaut, followed with a

talk on ‘Printing and the construction of Protestant Identity during the French

Wars of Religion’. His paper examined how the Huguenots and the Catholics used emotions

and passions in martyrology narratives to shape religious identity during the

French reformation, and was followed by questions from the chair, Rebecca Pilliere, and the floor.

The final panel of the day explored a wide range of printformats, with papers exploring displays of power and prestige in Johannes Blaeu's atlas *Theatrum Italiae* (Gloria Moorman) and the printed games of Giuseppe Maria Mitelli in the context of early modern Bologna (Naomi Lebens). The

conference ended with a roundtable discussion chaired by the organizers. This drew together various threads from throughout the day, including a questioning of the established notion of print as an 'agent of change', the use of print for the preservation of identities on the wane, and indeed the question of precisely what 'identity' meant to early modern individuals and groups. The interdisciplinary approach of our discussion led to some thought-provoking conclusions regarding definitions of this notion, and the impact of print at a time when Europe as a whole underwent a period marked by conflicts and changes marked by the juxtaposition of different identities.

As organizers and delegates, we were extremely pleased with how the day went. The papers were all of an excellent standard and prompted lively, interdisciplinary dialogue centred on the theme of identity. In spite of some late cancellations, the number of delegates (approximately 25) was well suited for the informal discussion we had envisaged. In bringing together participants from a wide range of institutions involved in a number of ongoing projects related to early print culture, we are confident that the conference has made a valuable contribution. We were also particularly pleased to hear that Rebecca Carnevali and Gloria Moorman, both PhD students in the Renaissance Centre, have been awarded a HRC Doctoral Fellowship for the coming year and will be organizing their own conference onearly modern Italian print culture next year.

We are extremely grateful for the generous support we have received from the HRC. Thanks must also go to Daniele Zecchinato, who helped out on the day, and Rebecca Carnevali, who live-tweeted the event (this can be revisited on <https://storify.com/RebeccaPilliere/shapingtheself>). Last but not least, we would like to thank Sue Dibben for her tireless support over the course of the last year and on the day itself.