

Kühner, Christian, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau and the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), France

Writing One's Nobility. An Inquiry into Aristocratic Autobiographies from Early Modern France

Cultural history has discovered the value of ego-documents long ago. However, the rich literature of early modern aristocratic memoirs has not yet been re-examined using ego-document methodology.

In parallel, the concept of self-fashioning has been developed by Stephen Greenblatt and other representatives of New Historicism. However, this approach has largely focused on literary classics.

These two theories need to be applied jointly to the field of early modern nobility. This paper proposes to examine how the aristocratic quality of an author influenced the kind of autobiographic text he or she wrote. Which typical stations of an aristocratic "curriculum vitae" were included in the emplotment of one's life? Which virtues were displayed? Which concepts of aristocratic masculinity and femininity underlie these descriptions? Such a new reading can help to avoid a naïve reading of these texts as documentary evidence.