

Narrative Conversions

**A Collaborative Workshop sponsored by
Early Modern Conversions (IPLAI, McGill University) and
Conversion Narratives in Early Modern Europe (University of York)
University of York, June 2-3 2014**

This workshop aims to turn the concept of the conversion narrative on its head, turning away from questions of spiritual autobiography as a particular genre, and towards the rhetorical, fictive, and narrative structures that enabled converts (broadly defined) to negotiate, more or less successfully, their changes of faith, country, community, and practice. Participants will ask how conversion is figured rhetorically, both as a trope in its own right, and as a form of performative utterance. We will explore the kinds of translation that underpin narrative conversion - from concrete movements between languages and places to figurative or literal changes of state and identity. And we will investigate how both modern and early modern theories of narrative might be interpreted and differently inflected through the sometimes fragmentary structures and storylines that characterize tales of transformation and religious change.

The workshop will address one of the pressing questions raised at the Early Modern Conversions project's first full meeting: can there be conversion without narrative? In particular, we will investigate how far the effect of the unspoken or unspeakable is itself a product of story, rhetoric, and text. Central to our conversation will be the idea that conversion (of various kinds) might be constituted – rather than simply mediated or expressed – through narrative acts.

The “Narrative Conversions” workshop will feature sessions around precirculated papers and/or short position papers, presentations of longer papers, and working sessions on important ideas, approaches, questions.

The Early Modern Conversions project will cover the travel and accommodation costs of as many co-investigators, collaborators, postdocs, and GSAs as budgeted funds will allow. To apply to participate please submit the application for collaboration fund support available on the EMC website. ** Those applying for travel funding should include a short account of how they would expect to benefit from participating in the meeting and should indicate how and in what form they would be willing to contribute to the meeting.