

## *VII col·loqui internacional Mimesi*



### Vides d'escriptors a l'Edat Moderna: retòrica, història i poètica

#### III. PARADIGMES I INTERSECCIONS

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*When the writer's life becomes literary criticism and historiography (France, 17th century)*

We shall endeavour to show how, in 17th-century France, the life of a writer, which was beginning to emancipate itself from the type of life of an "illustrious" person, could also become the medium for critical remarks on a work, or even a place where elements of literary historiography were disseminated (particularly in relation to a generic or linguistic heritage). We will be examining around fifteen isolated lives (from Binet's *Vie de Ronsard* [1586] to Desmaizeaux's *La Vie de M. Boileau-Despréaux* [1712]) and a few cases in works that accumulate a large number of 'lives' (notably Colletet's *Vies des poètes françois* [1635-1659], Moréri's *Dictionnaire* [1st editions 1674 to 1694] and Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* [1697]). We will thus observe how certain axiological, critical and historical tendencies can emerge within these narratives, depending on the framework that presides over these lives (for example, preface to the edition of a work vs. serial device), on editorial necessities and the target audience, on the forms adopted, on the various reciprocal projections established between the man and the work, and depending on the various reading protocols that are established.

In some cases, this attachment to private life (which developed especially in the 18th century) allowed not only to construct an "authorial" identity, but also to critically characterise and promote certain qualities of the writer's work, even if this is done in a worldly and not "scholarly" manner, particularly when the biographer claims to be a close friend. The life story can also present the writer as the embodiment of a collective destiny, for example when personal dispositions are made to coincide with the common dispositions of an era or a social group - or even a nation - or when incidents in the writer's individual career are made to coincide with decisive revivals in the history of a particular genre or corpus. In addition, in serial systems, discursive wefts can sometimes be woven between the various entries, which can also help to give some of these entries a literary historiographical dimension.