

***Mise en texte* and the fashioning of narrative**

During the first year of our cycle on the notion of *mise en texte*, our research team will analyse representations and study the processes at work when *mise en texte* is viewed as the fashioning of narrative. Any piece of writing, whether it is intended to become public or remain private, whether it claims to be genuine or fictional, is the product both of a particular context and of authorial subjectivity, which no genre escapes. In the process of fashioning their narratives, authors make deliberate choices to construct their personal version of the subject matter.

Some early modern authors have in fact highlighted the subjectivity of texts; in *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift debunked the documentary ambitions both of travel narratives and of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in particular. Texts, be they printed or manuscript, public or private, reveal how the individual meets the collective when the experience of one individual is presented as acquiring a universal value. They reflect the specific culture and positions of their authors and inform our understanding, like so many pieces of a puzzle, the analysis of which seeks to bring to light the (re)interpretations involved in the process of *mise en texte*.

The three sessions of our 2021-2022 seminar will discuss the notion of *mise en texte* through three particular approaches:

Our first session will examine the fashioning of the narrative of the founding moments of early America. Through the analysis of personal documents (journals, memoirs, autobiographies, correspondence) as well as public ones (treatises, declarations, constitutions, chronicles), we will question the ways in which texts participate in the building of a national and international narrative by weaving together and foregrounding common values and shared history which, in their turn, will shape their future readers.

Our next session will continue exploring texts of memory and the building of common narratives through the study of the texts of the English convents exiled on the Continent; whilst they sought to publicise the shared values and opinions of religious Catholic communities, conventual founding texts such as autobiographies, biographies and chronicles bore the distinctive trace of the person who had shaped them. The creative process of writing cannot be conceived independently from the complex phenomenon of coalescence between reading and writing; thus, even before they wrote the lives of individuals and communities, authors had read those lives through their own prism. They then proceeded to represent those lives through a lens which, whilst keeping in mind the aim of their writing and their target audience, was deeply influenced by their own historical and social contexts and bore many detectable traces of their own personality.

The notion of *mise en texte* assesses the processes whereby each of the agents involved in the fashioning of a narrative - authors, translators, editors and readers – creates their own version of a text. Our third session will conclude the year with the exploration of the lives of those writings, and especially of their textual transformations. We will see how many early modern texts, be they religious, political, philosophical or academic in nature, far from being considered as finished or set once and for all in their complete form, were in fact seen as ever-changing, living texts. Our guests will explore what they describe as ‘textual elasticity and mobility’, processes which tended to erase the difference between text and paratext, between textuality and intertextuality, and between authors, editors and readers.