

CHARTIER, Roger. 2022. *Won in Translation: Textual Mobility in Early Modern Europe*, translated by John H. POLLACK. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 192. ISBN 9780812253832, Hardback \$55. ISBN 9780812298444, eBook \$55.

“In recent decades, translation has become a central object of reflection and study, with copious critical literature focused upon it. Behind these studies is the central question: can a translation tell us more about the translator and the company for which the translation was made, than about the text that itself moves from one language to another?” (53). In *Won in Translation*, Roger Chartier faces such questions about translation and the status it has assumed over the centuries. Emeritus Professor at the Collège de France and Visiting Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, he has devoted his career to the mobility and forms of the text not only from a synchronic but also from a diachronic point of view. He does not set paper and digital in opposition but demonstrates their interdependence.

The book opens with a preface that introduces core points about the mobility of the text and the plurality of versions of the same work in circulation, as well as argues for the continuing relevance of in-person archival scholarship:

We must stress the essential role played by libraries in scholarship [. . .]. [E]ven (or especially) in a world where digital reproduction and online consultation permit us easy and rapid access to texts, it is necessary to recall that only the precise analysis of printed or manuscript objects themselves allows us to understand how the materiality of “books” shaped the meanings of “texts” they communicate. It is only by studying the books themselves, and not only their digital surrogates, that we can comprehend the multiple existences of the “same” works. Its intended audiences and constructed meaning may be transformed by changes in its format, by mutations of the modalities of its publication, or by the introduction of illustrations. (x)

Following the preface are four analytical chapters on four texts — three Spanish ones and a Portuguese adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615) — and an epilogue in which Chartier leaps forward three centuries, demonstrating, through a reading of Jorge Luis Borges’s story “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” (1939), the paradox of the immobility of the text: even if the texts remained fixed in their literal form, their readers and translators give them different or invented meanings. Chartier’s attention to

Iberian material develops out of his studies of French translations and editions of Francisco de Quevedo's *El Buscón* (1626), of Lope de Vega's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609), and of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and its English and French theatrical appropriations.

It is usual to define “translating” as turning any text into a language different from the original; the fundamental aim is to move the text linguistically while keeping the content unaltered. One can proceed along the *verbatim* line, a “literal” translation, or, as time and practice have shown, one can choose a “free” translation, a formal detachment from the original language in support of a more effective rendering of the translating language. With a new poetic sensibility and “through their lexical, aesthetic and cultural decisions, translators were able to assign new signification or new status to the works they translated” (vii). Chartier emphasises, however, that in early modern Europe, textual mobility was the result not only of acts of translation but of choices made by a team of individuals in the “production context”: copyists, censors, editors, copy editors, and composers.

The mode of “free” translating is close to Umberto Eco's view on interpretative semiotics. Eco wrote at the beginning of his *Lector in fabula* (1979): “When I published *Opera aperta* in 1962, I posed the problem of how a work of art, on the one hand, postulates a free interpretative intervention on the part of its readers and, on the other, exhibits structural characteristics that both stimulate and regulate the order of its interpretations” (Eco 1979, 13, my translation). In *Lector*, Eco adopts a pragmatic perspective: it is a matter of analysing the activity that leads the reader to collaborate with the text, drawing from it even what it does not say. A text postulates an active reader as an indispensable condition for its communicative capacity. Chartier demonstrates this in different terms and more circumscribed areas, analysing the path that the four texts take and how the readers's function and the production context determine the interpretation and use of a work over time. As Hans Robert Jauss once claimed, “the literary work is great insofar as it is linked to the ever new resonance of reading, which frees the text from the materiality of words and actualises its existence” (JAUSS 1969, 38).

Chartier's first chapter addresses Bartolomé de Las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. First printed in 1552, it became a powerful instrument for the creation of what is later called the Black Legend of the Spanish monarchy. *Brevísima* condemns the cruelty of the Spanish conquest and colonisation of the Americas. The work began ten years before it was printed. When it was edited, the preliminary part of the text was removed to avoid the censorial regime of Sevilla. Due to the

atrocities and cruelties perpetrated by the Spanish Crown in the New World, de Las Casas's work took on prophetic and apocalyptic overtones.

*Brevísima* was revived following a translation at a time of crisis — including a revolt in the Netherlands under Spanish rule and conflict between Spain and England. A German translation appeared in 1578, a French one by a Flemish Protestant in 1579, and another French translation by Jacques de Miggrode in 1583. These translations signal a profound shift in meaning for new readers. For example, the need for the Calvinist provinces to unite against Spanish tyranny is emphasised in Miggrode's translation. The crimes committed by the Spanish Crown that Las Casas had denounced prefigure in the French translation a possible rebirth of the Low Countries. The translated work of de Las Casas "could serve as an 'example', like the *exempla* deployed by preachers in their sermons and warning readers. Once aware of this recent history, they could and should act to avoid its repetition in the Low Countries, here figured as the new Indies" (9).

Chartier focuses on Lope de Vega's play *Fuente Ovejuna* (1619) in the second chapter. He stresses "the capacities of dramatic genres to capture discourses, cultural practises, and realities of the social world or the past" (30). The play's narrative was inspired by Francisco de Rades y Andrada's *Chronica* in 1572, which dramatised the revolt of inhabitants of the village of Fuente Ovejuna in Andalusia in 1476 against a feudal lord, Fernán Gómez de Guzmán. The play can be read as a justification of rebellion against tyranny and as a celebration of the power of the Castilian Crown. Following Andrada's *Chronica*, a proverb emerged: "When it is impossible to find who did it because the guilty people are numerous, one says: Fuente Ovejuna did it!" (32).

In the third chapter, "Translating: From *Oráculo manual* to *L'Homme de cour*", Chartier focuses on a 1684 French translation, by Amelot de la Houssaie, of Baltasar Gracián's *Oráculo manual* (1647), which became the most famous courtier's manual in Europe. Gracián had travelled widely and his book was translated repeatedly. For Chartier, this book illustrates the power of translation to change the meaning of work and to be placed in multiple and successive contexts, while taking on a range of purposes that it had not originally had.

The fourth chapter addresses the migration of text from one language to another and from one form to another: from Spanish to Portuguese, from *Don Quixote* to the Marionettes of Lisbon. In 1733, Antonio José da Silva put on a new play at the Teatro do Barrio Alto using marionettes, *Vida do grande dom Quixote de la Mancha e do gordo Sancho Pança*: "[some] scenes reveal significant gaps between the text of *Don Quixote* and Antonio José da Silva's adaptation"

(79–80). Da Silva’s life and work are intertwined in his oeuvre. “Is it possible to locate these texts, which rely upon shared practises and traces of personal and communal torments? The hand of Antonio José da Silva [. . .] is also the hand of a playwright who rewrote well-known tales for the marionettes of Lisbon without forgetting the memories of his suffering” (98). Da Silva and his family were condemned by an Inquisition tribunal in Lisbon for practicing the rites of Judaism. Although they eventually reconciled with the church, they had properties confiscated and da Silva was tortured — experiences that affected his translation of *Quixote*.

In the Epilogue, Chartier analyses Borges’s “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*”, one of the most quoted and interpreted texts in 20th-century literature. He concludes his book by noting that this work can help us “re-examine the mobile, shifting relations between texts and the ‘author’s name’ assigned to them” (100). From the biblical-medieval categories for reading a work — literal, anagogical, allegorical, and moral — Borges rewrites them into six: (1) the bibliographical; (2) the biographical; (3) the autobiographical; (4) a dimension that takes into account the relationship between the stability of the text and the mobility of its meanings; (5) a reading that focuses on the role of the reader and how “readers in different periods will have radically different horizons of expectations for what they read [. . .] so the interpretation of a text is reshaped by readings” (102–03); and (6) an aesthetic reading that sees “the story [as] implicitly defines all writing as rewriting” (104). Nothing is invented; all is a form of rewriting. Indeed, the text of Cervantes’s novel is never fixed or stable, as Chartier shows in studying editions published from 1605 to 1939. The text’s punctuation, materiality, spelling, chapters, divisions, and layout may vary. But the narrator of “Pierre Menard” and his *alter ego* Pierre Menard “tried to tame [those] infinite textual variations. They dreamed of an impossible text that would have been forever identical with itself” (105). Chartier quotes Borges on Menard: “He does not copy [*Quixote*] exactly. He forgets it and then recovers it from inside himself. In this [is the] idea that nothing is invented, that we work with memory, or, to be more accurate, that we work with forgetting” (104).

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