

Presentation

Written Culture in the Modern World

Apresentação

Cultura escrita no mundo moderno

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The theme of Written Culture is not new in the world of humanities. In the nineteenth century, the development of mechanical technologies increased interest in the manual practices of writing and resulted in editorial production with research that re-signified the illuminated manuscripts of the medieval period in the west.¹ However, while for many decades studies about written texts focused on the techniques applied to writing, old disciplines such as Paleography and Diplomacy

1 CURMER, Léon (Ed.). *Le livre d'Heures de la reine Anne de Bretagne traduit du latin et accompagné de notices inédites par M. l'Abbé Delaunay*. Paris : Léon Curmer, 1841 ; CURMER, Léon (Ed.) *Les évangiles des dimanches et fêtes de l'année. Suivis de prières à la Saint Vierge et aux Saints*. Paris, Léon Curmer, 1864.

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had long since renovated themselves and included in their concerns relations between products, producers, and consumers, and between times and spaces (Petrucci, 1999). On the other hand, the revaluation of the material aspects of writing led researchers from various fields to develop interdisciplinary dialogues, intersecting knowledge, methods, and technologies to resolve various aspects of scientific curiosity. Nevertheless, the principal questions to be dealt with in the field of written culture cannot avoid considering that the mental can only be expressed through the material (Almada, 2018).

The dossier *Written Culture in the Modern World* covers themes linked to modern Western written production, dealing with discourse, practices, representations, and the processes of production, circulation, use and preservation, including technical and material aspects which reveal the social relations and the agents involved. The articles present research in the fields of History, Literature, and Material Bibliography and privilege manuscripts and printed material as technologies for the propagation of ideas and knowledge in time and space. We understand as the *modern era* the period between the development of moveable type printing and the consolidation of changes in relations with writing which allowed the propagation of other forms of production — in other words, between the middle of the fifteenth century and the end of the eighteenth. This long period included many phases of technological, scientific, social, and economic development, which makes the investigation of the forms of communication extremely challenging.

In this dossier, we present the results of recent research in the field of Written Culture. Researchers were invited from both sides of the Atlantic who are on the front line in the proposition of new paths and perspectives about the forms of writing in the modern era. We divided the papers presented into two groups: *writing* and *writings*,² in other words the material process of writing and the text itself, the result of a mental process. Here we were inspired by the reading of Fernando Bouza's article.

2 Translator's Note: In the original Spanish writing is la escritura and writings lo escrito.

Roger Chartier's article, *Mobilidade de textos e diversidade de línguas. Traduzir nos séculos XVI e XVII (Mobility of texts and language diversity. Translating in the 16th and 17th centuries)*, opens the writing group dealing with the theme of translation and exploring the reasons why this topic became a concern shared by literary history, textual criticism, cultural sociology, and global history. The response proposed by the author is based on three aspects. The first is historic and refers to an initial 'professionalization' of writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through translation works which, despite being seen as a mechanical activity, allowed the survival of many writers. The second is methodological and locates translation studies as the essential element of the so-called 'literary geography,' which operates in accordance with the chronology and cartography of translation of an individual work. The geography of translations, however, is not the dynamic cartography of a textually stable entity and needs to take into account the various mutations which transform the work with the addition of new texts. Also of importance is the perspective of 'connected histories,' which are those of translators, not only of languages, but also of cultures. In this way, the study of translations proposes an approach on a lower scale of these connected Inter-Atlantic textual histories, concentrating on the multiple meanings of the same text.

The third aspect of interest to researchers of translation according to Chartier is linguistic-aesthetic and emphasizes the untranslatable (or the texts and authors considered as such). His article proposes three case studies which can identify three scales of research about the theme and three modes of the transformation of meaning of texts when they migrate from one language to another, whether due to the difficulty of translating certain words, or the influence in the context of reception. Translation is seen here as a practice which should make alterity comprehensible and make the other into someone similar.

Littérature de l'expérience au XVIIe siècle (Literature of Experience in the 17th century) is the second article in the dossier, in which Christian Jouhaud, in a very personal tone, deals with the question of the 'literature of experience' based on a manuscript left by a knight, a *valet de*

chambre of Louis XIV, called Marie Du Bois, who lived from 1601 to 1679. The text appears to be situated in the historiographic category of 'writings of an intimate nature,' but Jouhaud questions the anachronism of this definition and the actual distinction between the writings of 'common people' and 'writers,' at the moment when the notion of literature only began to exist as the potency of the symbolization of the world. The text left by Marie Du Bois, by resisting all classifications, invites us to face the question of the historicity of the practice of writing which allows its existence, before any extrapolation concerning a 'cosmovision' or a 'sensitivity,' or even thought or representations.

Jouhaud invites us to make a broader reflection on the relationship between Marie Du Bois's act of writing and the impact of his narrative form on a reader-historian who receives it as a narrative of a presence in a past, which is their field of study. In an original form, Jouhaud deals with the narrative of daily life from the perspective of its transmission in distinct times: the time of writing and the time of the contemporary historian, without ignoring the concern with the process of writing, the moving of the pen, the organization of pages, and the final material unity of the report, which allow the appearance of the personalities of those who write and the reality about which they write. As Jouhaud reflects, this production of the past exercises on us, through a succession of narratives, effects which are not identical to those perceived by their primary receptors.

In another perspective on *writings*, the article by Guillermo Wilde and Fabián R. Vega entitled *De la indiferencia entre lo temporal y lo eterno. Élités indígenas, cultura textual y memoria en las fronteras de América del Sur (On the Indifference between the Temporal and the Eternal: Indigenous elites, textual culture, and memory on the frontiers of South America)* introduces the theme of the textual culture of the Jesuit missions through the curiosity awoken by a small folded piece of paper containing a text with a religious nature written in three languages: Latin, Castilian, and Guarani. It is through this piece of paper that the authors try to comprehend the complex relations between missionaries and the indigenous elites, revealing the fascinating miscegenation

between the values of the two cultures, one structured by writing and the other by orality. Wilde and Vega inform us that the expansion of the missions, initially founded by the Jesuits in the region of Guayrá (the current state of Paraná, Brazil) around 1609, led to the restructuring of the space of populations and the rapid disappearance of other languages spoken in the region and the numerous dialectic variants of the Guarani language, with a 'general language' being imposed.

Through the unification of the indigenous language the uniformization of the doctrinal project was propelled as a broad textual production deliberately orientated to reunite the spiritual and the temporal, as part of a broader program for the reform of customs and the standardization of Christian subjectivity. According to the authors, textual productions stimulated the hybridization of textual genres which could promote, on an individual level, a model of subjectivity based on civic virtue and Christian devotion and, in the sociological plane, a collective memory based on the marks of territorial expansion, ordered in a chronological and mythological narrative. In this sense, through the various examples of printed and manuscript textual production, the authors present the conjugation of the spiritual and the temporal, led by the missions, as the structure of the conformation of indigenous individuals to the conduct of the civilized Christian.

We introduce the group of the processes of the production, circulation, and storing of *writings* with the article by Fernando Bouza, an author who usually grabs the attention of his readers in the first lines. In *Escribir a corazón abierto: emoción, intención y expresión del ánimo em la escritura de los siglos XVI y XVII (Writing with an open heart: soul's emotion, intention and expression in 16th and 17th centuries writings)* from the very beginning he connects us with naturality to the concerns of Mário de Andrade and Lope de Vega about the production of correspondence. This union of such distinct historical times is continued with the presentation of precious data about the writing of letters in various epochs, offering readers the opportunity to trace connections with their own objects of interest.

In the theme of epistolography, the principal argument of the author is that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the materiality of writing revealed the structures of the rules of courtly conduct and corporal aspects cannot be disdained in these. For example, letters written in hand by those writing them or ones that are just signed show different levels of personalness in relation to the sender or recipient. Bouza extrapolates the question of gestuality and presents a more particular physiology, which associates the heart, the hand, and the pen, with writing from the heart being capable of revealing the most intimate thoughts of those who write.

This was the argument used by Sigismondo Arquer, a Doctor of Law and Theology and a celebrated defendant charged by the Spanish Inquisition to defend himself against the accusation of heresy, made by the Holy Office in 1563, due to the supposed Lutheran propositions found in his correspondence. According to Arquer, using the argument of ‘writing with an open heart,’ his words could never defend Protestantism, since they had come from a Catholic soul. He based himself on the biblical tradition which distinguished *Intus* writing, which used the heart as an instrument, from *Extra* writing, which only needed the pen and the hand.

If the heart can be one of the instruments of writing, the exchange of information should be one of its motors. The production, consumption, and collecting of news in the Early Modern period, focusing on the Iberian experience, is the theme of *Escritos breves para circular: relações, notícias e avisos durante a Alta Idade Moderna (sécs. XV-XVII)* (*Writing to circulate: reports, news, and notifications in the Early Modern times (15th-17th centuries)*), an article by Ana Paula Megiani. She presents us with a complex panorama of the various forms of the circulation of news, which not only structured the new systems of governance, but also satiated the “curiosity to know what was happening elsewhere.” These were *reports of successes, notifications, decisions, and news*, modalities which maintained their specificity, but which could not be classified in a watertight manner due to the fact that they are not a specific genre of writing. Therefore, anyone who witnessed an event could become an agent propagating news, generating numberless reports, also with different outcomes. However, it should be noted that, in addition to

the ephemerality of news and the actual material configuration of this type of writing, made on small pieces of paper or annexed to letters or notebooks, its survival was possible due to the initiative of determined subjects who proposed to organize and collect news.

To study this subject, Megiani has focused on what was collected by the Portuguese Jerônimo Mascarenhas who, before assuming the Bishopric of Segovia in 1667, was directly involved with the Spanish royal household, having some proximity with the monarch. Mascarenhas became a royal chronicler with intense activities and also a collector of *relações de sucessos* which consisted of originals or copies of letters, reports, and old and official documents, amongst other papers which he collected, together with writings of his authorship, in a volume organized chronologically between 1558 and 1666. This material satisfied the curiosity of contemporaries and today serves the historian interested in the reception of facts at the time of the events in question. However, to fulfill this, as the author highlights, this collection should be dealt with from the perspective of notary practices and collectionism, which is one of the keys to understand the uses of writings in different temporalities.

Closing the dossier, and sealing the interdisciplinary perspective of the studies, we are presented with *Primeros vagidos de tipografía y biblioiconografía mexicana del siglo XVI (Early Signs of Sixteenth-Century Mexican Typography and Biblio-Iconography)*, by Guadalupe Rodriguez. Belonging to the area of Hispanic philology, she instigates us with an article which makes use of the methods of Material Bibliography to reevaluate the period of the installation and expansion of printing in Mexico, from 1539 on. Her approach gives protagonism to editors/printers, who faced a series of problem to do their work and dealt with the lack of raw materials such as paper, ink, printing presses, types, ornaments, and woodcuts. Based on a brief bibliography of Mexican proto-typographies Rodriguez exposes the vulnerability of previous research which, although it managed to determine the stock of materials and equipment of various printing houses, could not establish relations between their demands due to the lack of systematic studies and comparative analyses of the material collections of each printing house.

To overcome this weakness, Rodriguez undertook to carry out this project based on the new repertoire of the Mexican typo-bibliography of the sixteenth century, carried out under her coordination. With this material, she reflects on the networks of sociability developed among the first four Mexican printers (active between 1539 and 1593) and clarifies the mechanisms of transference (sale, rent, or loan) and the reuse of typographic raw materials by relatives and professionals. The article reveals the author's ability to use visual and material sources in bibliotypographic collections and to trace the biography of the raw materials and imagery matrices in search of the understanding of the social relations involved in their use. By detailing with clarity and generosity the methodological procedures adopted, her contribution becomes even more valuable for scholars of the historiography of typography.

We would like to thank the authors for their dedication in producing such original and instigating articles and we hope that this dossier can contribute to expanding studies of Written Culture in the Modern World. We hope that the dialogues arising out of these excellent texts will be profitable and bring good fortune to the area, creating new perspectives towards essential themes in times of profound changes in social relations caused by a new mutation of practices of written communication.

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