

# Humanities



# “Listen to the dead with the eyes”<sup>1</sup>

ROGER CHARTIER

Mr. Administrator,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

“LISTEN TO the dead with the eyes” (“*Escuchar a los muertos con los ojos*”). This verse by Quevedo comes to mind as I inaugurate a series of lectures devoted to the role of writing in European cultures from the end of the Middle Ages to the present. For the first time in the Collège de France’s history, a Chair is devoted to the study of writing practices, not in ancient or medieval worlds, but in the long period of modernity whose disintegration we may currently be witnessing. A course of studies of this sort would have been impossible without the works of those who have profoundly transformed the disciplines that form the base of this new field: the history of the book, the history of texts, and the history of written culture.

There are few historians whose names are attached to the invention of a discipline. Henri Jean Martin, who died in January this year, is one of those few. The book he wrote inspired by Lucien Febvre and published in 1958 under the title *The coming of the book* is rightly regarded as the founder of the history of the book or at least of a new history of the book. As Febvre wrote, by studying rigorously the technical and legal conditions of their publication, the contexts of their production and the geography of their circulation, he made texts descend “from heaven to earth.” In the works that followed, Henri-Jean Martin spared no effort to expand the questioning, shifting his attention to the trades and milieus of the book, mutations in the way texts were displayed on the page and, finally, the successive modalities of readability. I was his disciple without being his student. It would have been a great pleasure to have been able to tell him this evening how much I owe him and also what happy memories I have of our joint intellectual pursuits.

There is another absence, another voice that we need to “listen to with our eyes”: that of Don Mckenzie. He was a wise man who lived between two worlds: Aotearoa, his native New Zealand, where he was relentless defender of the rights of the Maori people, and Oxford, where he held the chair of Textual Criticism. An expert practitioner of the erudite techniques of the “new bibliography”, he taught us to go beyond its limits by showing us that the meaning of

any text, whether it was canonical or ordinary, depends on the form that makes it available to be read, i.e., the different characteristics of the materiality of the written word. Thus, for example, for printed objects it meant the format of the book, the layout of the page, the division of the text, the presence or absence of images, typographic conventions and punctuation. By basing the “sociology of texts” in the study of their material forms, Don Mckenzie did not stray from the intellectual or aesthetic meanings of the works. On the contrary, it is from the perspective offered by him that I shall situate a course of study that proposes never to separate the historical comprehension of writings from a morphological description of the objects in which they are contained.

To these two works, without which this chair could not have been conceived, I should add a third one: that of Armando Petrucci, who is in Pisa and unfortunately could not be with us today. By focusing on the practices that produce or mobilize the written word, by shaking up the classic divisions - between manuscript and print, the stone and the page, between ordinary writings and literary works - his work has transformed our comprehension of the written cultures that succeeded one another over the very long time span of Western history. By discovering inequality in the realm of writing and the multiple possibilities offered by the “graphic culture” of an age, the work of Armando Petrucci is a magnificent example of the necessary link between a scrupulous erudition and the most inventive kind of social history. Here I would like to stress his fundamental lesson, which is to always associate in the same analysis the roles assigned to writing, the forms and supports of writing and ways of reading.

Henri-Jean Martin, Don Mckenzie, Armando Petrucci: each one of them could or should have been here now instead of me. Happenstance or the hazards of intellectual life have determined otherwise. But their works, constructed in very different fields - the history of the book, material bibliography, paleography - will be present in every moment of the teaching that I shall start today. Following in their footsteps, I will attempt to understand the place that writing has held in the production of knowledge, in the exchange of emotions and feelings, in the relationships that men and women have maintained with one another, with themselves, or with the sacred.

### **Present-day mutations or the challenges of digital textuality**

This is undoubtedly an urgent task today, at a time when the practices of writing have gone through profound changes. The transformations of our present affect at the same time the supports of writing, the technique of its reproduction and dissemination as well as ways of reading. That simultaneity is unprecedented in the history of humanity. The invention of printing has not changed the fundamental structure of the book, which is formed - after as well as before Gutenberg - by quires, leaves and pages brought together in one single object. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the new form of the book, the *codex*, gained popularity over the scroll, but was not accompanied by a trans-

formation of techniques for the reproduction of texts, always carried out by hand-copying. And if it is true that reading has experienced several revolutions, which historians either recognize or discuss, these occurred over the long term development of the *codex*: the medieval achievements of silent and visual reading, the reading frenzy that took over the Age of Enlightenment or, beginning in the nineteenth century, the massive arrival in new readers from the popular strata of society, among them women and children both in and out of school.

By severing the former ties between texts and objects, between discourses and their materiality, the digital revolution has required a radical revision of the acts and concepts that we associate with writing. Despite the inertia of a vocabulary that attempts to tame novelty by designating to it familiar words, the fragments of texts that appear on our computer screen are not pages, but unique and ephemeral compositions. The electronic book, unlike its predecessors the scroll and the codex, is no longer distinguished from other written products by the evidence of its material form.

Discontinuity exists even within apparent continuities. Reading on a screen is discontinuous, segmented, attached to the fragment rather than to the whole. Is it therefore not the direct heir of practices stemming from the codex, which invites the reader to skim texts, based on their index or, as Montaigne put it, in ‘leaps and bounds’. The codex invites us to compare passages, as does a typological reading of the Bible, or to extract and copy quotes and sentences, as required by the humanistic compilation of commonplaces. However, the morphological similarity should not lead us astray.

The discontinuity and fragmentation of reading does not have the same meaning when they are accompanied by a perception of the textual totality contained by the written object, as opposed to the situation where the lighted screen that enables us to read fragments of writing no longer displays the limits and the coherence of the corpus from which they are extracted.

The interrogations of the present stem from those decisive ruptures. How can we maintain the concept of literary property, defined since the eighteenth century on the basis of a perpetuated identity of works, recognizable irrespective of the form of their publication, in a world where texts are mobile, malleable and open, and where everyone, as they start, can “follow on, continue the sentence, fit into the interstices without anyone noticing” – as Michel Foucault wanted. How can we recognize an order of discourses that was always an order of books or, in other words, an order of writing closely associating the authority of knowledge and the form of publication, when today’s technical possibilities allow for the uncontrolled, instantaneous and universal circulation not only of opinions and knowledge, but also of errors and falsifications? How can we preserve ways of reading that construct meaning from the coexistence of texts in the same object (book, review, journal), whereas the new mode of conservation and transmission of writings imposes on reading an analytical and encyclopaedic logic where each text has no context other than the fact of falling under the same heading?



*The German printer Johannes Gutenberg (1398-1468).*

Today the dream of the universal library seems closer to realization than ever before. The digital conversion of existing collections promises the creation of a library without walls, where all the works ever published, all the writings constituting the heritage of humanity, might be accessible. This is a wonderful ambition and, as Borges wrote, ‘when it was proclaimed that the Library contained all the books, the first reaction was extravagant joy’. But the second reaction may be questions on the implications of this violence to which texts are subjected when they are no longer offered to readers in the same forms as in the past. Some may argue that a shift of the sort is not without precedent, and that it was in books, which were no longer the rolls of their first circulation that medieval and modern readers appropriated the ancient works - or at least those among such works that they could or wanted to copy. There may well be true. But to understand the meanings that readers gave the texts that they appropriated we need to protect, conserve and understand the written objects that contained them. The ‘extravagant joy’ triggered by a universal library could become an impotent bitterness if it resulted in the relegation or, worse still, the destruction of the printed objects that through the ages have nourished the thoughts and dreams of those who read them. The threat is not universal and the incunables have nothing to fear, but the case is different for more humble and recent publications, whether periodic or not.

These issues have been discussed at length by innumerable discourses that attempt to conjure away, by their very abundance, the announced disappearance of the book, the written work and reading. The wonder of the incredible promises of navigating through islands of digital texts has been opposed by the nostalgia for a world of the written word that we would have already lost. But should we really be choosing between enthusiasm and despair? To better situate the greatness and miseries of the present, it may be helpful to evoke the only competence historians can boast about. They have never been good prophets but at times, recalling that the present is made of layered or entangled pasts, they have been able to contribute a more lucid diagnosis of novelties that seduce or frighten their contemporaries. This audacious certainty is what gives me courage as I stand at the brink of this course of studies.

### **The historian’s task**

It was imbued with this spirit that Lucien Febvre, in a Europe still wounded by the war he delivered, in 1933, the inaugural lecture for the chair of “History of Modern Civilization.” His vibrant argument in favor of a history capable of constructing problems and hypotheses was not separated from the idea that history, like all sciences, “is not done in an ivory tower. It is done in the midst of life, and by living beings who bathe in the century.” Seventeen years later, in 1950, Fernand Braudel, who succeeded him in that, again insisted on the responsibilities of history in a world once again disturbed and deprived of painstakingly reconstructed certainties. For him, it would be by distinguishing the

articulated temporalities that characterize each society that it would be possible to understand the permanent dialogue established between the long duration and the event or, in the words of the master, between the phenomena situated “outside the reach and the bite of time” and “the profound breaks beyond which everything changes in the life of men.”

If I’ve mentioned these two frightening examples it was probably because the proposals of these generous giants can still guide the work of a historian. But it was also to better appreciate the distance separating us from them. Our obligation is no longer that of reconstructing history, as demanded by a world twice brought to ruin, but to better understand and accept that, these days, historians no longer have the monopoly of the representations of the past. The insurrections of memory, as much as the seductions of fiction, are their fierce competitors. Moreover, it is not a totally new situation. The ten historical plays written by Shakespeare and gathered in the Folio of 1623 under a category of their own, i.e., histories, although little compliant with the Aristotelian poetics have undoubtedly shaped a history of England that is stronger and more “real” than that reported by the chronicles that inspired the playwright. In 1690 the Furetiere dictionary recorded in its own way this closeness between true story and believable fiction, by defining history as the “narration of things or actions as they happened, or as they could have happened.” The historical novel, which has made good use of this definition, assumes in our present the construction of the pasts imagined with an energy as powerful as that contained in the theatrical works in the times of Shakespeare or Lope de Vega.

The claims of memory, whether individual or collective, experienced or institutionalized, have also shaken the claims of historical knowledge, which is deemed to be cold and lifeless when compared to the living relationship that leads the past to be recognized in the immediacy of its reminiscence. As magnificently shown by Paul Ricoeur, the task of history is not easy when memory assumes the representation of the past and opposes the force and authority of the memory to the “malaise in historiography,” according to an expression taken from Yosef Yerushalmi. History should respect the demands of memory, which are needed to heal endless wounds, but at the same time it should reaffirm the specificity of its own knowledge regime, which presupposes the exercise of criticism, confrontation between the reasons of the actors and the embarrassing circumstances that they ignore, as well as the production of a type of knowledge enabled by operations controlled by a scientific community. It is by marking its difference in relation to powerful discourses, either memorial or fictional that they, too, give presence to what has passed, that history is capable of assuming its own responsibility: to make intelligible the accumulated legacies and the founding discontinuities that have made us what we are.



GENESIS

**I**ncipit liber brevis que nos genese[m]  
 In principio creavit deus celum **dicim**<sup>9</sup>  
 et terram. Terra autem erat inanis et  
 vacua: et tenebre erant super faciem abyssi:  
 et spiritus domini ferebatur super aquas. **Dixit**<sup>9</sup>  
 deus, fiat lux. Et facta est lux. **Et vidit**  
 deus lucem quod esset bona: et divisit lucem  
 a tenebris: appellavitque lucem diem et  
 tenebras noctem. **Factus**que est vespere et  
 mane dies primus. **Dixit**que deus, fiat  
 firmamentum in medio aquarum: et divi  
 dat aquas ab aquis. **Et fecit** deus firmamentum:  
 et appellavitque firmamentum: et factus est ita. **Vocavit**<sup>9</sup><sup>9</sup>  
 deus firmamentum celum: factus est vespere  
 et mane dies secundus. **Dixit** vero deus,  
 congregavit aque que sub celo sunt in  
 locum unum et apparuit arida. **Et factus** est  
 ita. **Et vocavit** deus aridam terram:  
 congregatioque usque aquarum appellavit  
 maria. **Et vidit** deus quod esset bonum: et  
 ait. **Generavit** terra herbam viventem et  
 facientem seminem: et lignum pomiferum faciens  
 fructum iuxta genus suum: cui seminem in  
 semetipso sit super terram. **Et factus** est ita. **Et**  
 produxit terra herbam viventem et facientem  
 seminem iuxta genus suum: lignumque faciens  
 fructum et habens unumquodque seminem secundum  
 speciem suam. **Et vidit** deus quod esset bonum:  
 et factus est vespere et mane dies tertius.  
**Dixit**que ait deus, fiat luminaria  
 in firmamento celi: et dividat diem ac  
 noctem: et sint in signa et tempora et dies et  
 annos: ut luceat in firmamento celi et  
 illuminet terram. **Et factus** est ita. **Fecit**<sup>9</sup><sup>9</sup>  
 deus duo luminaria magna: luminare  
 maius ut pelleret diem et luminare minus  
 ut pelleret noctem: et stellas: et posuit eas in  
 firmamento celi ut luceant super terram: et

pellent diem ac noctem: et dividant lucem  
 ac tenebras. **Et vidit** deus quod esset bonum:  
 et factus est vespere et mane dies quartus.  
**Dixit** etiam deus, producat aque repale  
 anime vivantis et volante super terram:  
 sub firmamento celi. **Creavit**que deus esse  
 grandia: et omne animam viventem aere:  
 mirabilem quam producat aque et speciem  
 suas: et omne volante secundum genus suum.  
**Et vidit** deus quod esset bonum: benedixitque  
 eis dicens, **Creceat** et multiplicamini: et  
 repleat aquas maris: aereque multiplicemini  
 super terram. **Et factus** est vespere et mane  
 dies quintus. **Dixit** quoque deus, Pro  
 ducat terra animam viventem in genere suo:  
 iumentum et reptalia et bestias terre secundum  
 species suas. **Factus**que est ita. **Et fecit** deus  
 bestias terre iuxta species suas: iumenta  
 et omne reptile terre in genere suo. **Et**  
 vidit deus quod esset bonum: et ait. **Facia**  
 mus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem  
 nostram: et prelosetur pisces maris: et vola  
 tiles celi: et bestias uniuscuiusque: et omnes  
 reptiles quod movetur in terra. **Et creavit**  
 deus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem  
 suam: ad imaginem dei creavit illum: ma  
 sculum et feminam creavit eos. **Benedixit**<sup>9</sup><sup>9</sup>  
 que illis deus: et ait. **Creceat** et multiplica  
 mini: et repleat terram: et servate eam: et di  
 namini pisces maris: et volantibus celi:  
 et uniuscuiusque animantibus que moventur  
 super terram. **Dixit**que deus, **Eccc dedi** vobis  
 omnem herbam afferentem semen super terram:  
 et uniuscuiusque ligna que habent in semetipsis  
 seminem: genus sui: ut sint vobis in escam  
 et cunctis animantibus terre: omnique volucri  
 celi: et uniuscuiusque que moventur in terra: et in  
 quibus est anima vivens: ut habeant ad  
 vescendum. **Et factus** est ita. **Vidit**que deus  
 cuncta que fecerat: et erat valde bona.



Page from the Bible printed by Johannes Gutenberg - circa 1455.

The fact, at the beginning of a historian's essay dedicated to writing, of evoking an inaugural lecture, that of Lucien Febvre, whose purpose was precisely to free history from the tyranny of texts and the exclusive link that connected it to writing, is probably somewhat paradoxical. Would we have forgotten the caveats of the master, engaged in a war against a poor history of "textuaries" (the word is his)? I hope it's nothing like that. Firstly because, to me, that it will always be about linking the study of texts, whatever they are, with the that of the forms that give them their very existence, and to that of the appropriations that give them meaning. Febvre mocked those historians "whose peasants, in terms of abundant land, seemed to cultivate only old cartularies." Let's not make the same mistake, forgetting that the writing is transmitted to its readers or auditors by objects or voices, whose material and practical rationale we need to understand. This is precisely the proposal of the chair whose name I am now charged with justifying.

### **Writings and written cultures in modern Europe**

The limits of my competence, or rather the vast extensions of my incompetence, define its geographic space: Europe. But addressing Europe, especially Western Europe, does not preclude comparisons with other civilizations that used writing and in the case of some of them, got to know the press. For such an approach, there is no more auspicious institution than this house, as it brings together scientists that institutions tend to separate. Therefore, it is Europe, but modern Europe. Will I dare to say that the ambiguity of this term suits me? In the jargon of historians, "modern" covers at least three centuries, ranging from the fifteenth century (should I say from the discovery of America, the fall of Constantinople or the invention of the press?) up to the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, of which the most important is of course the French revolution, understood as an end or a beginning. My courses will be included in this first modernity, decisive for the evolution of Western societies, and the study of which has never been interrupted here since the creation of the chair held by Lucien Febvre, then by Fernand Braudel, up to the teachings of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Jean Delumeau and Daniel Roche, who was the master from whom I learned the historian's craft as the apprentices used to do in the old workshops. But "modern" to us, who think about being modern or still want to be modern, is also a way to designate the time that is ours today. This meaning also suits me, since it refers back to the basic project that underlies this course of studies: to identify the strata of the written culture of the past in order to understand more accurately the changes that affect it in the present.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, and probably before that, recourse to writing played a key role in several major developments within Western societies. The first of these was the construction of a state based on justice and finance, which entailed the creation of bureaucracies, the establishment of archives, and the development of administrative and diplomatic communication. It is true

that those who held the power mistrusted writing and in many ways attempted to censor it and control it. But it is also true that those same people in power increasingly supported the government of territories and peoples by means on public correspondence, written records, epigraphic inscriptions and printed propaganda. The new demands of judiciary procedures, the management of bodies and communities and the administration of true thus multiplied and use and the obligations of writing.

The connection between religious experience and uses of writing is another essential phenomenon. Inspired writings have left many traces: spiritual autobiographies and soul searching, visions and prophecies, mystical journeys and narratives of pilgrimage, prayers and conjurations. In Catholic lands, but not only there, these testimonies of faith have always worried ecclesiastical authorities, who have attempted to contain them, or when they seemed to contravene the limits of orthodoxy, to prohibit them and destroy them.

The imposition of new rules of behavior demanded by the absolutist exercise of power and disseminated by instructions for the nobility or civility treatises formulated by pedagogues or moralists, also depended on writing. A profound transformation of the structure of personality, which Norbert Elias designates as a long civilizing process, demanded the control of emotions and impulses, the distancing of the body and an increasing level of modesty, changing precepts into behaviors, norms into *habitus*, and writings into practices.

Finally, during the eighteenth century, correspondence, reading and lettered conversations led to the emergence of a public sphere that was initially aesthetic and then political, and in which all forms of authority – the learned, the clerics, the princes – were submitted to discussion and review. In *What is Enlightenment?*, it is in the confrontation of reasoned opinions and propositions for reform that arise from circulation of the written word that Kant based the project and the promise of an enlightened society, in which each individual, regardless of estate or condition, could be in turn reader and author, scholar and critic.

These changes, which I have sketched in only in broad lines, did not occur at the same pace throughout Europe and do not involve in equal measure “the court and the city,” the lettered and the popular classes or, as it would have been said in the Golden Age, the *discreet* and the *vulgar*. Hence, probably, the dangerous recklessness that has led me to use, in the name of this chair, the term “cultures” (in the plural), to designate the social fragmentation, by which, in quite different ways and rather unevenly, the uses of writing and the ability to master writing skills penetrated. From among the proliferation of definitions of the word “culture”, I have chosen an entirely temporary one: that which articulates symbolic productions and aesthetic experiences, removed from the urgencies of daily life, with the languages, the rituals and the conducts, thanks to which a community lives and reflects its relationship to the world, to others and to itself.

## What is a book?

Circumscribed in this manner, this course of studies and research program will be organized on the basis of a series of questions bequeathed to us by prominent predecessors, starting from the simplest one: What is a book? In 1796 Kant posed this the question in the “Doctrine of Law” of his *Metaphysic of Morals*. There he establishes a fundamental distinction between the book as *opus mechanicum*, as a material object that belongs to the individual who acquires it, and the book as a discourse aimed at an audience, which remains the property of its author and can only be put into circulation by those so designated by the author. This statement about the dual material and discursive nature of the book, mobilized to denounce pirate editions in the Germany for his day, provides a solid base for several lines of inquiry.

Some, genealogical and retrospective, will focus on the long history of metaphors for the book – not so much those that speak of the human body, nature or destiny as a book – where Curtius said almost everything there was to say - as those that present the book as a human creature, endowed with a soul and a body. In the Spain of the Golden Age, the metaphor was used for quite different purposes: to reflect the two figures of God as a printer, who put his image on the printing press so that “the copy will be consistent with the form that it should have” and who “wanted to be pleased by the many copies of his mysterious original,” as the lawyer Melchor de Cabrera wrote in 1675; and the figure of the printer as demiurge, who gives an appropriate corporal form to the soul of his creature. That was what Victor Alonso de Paredes, who was well acquainted with the trade because he was a printer in Madrid, declared around 1680 in the first treatise about printing composed in a vernacular language:

A perfectly achieved book consists in a good doctrine, presented by the printer and the corrector in the arrangement most proper to it; this is what I hold to be the soul of the book; and it is a fine impression under the press, clean and done with care that makes me compare it to a graceful and elegant body.

Other investigations based on Kant’s distinction will follow the flow of time, starting from the paradoxical concept of literary property, formulated in various ways during the eighteenth century. Indeed, it was only when written works were detached from any particular materiality that literary compositions could be regarded as immaterial property. Hence the oxymoron that leads the text to be designated as an “immaterial thing.” Hence the fundamental separation between the essential identity of the work and the indefinite plurality of its states or, to use the vocabulary of material bibliography, between *substantive* and *accidental*; between the ideal and transcendent text and the multiple forms of its publication. Hence, finally, the historical hesitations that bring us to the present day, about the intellectual justification and criteria for defining the literary property, which assumes that a work can be recognized as always identical

to itself, regardless of how it is published and transmitted. It is this foundation of the writers' imprescriptible though transmissible ownership of their texts that Balckstone situated in the singularity of language and style, Diderot situated in the sentiments of the heart, and Fichte in the always unique way in which the author links ideas.

### What is an author?

In all cases, an original and indestructible relationship is supposed to exist between the work and its author. However, a connection of the sort is neither universal nor unmediated, because if all texts were indeed written or spoken by someone, not all of them are attributed to one proper name. This notion underlies a question posed by Foucault in 1969 and resumed in *The Order of Discourse*: "What is an author?" His answer, which considers the author as one of the devices aimed to control the disturbing proliferation of discourses, does not, it seems to me, exhaust the heuristic force of the question. It obliges us to resist the temptation to hold as universal, implicitly and inappropriately, categories whose formulation or use have varied considerably through history. Two lines of research can show that.

The first will be devoted to "collaborative writing" (especially in the case of theatrical works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and will contrast the frequency of that practice with the logic of print publication, which prefers anonymity or a sole author's name, and with the literary and social logic that brings together in a single volume the texts of a given writer, sometimes accompanied by his biography – as in the case Shakespeare in the Rowe edition of 1709 edition or the London edition in Castilian of Cervantes by Mayans y Sísar of *Don Quixote*, published by Tonson in 1738. The construction of the author from the aggregation or, it could be said, the binding of his texts (at least some of them) in the same volume or the same *corpus*, stands opposed to the reverse process of disseminating works in the form of quotations or excerpts.

There are many examples that illustrate that dual modality of circulation of texts, starting with Shakespeare. If the 1623 Folio inaugurated the canonization of the playwright, as early as 1600 excerpts from his poems *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis* and from five of his plays had already appeared in commonplace books, composed entirely of the works of authors who had written and were still writing in English and not in Latin. In the first of these, *The Bel-Vedere*, or *The Garden of the Muses*, excerpts are given without mention to any of the writers listed at the head of the book. In the second, titled *England's Parnassus*, excerpts are followed by their authors' names. This one example shows the contradictions and hesitations of a genealogy of the "author function", as Foucault called, while suggesting that the inquiry be pursued, recognizing other forms of fragmentation of texts in the age of complete works from the *esprits* of the eighteenth century, which distilled texts as if they were perfumes, to the *morceaux choisis* that fill schoolbooks.

The second line of research will focus on conflicts concerning the name of the author's surname and the paternity of texts at a time, before the establishment of literary property, when stories belonged to everyone, the anthologies of commonplaces circulated examples ready for reuse, and plagiarism was not legally considered a crime - unlike pirating editions, which was a crime and defined as a violation of a bookseller's privilege or "right in copy". How, then are we to understand the controversies about apocryphal sequels (like that of Don Quixote by the unscrupulous Avellaneda) or the complaints against the encroachments of the identity of famous authors with the aim facilitating the sale of books written by other authors (such as Lope de Vega's complains when his name was used by publishers of *comedias* that were not his and that he considered detestable), or yet convictions for thefts of texts, theatrical works or sermons committed to memory and, at least in England, noted down by using one or another method of stenography that had been in circulation since the late sixteenth century?

Answering these questions obviously involves articulating the principles, which varied from one historical period to another, governing the order of discourses and equally diverse regulations and conventions that governed the order of books, or, more generally, the ways in which writings were published. By doing so, we can draw the limits between what was and what was not acceptable within a historical situation in which, at first, the ownership of works was not held by their authors and originality was not the first criterion guiding their composition or their appreciation.

### **Written culture and literature**

Reflecting on ways to categorize texts or on the dual nature of the book also suggests to a third question that a historian raises with a degree of apprehension: that of the relations between the history of the written word and literature. And yet, there is no long-term history of written cultures that can avoid the strong ties of dependency between pragmatic and practical texts of no particular quality and texts inhabited by the strange power of inspiring dreams, eliciting thoughts and awakening desires. Should historians then retreat and remain on the terrain that is most familiar to them? Chastened by severe warnings addressed to some imprudent historians, that is what they have believed for a long time.

However, my teaching will be encouraged by a similar imprudence, for at least two reasons. The first stems from the impossibility of applying retrospectively the categories that at least since the eighteenth century have been associated with the term "literature", which once had a totally different meaning. Understanding works written according to older definitions rather than on the basis of contemporary distinctions, establishing unexpected morphological relationships (as done, for example, by Petrucci between notarial records and poetic manuscripts of Trecento authors), connecting scholarly discourses or

the discourse of fiction to the reading and writing techniques that made each of them possible, are all requirements that warn us against the first capital sin for a historian, which is to forget differences through time.

There is a second reason for my temerity. I can blame Borges for it, since he wrote in a prologue to *Macbeth*: “Art happens, said Whistler, but the idea that there is no way to ever get rid of deciphering the aesthetic mystery does not preclude examination of the facts that made it possible (*los hechos que le hicieron posible*)”. If Borges is right, everyone can and should play their part in the examination of these “facts” that give certain texts, and not all of them, the perpetuated strength of charm.

Borges’ fictions followed, in each of their stages, the definition of this course of studies. One of them in a very special way: *El espejo y la máscara* [The Mirror and the Mask]. Like a ruthless modeling, but inhabited by grace, Borges includes in the same text all the elements that govern its writing and its reception. Three times the poet Ollan goes back to his winning king with an ode of praise. And three times there are changes in the nature of the audience (the people, the *doctos*, the sovereign alone), the mode of publication of the poem (read aloud, recited, chanted), the aesthetics of its composition (imitation, invention, inspiration), and the established relationship between words and things, between the verses of the poet and the high feats of the king, successively inscribed in the system of the representation, of the *ekphrasis* and of the sacred. With the third poem, which consists of a single, mumbled and mysterious verse, the poet and his king knew beauty. They must atone for this favor forbidden to men. The poet received a mirror for his first ode, which reflected all the literature of Ireland, then a mask for the second, which had the force of theatrical illusion. With the dagger, which is the last gift from his king, he kills himself. As for the sovereign, he condemned himself to wander the lands that were formerly those of his kingdom. Reversing the roles, Borges is the blind man who tells us, in the poetic splendor of the fable, that the spells of fiction always depend on the norms and practices of the writing that inhabit them, take them over and transmit them.

It is probably this concern that explains the increasingly important place held in my work by Castilian literature, that of the first modernity and, occasionally, of our time. The casualties of travel and teaching, the strength of meetings and friendships play their part in it, which is significant. But there is something else. As already pointed out by Auerbach with his usual acuity, the works of the Golden Age are marked by a “constant effort to poeticize and sublimate the real”, stronger even than in the Elizabethans, its contemporaries. This aesthetics “that includes the representation of everyday life, but does not make it an end and overcomes it “has a particular effect, felt in a very large number of works: to transform into the very subject of fiction the objects and practices of the written word. The realities of the writing or of the publication, the ways of reading or listening are thus transfigured for dramatic, narrative or poetic purposes.

I will give you an example. Entering Sierra Morena with *Don Quixote* leads to

finding an object forgotten by the history of written culture, the *librillo de memória* that in seventeenth-century French was translated as “*tablettes*”. In the *librillos de memória* it was possible to write without ink or pen, and its pages, covered with a thin varnish coating, could easily be erased and reused. Such is the true nature of the object abandoned by Cardenio, the young Andalusian nobleman who also retreated to the solitude of the mountains, and on the pages of which *Don Quixote*, for lack of paper, wrote a letter to Dulcinea and another, in the form of bill of exchange, to Sancho. But, they will say, is it that important to identify the true materiality of this modest object and indicate that it is not a regular notebook or a simple travel log as proposed by recent translations? Wouldn't that imply the curiosity of an antiquarian, insignificant for those who intend to approach the “aesthetic mystery?”

Perhaps not. By authorizing the writing and its deletion, the trace and its disappearance, Cardenio's *librillo* is like a material metaphor for the multiple variations of the memory and forgetfulness that obsess the chapters of Sierra Morena. Sancho, who says he forgets even his own name and cannot read or write is, however, a being of memory, Sancho, the one with the great memory, who speaks only through sentences and proverbs. Don Quixote, in turn, has the memory of the knights of literature, whom he mimics in everything and, at every moment, takes from this bookish memory the meaning of the misfortunes that overwhelm him. Between memory without book and books that are memory, Cardenio's *librillo de memória* is a contradictory object in which, as defined in the *Dictionnaire de la langue castilhane* published by the Royal Academy in the early eighteenth century “one sees everything one does not want to entrust to the weakness of the memory, and which then is erased so that the pages can be used again.” On the pages of the “*tablettes*”, and contrary to the adage *verba manent et scripta volant*. Just like forgetfulness is the condition of the memory, deletion is the condition of the written word.

Cardenio's “*tablettes*” thus designate the weakness, either pitiful or necessary, of any writing. In *Don Quixote*, the writing is always waiting for eternity, but is never protected against loss and forgetfulness. Poems written on sand or on the bark of trees disappear, the pages of memory books dim, the manuscripts are interrupted, as in the case of the one recounting the sallies errant knight, and which would have been left unfinished were it not for the relationship between the Arab historian and his Moorish translator. Thus, a return to Cervantes' text suggests that sometimes the most material history of the written word offers an entry into the most canonical, most frequently commented upon works, for the overlooked reasons for their magic to be perceived. It is also to indicate that in my courses, and without any pretension on my part to the dignity of a Hispanist, illustrated in Collège de France by great examples, I hope to make heard the voices of writers who have written in the language about which the grammarian Antonio de Nebrija said in 1492 that it was perfect because in it there was no gap between what is written and what is pronounced.



### **Production of the text, instability of the meaning, authority of the written word**

Like others or better than others, the Spanish authors of the Golden Age were aware of the processes that are the object of any history of written culture. Three of these are essential. The first is created by the plurality of the operations used in the publication of texts. Authors do not write books, not even their own books. Books, whether manuscript or printed, are always the result of multiple operations that imply a large variety of decisions, techniques and skills. For example, in the case of books printed in the age of the “ancient typography regime”, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, this process involved the production of a transcript (fair copy) of the author’s manuscript by a professional scribe; the examination of that copy by the censors; the choices made by the bookseller/publisher as to the paper to be used, the format chosen and the print run; the organization of the work of composition and printing in the print shop; the preparation of the copy; then the composition of the text by the compositors; the reading of the proofs by the corrector; and finally the printing of the copies which, in the era of the manual printing press, permitted new corrections during the printing process. What is at stake thus was not only the production of a book, but the production of the text itself in its material and graphic forms.

It was that reality that Don Quixote encounters when he visits a print shop in Barcelona and sees “drawing of the sheets in one place, correcting the proofs in another, setting up the types in this, revising in that – in short, all the process [*la máquina*] that are to be seen in a large printing house.” In the seventeenth century, treatises and memoirs devoted to the typographic art insisted on this division of tasks, in which the authors did not play the leading role. In 1619, Gonzalo Ayala, who was himself a print corrector, sated that the corrector “must know grammar, spelling, etymologies, punctuation and the disposition of accents.” In 1675, Melchor de Cabrera, the lawyer already mentioned, pointed out that the compositor must know “how to place question marks and exclamation marks and parentheses, because often the intention of the writers is made unclear if these elements, necessary and important for the intelligibility and comprehension of what is written or printed are missing, since if one or the other is lacking, the meaning is changed, inverted and transformed.” A few years later, Alonso Víctor de Paredes stated that the corrector must “understand the intention of the author in what he sends to the printing house, not only in order to introduce adequate punctuation, but also to see if the author has not committed oversights, so as to advise him of them.” The form and the layout of the printed text thus did not depend on the author, who delegated decisions about punctuation, accents and spelling to those who prepared the copy or composed the pages. The basic historicity of a text came to it from negotiations between the order of discourse that governed its writing, its genre and its status, and the material conditions of its publication.

This was true to the extent that the role of the men in the print shop often did not stop there. They were also charged with casting off the copy so that books, or at least certain books, could be composed not according to the order of the text, which would keep the composed characters in place to long and leave the workers with nothing to do, but by “forms, that is, by setting type for all the pages that ere to be assembled within the wooden frame, in order to be printed on the same side of the sheet (e.g. for a book published in quarto format in which each quire was made up of two print sheets, as was the case of pages 1, 4, 13 and 16 of *Don Quixote*). Printing one side of a sheet could this begin even while all the pages of the same quire had not yet been set in type. This previous casting off of the copy-text and an accurate division of the text on the future printing pages, which was not an easy tasks, especially since, as Alonso Víctor de Paredes so nicely put it: “*no son angeles los que cuentan* “ (“it is not the angels that do the casting off”). If the text was divided wrongly, the composition of the final page of the quire would demand adjustments that might go so far as to include, as our printer remarks scornfully, layout of the last pages of a same section will require adjustments, as says reproachfully our printer, can go as far as “the use of ugly procedures, which are not permitted”, by which he meant the addition or deletion of words or phrases that owned nothing to the author’s desire, but everything to the compositor’s difficulty or the corrector’s decisions. As Francisco Rico has brilliantly demonstrated on the basis of some one hundred printer’s copies, examinations of additions or cuts made on their pages offer spectacular examples of alterations involved in the technique of composition forms.

Once prepared in this manner, the copy, called the *original* in Castilian (as if the autograph manuscript was not), was then transformed or distorted by the other operations in the print shop. The mistakes usually made by compositors included: inverted letters or syllables, missing words, skipped lines. Moreover, the same copy-text read by different correctors or compositors might bear noticeable variations on the printed pages, in serious variations in the use of pronouns, grammatical decisions or spelling. Certainly, authors did not write their books, even if some of them did intervene in some editions of their works and fully aware of the effects of the material forms of their texts. Will the situation be different now that books are usually printed on the basis of a text written and corrected by the authors themselves on the screen of their computers? Perhaps, but that does not mean that decisions, interventions and mediations that distinguish publication from simple communication have disappeared in electronic “desktop publishing.”

So, who was the master of meaning? Will it be he the reader, “that *someone* who holds together in one field, all the traces that constitute the written work” as proposed by Roland Barthes? In fact, mobility of meaning is the second instability that bothered or inspired the authors who accompany our investigation.

In the prologue to the *Tragicomedy of Calixto and Melibea*, better known as *La Celestina*, Fernando de Rojas assigns different interpretations of the work to diversity in ages and humors of his listeners.

Some make it into a tale for travel. Others pick known witticisms and known proverbs and, taking care to praise them well, neglect what would apply to them and would be most useful to them. But those for whom all is true pleasure reject the repeatable anecdote, retain the pith of it for their profit, laugh at the jokes and keep in their memory the pronouncements and maxims of the philosophers in to apply them, at the right time, to their acts and plans. Thus, should ten persons in whom there are as many different humors as always is the case, happen to get together to hear this comedy, can one deny that there motifs for discussions on matters that can be understood in so many ways?

Almost five centuries later, Borges attributes variations in the meaning of literary works to changes in ways of reading in much the same way:

Literature is not exhaustible, for the sufficient and simple reason that a single book is not. A book is not an isolated entity: it is a narration, an axis of innumerable narrations. One literature differs from another, either before or after it, not so much because of the text as for the manner in which it is read.

With such authorities, there is hardly any need to pursue justification of the reasons behind the widely shared project of a history of reading or the heuristic validity of the notion of appropriation, which refers both to the intellectual and aesthetic categories of the different audiences and to the gestures, habits, and conventions that govern their relations to the written word.

The third tension that runs through the history of written culture lies between the authorities, who intend to impose their control or their monopoly over the written word and all those for whom knowing how to read and write was the promise of a surer control over their destiny. Every day, for the worse and to our shame, the cruelty of our societies towards those who are excluded from writing and toward those whom worldly misery and the brutality of the laws have left undocumented recalls the ethical and political importance of access to writing. Which is also to say, following the scholarly and civic example set by Armando Petrucci and Don McKenzie that to study as a historian the confrontations between the power over writing established by the powerful and the power that its acquisition confers on the weaker is to oppose the power exerted by writing its ability to found, as stated by Vico in 1725, “the faculty of the peoples to control the interpretation given by the chiefs to the law.”

Whether printed or in manuscript form, the written word has long been invested with a power that is both feared and desired. The foundation of such ambivalence can be read found the text of the Bible, with the dual mention of the eaten book that appears in Ezekiel, 3.3 (“And he said to me, “Son of man [God] then said to me, feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll

that I give you; then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey”) and the echo of this scene in Revelation 10:10 (“I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it; in my mouth it tasted as sweet as honey, but when I swallowed it my stomach turned sour”). The book given by God is bitter, as is the knowledge of sin, and sweet, as is the promise of redemption. The Bible, which contains the book of Revelation, is itself a powerful book, one that protects and conjures, protects from ill, turns away evil spells. Throughout Christianity it was the object of propitiatory and protective uses that did not necessarily suppose the reading its text, but demanded its material presence close to the body.

Also throughout Christianity the book of magic was invested with a similar charge of sacredness that which gives knowledge and power to the person reading it, but that, at the same token, subjugates him. This was expressed in two ways: first, in the language of diabolic possession; then in the language of madness brought on by excessive reading. The danger of the book of magic was soon extended to all books and readings of all sorts, to the extent that reading absorbs the reader, and closes him within a chimerical world. The only defense for anyone wishing to remain master of the power of books without succumbing to their force is to make them his own by copying them.

The written word was then the instrument of redoubtable and feared powers. Caliban knows this well, who thinks that the Prospero’s power will be destroyed if his books are seized and burned: “Burn but his books.” But Prospero’s books are in fact only one book: the book that allows him to subject Nature and fellow creatures to his will. This demiurgic power is a terrible threat to those who exercise it, and copying the book is not always enough to conjure away the danger. The book must disappear, drowned at the bottom of the sea, “And deeper than did ever plummet sound/I’ll drown my book.” Three centuries later, it would be at other depths, those of library warehouses that a book would be buried which, although made of sand, was nonetheless disquieting.

That disquietude was accompanied, from the fifteenth century on, by the many condemnations that provided a counterpoint to celebrations of Gutenberg’s invention by stigmatizing compositors’ mistakes, correctors’ ignorance or the dishonesty of booksellers or printers, but and even more the profound corruption of texts by readers incapable of understanding them. In Quevedo’s *The dream of hell* booksellers are sent to eternal damnation condemned to eternal damnation for having put in the hands of ignorant readers books not destined for them:

We booksellers all damn ourselves for the worthless books of others and because we sell at a low price Latin books translated into the vernacular, thanks to which dolts claim a knowledge that at one time was valuable only for the learned - with the result that today the lackey indulges in Latinizing and Horace in Castilian lies about in stables.

Raising questions regarding the authority attributed (or denied) to writ-

ing and about struggles about the confiscation (or divulgation) its powers is perhaps not without pertinence for the understanding of the present day. The continual flow of digital textuality on the computer screen makes the undeniable credibility of discourses really, instantly, less noticeable than the hierarchical order of the printed matter, thus exposing less informed readers to counterfeits.

The credit given to the written word, for better or worse, and its achievements in all fields of social experience cannot be separated from its opposite, i.e., an enduring nostalgia for a lost orality. Recognizing its expressions is another of the tasks proposed to a long-term history of written culture. Its subjects are many, among which it is worth noting the irreducibility between the liveliness of the oral exchange and the inertia of the written transcript, which led Molière to say about the editions of his plays: “And I would only have those read this who have eyes to discover in their reading the whole interplay of the Theatre”, or yet the close relationship between word and punctuation. After the establishment by printers of the unequal duration of pauses, indicated by the “comma”, according to the lexicon of Etienne Dolet in 1540, the desire for orality led to the search for the way to mark in the written text the differences in intensity that command the reader, to others or to himself, to raise his voice or highlight the words. The diverted use of exclamation marks or question marks and the use of capital letters at the beginning of words are devices that enable “accommodating” the voice, as put by Ronsard. Understanding how mute pages were able to capture and retain something from the live word is a matter that this course would like to raise, confronting the spelling reform projects, which were so many in sixteenth-century Europe, the practices of compositors and correctors, and in some, albeit rare cases, the punctuation games promoted by the authors themselves.

### **Principles of analysis**

The affirmed or challenged authority of the written word, the mobility of the meaning, the collective production of the text: such are the plots in which I would like to enroll more particular reasons that will make up the object of my courses. They will mobilize various principles of analysis. The first situates the construction of the meaning of texts between violated impositions and repressed freedoms. Always, the forms of the writing or the cultural skills of the reader narrow the limits of understanding. But always also the appropriation is creative, producing a difference, proposing a possible, although unexpected meaning. Away from all perspectives that prevailed for a long time, which relate the meaning of the text exclusively to the automatic and impersonal evolution of the language, this approach aims to recognize the link between a *difference* - that by which, in varying forms, all societies have delimited a particular field of textual productions, collective experiences or aesthetic pleasures - and certain *dependencies* - those that include literary or intellectual creations in the discourses and practices of the social world that make them possible and intelligible. The

unprecedented crossing of disciplines for a long time unknown to each other (textual criticism, history of the book, cultural sociology) entails therefore a fundamental challenge: to understand how the unique and inventive appropriations by readers, listeners or spectators depend, all at once, on the effects of the meaning pursued by the texts, on the uses and meanings imposed by the forms of their publication, and on the skills and expectations that govern the relationship between the interpretation community and written culture.

Regarding the method, a second requirement, which is necessary for an activity that is - importantly but not exclusively - the study of texts, takes us back to the concept of representation in the dual dimension that Louis Marin attributes to it: "transitive dimension" or transparency of utterance, every representation *represents* something; "reflexive" dimension or enunciatory opacity, every representation *presents itself* representing something. Over the years and throughout the works, the notion of representation nearly came to designate in itself the cultural history process that is the basis of this course of studies. The observation is relevant, but should avoid misunderstandings. As I understand it, the notion deviates neither from reality nor from the social. By highlighting the strength of representations, whether internalized or objectified, it helps historians to dispose of their "quite fragile idea of the real," as Foucault used to say. These representations are not simple images, whether true or misleading, of a reality strange to them. They have an energy of themselves that convinces that the world, or the past, is really what they say it is. Produced in their differences by the distances that fracture societies, representations in turn produce and reproduce them. Therefore, leading the history of written culture, giving it as cornerstone the history of representations, is to link the power of written texts that offer them to be read or heard, to the mental, socially differentiated categories that they impose and that are the matrices of classifications and judgments.

A third principle of analysis consists in placing single works or the bodies *corpus* of texts that are the object of study at the point of intersection of the two axes that organize all investigation of cultural history or cultural sociology. One is a synchronic axis that allows to situate every written text within its time or its field, and that places it in relation to other works contemporary to it that belong to different forms of experience. The other is a diachronic axis that inscribes the work within the past of the genre or the discipline. In the more exact sciences, the presence of the past usually refers to brief, on occasions very brief, time spans. The same is not true of literature or the humanities, for which the most ancient pasts are always, in some fashion, still-living presents from which new creations take inspiration or detach themselves. What contemporary novelist does not know *Don Quixote*? And what historian could launch a course within these walls in this house without mentioning at least once the great shadow of Michelet? Neither Febvre nor Braudel failed to do so. Nor Daniel Roche. And I in turn have just done so.

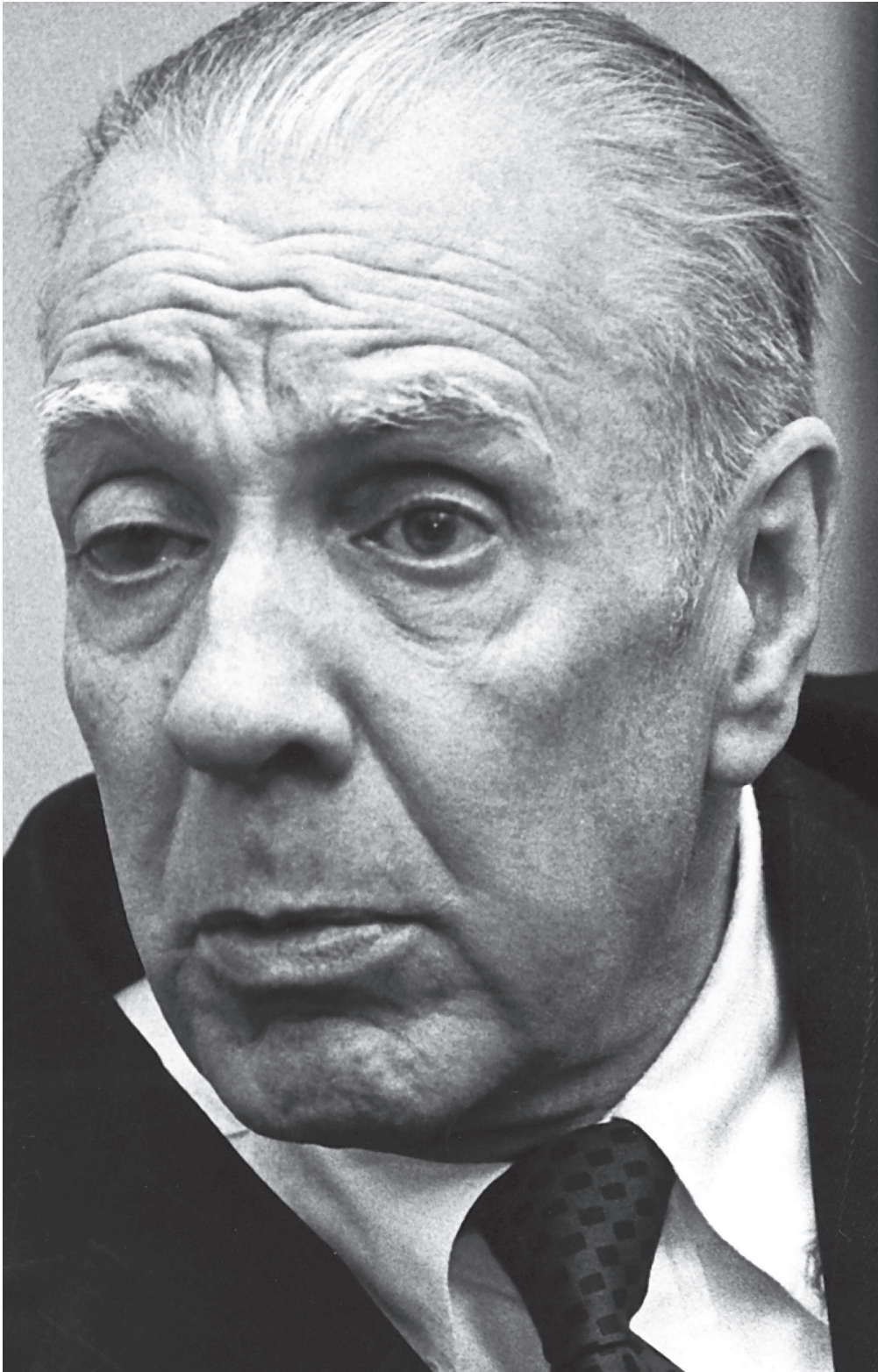


Photo Peter Kokosch / Interfoto

*The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986).*

Pierre Bourdieu saw in that contemporaneity of successive pasts one of the characteristics of the fields of cultural production and consumption: “The entire history of the field is immanent in the functioning of the field, and in order to be able to respond to its objective demands, as a producer but also as a consumer, one must possess a practical or theoretical mastery of that history.” That possession (or absence thereof) distinguishes the learned from the unlearned, and it contains the diverse relations that every new work maintains with the past: academic imitation, kitsch restoration, the return to the ancients, satirical irony, and aesthetic rupture. When Cervantes picked books of knightly chivalry as the targets of his parodies, but also pastoral romances (as when Don Quixote becomes the shepherd Quijotiz) and picaresque autobiographies (with allusions to the life narrative written by Ginés de Pasamonte) he established within the present of his writing three genres with very different time-schemes, in contrast to which he invents a new way of writing fiction, conceiving it, as Francisco Rico writes “not in the artificial style of literature, but in the domestic prose of life.” Thus, he, the *ingenio lego*, the ignorant genius, shows that the *learned* are not the only ones to make good use of the history of literature genres and forms.

### Excess and loss

A contradictory fear inhabited modern Europe and still torments us. On the one hand, there is fright of the uncontrolled proliferation of writings, the heaps of useless books, the disorder of discourse. On the other there is fear of loss, of lack, and of forgetfulness. It is to that second concern that I would like to devote my first course of studies here. Inspired by a project somewhat in the style of Borges, , it will focus on a work that has disappeared and for which we have neither the manuscript nor a printed edition. It was performed twice in the court of England, in early 1613. Payment orders to the company that performed the play, the King’s Men, indicate the title of the play, *Cardenio*, and nothing else. Forty years later, in 1653, Humphrey Moseley a London bookseller intent on supplying readers with the dramatic works that he had been forbidden to perform during the revolutionary times, when the theaters were closed, registered his rights over the work, indicating to the secretary of the Stationers’ Company, the booksellers’ and printers’ guild, the names of the two authors of the work: “*The history of Cardenio, By Mr. Fletcher & Shakespeare.*” The play was never printed, and in the eighteenth century, like a ghost, it began to obsess the passions and imaginations of Shakespeare editors and scholars.

Two payment orders, one entry in a bookseller’s register, a play that has disappeared. “These are a pretty meager beginning!” some would say. Still, it can permit us to formulate some of the most basic questions in a history of the written word. First, by focusing on the mobility of works from one language to another, one genre to another, one place to another. It was, in fact, just one year before the performances of *Cardenio* that the English version of *Don Quixote* was printed, translated by Thomas Shelton, a Catholic, and published



by Edouard Blount, who also published Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*. Fletcher and Shakespeare were neither the first nor the last to transform Cervantes's tale into a play. In Spain, Guillén de Castro had preceded them with his *comedia*, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*; in Paris Pichou, the author of *Les Folies de Cardenio* followed them, as did Guérin de Bouscal, who staged three plays inspired by *Don Quixote*.

Second challenge: the tension between the perpetuation of traditional modes of literary composition, which offer ample space for collaboration, adaptation and revision, and the emergence, centered on some authors – as is the case of Cervantes and Shakespeare, united by *Cardenio* – of the figure of the writer who is unique in his geniality and creation. Finally, the search for *Cardenio*, lost somewhere between Sierra Morena and the London theaters is also a history of textual appropriations, of the ways in which the same texts have been read and mobilized in different social and cultural contexts and, consequently ceased to be the same. This was the case with *Don Quixote*, whose protagonists appeared in aristocratic or carnival festivities by the early seventeenth century, both in the metropolis and in the Spanish colonies, and with Shakespeare, treated so differently in the England of the Restoration and of the eighteenth century by respectful editors and less respectful playwrights who, incidentally, might be the same persons. “*Cardenio* scams were the three-card trick of the literary world – the bread and butter for literary lowlife,” says one of the characters in the contemporary novel by Jasper Fford, *Lost in a Good Book*. I hope you will forgive me for giving it a new setting in this institution that has become so used to more severe and nobler studies.

Listen to the dead with your eyes. Several shadows have passed through my words, recalling by their presence our sadness at their absence. Without them, and others also who have written nothing, I would not be standing here this evening. But, as I am about to conclude, I remember Pierre Bourdieu's warnings about the illusion that makes us speak in the singular of shared roads traveled. The “I” that I have imprudently used at times today, unwisely and against my principles, should be understood as we – the “we”, the we of all the men and women, colleagues and students with whom, over the years, I have shared courses and research projects at the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, and numerous institutions of our Republic of Letters. It is with them and with all of you, who do me the honor of welcoming me here, that I would like to turn to the pursuit of a task that intends to use the long-term of the history of written culture to support the critical lucidity demanded by our uncertainties and our anxieties.

## Note

1 Inaugural lecture No. 195 at Collège de France / Fayard, delivered on Thursday, October 11, 2007; Chair “Writing and Cultures in Modern Europe.” Since its founding in 1530, the primary mission of Collège de France has been to teach not established knowledge, but “knowing by doing,” i.e., scientific and intellectual research. Its courses are open to all, free of charge, without registration or diploma. As its motto says (*Docet omnia*, “Teach All Things”), Collège de France is organized into 52 chairs, covering a wide range of disciplines. In addition, a European chair, an international chair, an artistic chair and a technological innovation chair are established each year. The professors are freely chosen by their peers, according to the evolution of science and knowledge. Upon the arrival of each new professor, a new chair is created, which can either continue, at least partially, the legacy of a previous chair, or introduce a new discipline. The first course of a new professor is his inaugural lecture. Solemnly delivered in the presence of their colleagues and a wide audience, it gives them the opportunity to situate their own work and their teaching in relation to those of their predecessors, as well as the latest developments in research. Besides presenting an overview of the present state of our knowledge, thus contributing to the history of each discipline, the inaugural lectures also introduce us into the workshop of the scientist and researcher. In their field and at their time, many of them have been significant events, sometimes making a strong impact. They address a wide and savvy audience, concerned about better understanding the evolution of contemporary science and intellectual life.

*Roger Chartier* has taught Modern History at the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS), Paris, and at the University of Pennsylvania. His works focus mainly on the history of the book and reading. His published works include *Lecture et lecteurs dans la France de l'ancien Régime* (1987), *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution Française* (1990), *Écrire et effacer. Culture écrite et littérature* (2003), among others, and he co-directed *Histoire de l'édition française* (1983-1986) and *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental* (1997). He has published several books in Brazil, including: *História da vida privada: da Renascença ao Século das Luzes*, co-authored with Philippe Ariès (Companhiadas Letras), *A ordem dos livros: leitores, autores e bibliotecas na Europa entre os séculos XIV e XVIII* (UnB press), *A aventura do livro: do leitor ao navegador* (UNESP press) and *Os desafios da escrita* (UNESP press). Since 2007, he has been a professor at Collège de France in the chair “Writing and Cultures in Modern Europe.”

@ – roger.chartier@college-de-france. fr

Received on 10 August 2009 and accepted on 15 August 2009.