

An Early Translation of a Text
Attributed to Cervantes:
Cesare Parona's
*Relazione di quanto è successo
nella città di Vagliadolid*

FREDERICK DE ARMAS AND ARMANDO MAGGI

In 2004, the Special Collections Department at the Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, acquired a volume with two works in Italian celebrating the birth of Prince Felipe Dominico Víctor, the future Philip IV.¹ The first text is *Feste di Milano nel felicissimo nascimento del Serenissimo Principe di Spagna Don Filippo Dominico Vittorio* by Cesare Parona, published in Milan by Girolamo Bordone and Pietro Martire Locarni in 1607. The second text is *Relazione di quanto è successo nella città di Vagliadolid dopo il felicissimo nascimento del Principe di Spagna Don Filippo Dominico Vittorio*, Cesare Parona's translation of the famous *Relación de lo sucedido en la ciudad de Valladolid* attributed to Cervantes. This Italian version came out with the same publisher in Milan in 1608. In the dedicatory letter of January 2nd 1608 to Count Teodoro Trivultio the publishers explain that they had asked Parona to translate the Spanish *Relación* since he had composed the previous *Feste di Milano* also in celebration of this Prince's birth. This dedicatory letter replaces the original one to Don Juan de Zúñiga Avellaneda y

¹ We would like to thank Alice Schreyer, director of Special Collections at the University of Chicago, for purchasing the volume in question and assisting us in our research.

Bazán, and its date shows that this translation is prior to the French translation of *Le curieux impertinent* (Paris, 1608), traditionally held to be the first translation of a work of Cervantes.²

Hora noi, che di Libri trattiamo, dopò la cura dataci d'imprimere nelle nostre Stampe la Narratione di quante feste habbia fatto la gran Città di Milano nel nascimento del Principe di Spagna Signor nostro; habbiamo fatto opera, che l'istesso Autore traducesse nella nostra lingua l'altra, c'havevamo nella Castigliana, delle allegrezze fatte nella Corte di Sua Maestà Catolica in Vagliadolid, et questa veniamo à dedicare à V. S. Illustriss. assicurati, ch'ella vederà volentieri in Italiano quanto colà è seguito; disponendo poscia la sua leggiadrissima persona co'l tempo, à far di se quel progresso nelle Cavalleresche dimostrationi, ch'andarà d'altri principali Signori leggendo, per quelle occasioni, ch'à lei potranno presentarsi giostrando, & armeggiando... (fol. a2^v)

In a prefatory poem signed under the pseudonym *Del Limpido*, Parona is praised as both writer and painter because of the accuracy of his translation that mirrors "quel che fu" (what happened).

Parona's translation follows the original *Relación* very closely, though with a more detailed table of contents. This fidelity in itself is significant given the fact there was a wide range of practices regarding the art of translation. In this note we will briefly examine Parona's strategies for mirroring the original and we will also point out the ways he veers away from the Spanish. For Parona a faithful translation not only reproduces the correct meaning of the original but also echoes it phonetically. Thus he often uses terms and expressions that, though usually acceptable in Italian, can be regarded as italianizations of Spanish words and phrasings. We will provide several examples. Describing the *carro triunfal* that was part of the celebration for the prince's birth, Parona mentions the "quattro schiene della base" (22), which corresponds to "las quatro esquinas de la base" in the original *Relación*

² The *privilegio* of this translation is dated April 26, 1608 (Rius 1: 329).

(216). In Italian, "schiena" does not mean "corner" but "back," having several different connotations (Tommaseo and Bellini, vol. 4.1, 643). Parona chose to keep the Spanish-sounding "schiena" because its meaning is not far removed from "esquina." Writing of the same *carro triunfal*, "Cervantes" describes the "librea" of the musicians, which has the same colors of the city of Valladolid, that is, yellow and red ("amarillo y colorado," 215).³ Parona follows suit stating that these colors are "giallo e colorito" (20). "Colorito" usually means "with colors" and not necessarily "red," although it does have this connotation when it refers to wine and a person's complexion. Once again, phonetics seems to be more important than meaning, and once again Parona uses a term that an Italian reader could understand given its multiple connotations (Tommaseo and Bellini, *Nuovo dizionario*, 1.2, 1506; *Vocabolario*, 3, 166-67). To translate the word "sucedido," Parona prefers to use the expression "quanto è successo" instead of a noun in order to preserve the Spanish flavor. The same rationale is behind the translation of "suceso" (206) as "successo" (6). Parona goes as far as to reproduce entire expressions from the Spanish text. "El rey tubo por bien de dar satisfacción" (247) reads "Il re hebbe per bene di dare sodisfazione" (74); "daban la norabuena" (206) and "dieron a su majestad la norabuena" (216) are rendered as "dettoro la hora buona" (6) and "dettoro a Sua Maestà la horabuona" (22) in Parona's translation. Expressions such as "con molto gusto" (63) follow the same rationale.

Parona also makes some subtle changes so that the narrative structure of the *Relación* becomes more visible. Most importantly he cuts lengthy paragraphs allowing the reader to perceive the progression of events more clearly.⁴ He also uses this technique to mark the beginning and the end of a speech, as when the cardinal of Toledo reads out loud the Spanish king's "juramento" (*Relación* 247; *Relatione* 75). Parona's attempt to clarify the narrative structure of the text at times is inconsistent. Both the Spanish and the Italian texts make use of marginal notes as mnemonic reminders. Parona tends to insert more marginal notes but at times

³ "COLORADO. La cosa de color roxo" (Covarrubias 339).

⁴ See, for example, pages 4, 56, 57, 68, and 69 in the *Relatione*.

he fails to reproduce the ones in the Spanish original.⁵ Very rarely Parona has a minor lapse. For instance, the emperor “Teodosio” (216) becomes “Teodoro” in the *Relatione* (22).

In conclusion, we could say that Parona’s translation attempts to be so faithful to the original that it reflects the deep contamination between the Spanish and the Italian languages at a time when the two cultures were extremely close—Cervantes himself uses a number of Italianisms in his works. Both Parona’s *Feste di Milano* and his *Relatione* reflect “the power and presence of the Spaniards in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century” Italy (Dandelet 9).

Dept. of Romance Languages
University of Chicago
1115 East 58th St.
Chicago IL 60637
fdearmas@uchicago.edu

WORKS CITED

- Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de (atrib.). *Relación de lo sucedido en la ciudad de Valladolid*. Ed. Patricia Marín Cepeda. *Cervantes* 25.2 (2005): 194–270. Available shortly at <<http://www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/bcsaf05.htm>>.
- . *Relatione di quanto è successo nella città di Vagliadolid*. Trans. Cesare Parona. Milan: Bordini and Martire Locarni, 1608.
- Covarrubias, Sebastián de. *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*. Ed. Martín de Riquer. 1943. Barcelona: Alta Fulla, 1987.
- Dandelet, Thomas James. *Spanish Rome. 1500-1700*. New Haven: Yale UP 2001.
- Rius, Leopoldo. *Bibliografía crítica de las obras de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*. 3 vols. 1895–1904. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970.
- Tommaseo, Nicolò and Bernardo Bellini. *Nuovo dizionario della lingua italiana*. Turin, 1861-79.
- Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. Florence, 1878.

⁵ See, for example, pages 5 and 12, 29, 36, 58, 63, 79.