Cheap Print and the People

Cheap Print and the People:

European Perspectives on Popular Literature

Edited by

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ILLUSTRATIONS

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The purpose of this volume is to introduce readers to the variety of cheap literature that was produced and sold right across Europe from early modern times through to the beginning of the twentieth century. Inevitably, the historical, political, chronological, and commercial circumstances vary in important ways from one place to the next, and a consequence of this is that there are some differences in terminology that need to be noticed, if not entirely resolved.

- *Almanac* is the term used for an annual book containing a calendar of months and days, astronomical data and calculations, anniversaries and notable dates, astrological and meteorological forecasts, lists of markets and fairs, and the like. An *almanac* is more expansive than a *calendar*, which implies little more than a list of dates.
- *Broadside* is the fairly straightforward description for a single sheet of paper printed on one side, with text in verse of prose, frequently with a woodcut illustration. Occasionally, a single sheet would be printed on both sides, and this is sometimes called a *broadsheet*, although the distinction is not always maintained.
- *Chapbook* is both a particularly useful and potentially confusing term. Strictly speaking, a *chapbook* comprises a single sheet of paper printed on both sides and folded to form a small booklet or pamphlet, normally of between eight and thirty-two pages, of small size, and issued without stitching or binding. The term *chapbook* is a back-formation from *chapman* + *book*. A *chapman* was, from medieval times to the nineteenth century, an itinerant pedlar or hawker selling myriad kinds of wares, including cheap print; the word itself derives from Old English *céap* = sale (from *cípan* = to sell) + *mann*. Accordingly, to call a publication a *chapbook* implies this method of itinerant distribution and sale, in streets and byways, at markets and fairs. A false etymology that derives *chapbook* from "cheap book" is sometimes quoted and, if not correct, is not altogether inappropriate. While the bibliographical definition of a *chapbook* is a small book printed from one sheet of paper, the term can usefully be applied to any kind of book that was (or might have been) carried by a *chapman* and might extend to, say, ninety-six pages or three folded sheets. The terms *booklet* and

pamphlet encompass a rather broader range of small books, sold in more conventional ways and not necessarily aimed at the popular end of the market, although the distinction is far from absolute and some scholars treat *pamphlet* and *chapbook* as interchangeable terms.

- *Print* or "popular print" in English usage usually refers to a woodcut or copperplate illustration printed as a broadside with very little in the way of accompanying text – a cheap picture, in other words. Elsewhere, "popular prints" or "penny prints" would also carry some explanatory text. Sometimes, however, the term *print* is used as a convenient shorthand for "printed item". Although this volume tries to avoid using the word in a potentially ambiguous way, the different implications should be borne in mind.

Nevertheless, it is not always easy to translate the terms used in the different languages without forcing everything into an English-language mould or adding further confusion. Translating the French *bibliothèque bleue* as "blue books", for example, would hardly be useful, and to render the Scandinavian s*killing* ballad as "shilling ballad" would be downright confusing, as in Britain one could normally buy twelve or even twenty-four ballads for one shilling. We have therefore adopted the plan of asking our contributors to describe the physical materials with which they are concerned, explain the local terms, and then use those in their writing without further comment.

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Note: All online resources were accessed and verified between 15 and 21 March 2019.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

STEVE ROUD AND DAVID ATKINSON

The subject of this collection of essays is the many kinds of publications that emerged across Europe from early modern times to the twentieth century that fall within the categories of "street literature" (the term most commonly used by scholars of literature and folklore) and "cheap print" (the term favoured in studies of book trade and printing history). While all kinds of material might in principle be drawn in under the rubric of cheap print, the terminology of street literature narrows the field down somewhat, to printed works that, however humble, display a degree of syntactical structure and imaginative compass. Empirically, the printed items under consideration here are broadsides, chapbooks, pamphlets, and other small booklets. Their contents were ballads and songs, tales, and works of non-fiction, intended variously to inform, educate, and entertain. They could be in verse or prose (or a mixture thereof), and they were frequently illustrated (in some instances with little printing besides the illustration). Street literature was usually, though not invariably, presented for sale, and a degree of intended permanence may be imputed to it, in theory if not necessarily in practice. These definitions are porous all round, but on the whole the essays here are not concerned with other kinds of cheap printed things such as posters, handbills, advertisements, or trade cards which can be more intuitively described as "ephemera". Nor are we usually concerned with the later reading materials, such as popular novels, magazines, and newspapers, that developing print technology allowed to become increasingly "cheap" as the nineteenth century progressed.

The sale of street literature was characteristically carried out through networks that involved publishers and printers selling wholesale, modest retailers operating from shops or stalls, and itinerant sellers who would carry cheap print into public places – streets, marketplaces, fairs – and would sometimes sell from door to door. Travelling sellers are variously described by names such as pedlars, hawkers, chapmen, *colporteurs*.

Another feature was that these retailers of cheap print would cry their wares. This performance element meant that there was something of a crossover between the print trade and street singers, musicians, and other itinerant entertainers. From a scholarly perspective this crossover has sometimes given rise to a rather uneasy situation whereby a largely idealized conception of oral "folk song" has come up against the hard evidence of the circulation of song texts in cheap print. Some of the songs and tales that appeared in cheap print also circulated orally, and some of them may have been in existence prior to print, but print enhanced their distribution and preservation, and it is largely print that provides the evidence for their currency especially before, but also after, the Romantic era "discovery of the people", to use Peter Burke's phrase.

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If this book fulfils its aims, it will operate on two levels. Each chapter should stand as a much-needed introduction for English-language readers to the street literature of a particular country or region. Then, taken in combination, they offer a comparative perspective on the genre on a continental scale. It has not been possible to cover every country or region (Germany, for instance, is a notable absence) and to do so would have required a much larger book, but if there is a chance of a second volume it will aim to cover some of the areas and topics not included here. Nor could we hope to elucidate all the intricacies and fine details of the history of cheap literature in the countries that are included. Cheap print is a much wider field than first meets the eye and it has to be studied from a range of perspectives. But we are confident that the contributions gathered here are sufficiently broad in geographical spread, and diverse enough in terms of genre and local situation, to serve as an effective introduction and to map out the field.

The editors deliberately avoided giving the contributors a strict template in which to operate. To do so would have forced them into one mould based inevitably on the view from one locality, and while accentuating similarities it may well have disguised the underlying differences that we hoped to make plain. We wanted the local situation to dictate the style and content, and our authors have therefore produced chapters that are pertinent to the circumstances of the subject in their locality. While this may have lost a little in terms of ease of straightforward cross-national comparison, it has gained immeasurably in readability and fidelity to the subject in each region.

One function of this short introduction is, therefore, to highlight some overarching themes that will help the newcomer to the subject to identify the main points of comparison. First, our conception of "cheap print" is normally concerned with the purchaser or recipient – the material was cheap to buy. It may be a truism, but it is surely one that needs repeating, that *cheap to buy* means *cheap to print*. Except in special cases where some person or organization has subsidized production, there is a direct correlation between the method of production and the price to the consumer, which impacts on the quality of materials, the time spent on the production of individual items, the quality of printing presses and type, the size and skill of the workforce, business arrangements such as the availability of credit, and so on.

The first prerequisite for a local trade is a printing press in operation, someone to own it, someone sufficiently skilled to operate it, and adequate access to consumables such as ink and paper. Nevertheless, just how *local* the press must be to its market is highly variable. In most countries where printing technology was introduced early the trade was initially highly centralized and controlled, and only gradually managed to break out into the country as a whole. Elsewhere, the presses serving a particular population remained for a long time in a different country altogether, controlled by "outsiders". This situation has ramifications for any attempt at understanding how close the literature came to the mentalities of its consumers – it may well have been at some variance with their world view.

For the historian who wishes fully to understand the genre and its place in society one of the first questions to be tackled concerns the conditions of production. Who were the authors and publishers, were they working under their own volition, what were the constraints upon them? And perhaps most importantly of all, how close were they – in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, education, and so forth – to the people they hoped would buy their works? The readership for cheap print is usually assumed to have been the "common people". While this is true to a large extent, several chapters in this book go to show that the market could be a particular segment of that population, defined by language, ethnicity, religion, or some other social category. As some of the chapters reveal, the choice of language was an especially important indicator of the target audience for cheap print. Furthermore, many publications had the appearance of street literature but without meeting the usual definitions of the genre. Especially in the early days of printing, cheaply printed items were very often *official*, in the form of proclamations, announcements, legal warnings, and the like. They were not intended for sale and were aimed at the general populace

only in so far as the people were expected to comply with the regulations they promulgated.

In practice, it is probably a universal principle that state and church authorities across Europe have been at least highly suspicious of, if not overtly hostile to, cheap popular print, whether in the early modern period or the nineteenth century. Ruling elites were everywhere extremely wary of anyone but themselves speaking directly to the people without their oversight and control. The source of their wariness could be political, religious, moral, or social, or might even be couched in paternalistic terms of protecting the people from subversive messages for their own good. The outright banning of particular types of publication, pre-publication censorship, licensing of printing presses, post-publication prosecution, taxes on printed matter or materials such as paper were all tried at different times, and likewise the authorities attempted to control the distribution of print through means such as the issuing of hawkers' licences.

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The sort of cheap print discussed in this book inevitably falls under the widely used heading of "popular culture", a term that owes much to Peter Burke's *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, first published in 1978, which constructed a "withdrawal thesis" whereby over the course of some three centuries up to *c*.1800 European elites withdrew from a shared culture, which was increasingly abandoned to the lower classes or the "common people". Popular culture is thus readily understood as comprising shared meanings, attitudes, and values, expressed in forms such as cheap print. Yet as the foregoing remarks indicate, and as the following chapters reveal in much greater depth, cheap print of the kind considered here was never so bounded – never confined just to the peasantry, or the working classes, or even the middling sort, and conversely influenced by sources that would normally fall under the heading of elite culture. The "popular" description remains a useful one in so far as it implies widespread dissemination and reach, and a volume of sales flowing from cheapness of production and itinerant distribution, but it is also fraught with implications about social structures and literary origins that are potentially misleading. This is not a debate that is going to be resolved here, but the reader should at least be aware of the terminological minefield.

Across the board, and especially in the later periods, cheap print has attracted the derision of perhaps a majority of educated people, although occasional individuals have taken an interest and made collections to pass

down to us. In like manner, albeit with some notable exceptions, modern scholarship has been very slow to come to an understanding of how interesting and valuable cheap print can be. Several contributors to this volume write that in their country the mass of surviving examples awaits scholarly attention. Paradoxically, it is precisely those areas where the social elites and educated middle classes have taken the least interest that we now value the most. So many other types of historical source have been mediated by the elites that it is a pleasure to find materials that were largely beneath their notice and which therefore remained largely uncontaminated.

Nevertheless, we must avoid the trap of presuming that cheap print gives us direct, unproblematic access to the mentalities, experiences, and desires of the common people. We must always remember that the material as printed had already gone through the mediation of the writer, the printer/publisher, and the distributor, any one of whom might not have been "of the same people" as the individual consumer. Material produced *for* the people is not synonymous with material produced *by* the people. Some social historians have presumed too much in that direction. In fact, we rarely know much about purchasers' preferences beyond the notion that an item that sold well was presumably in some way more to their taste than one that did not. Similarly, we can assume that printers had some notion of what people wanted, or they would not have stayed in business very long. But crucially, we have no idea what the people would have liked but were not offered.

Another pitfall we must avoid is to fail to take into account the chronology – or better still, *chronologies* – laid out in each chapter. There will be great differences between countries where general printing was adopted relatively soon after its invention and those places where the technology was introduced much later, when it had already been "democratized" by technological development and increased availability. Similarly, continuity of types of printed material can disguise important underlying differences.

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Throughout the chapters in this collection there are recurrent patterns in the production, distribution, and consumption of cheap print across Europe – with the caveat that consumption, or reception, is much harder to recover than are production and distribution. But equally there are differences of chronology, technology, and authority which comparative studies must take into account. It is this recurrent sense of difference within similarity,

or similarity within difference, that we perceive as the overarching context for the chapters that follow.

SR, DA, *March 2019*

CHAPTER TWO

POPULAR LITERATURE IN SPAIN: A MOUSE'S TALE

ALISON SINCLAIR

"Spain is different" – so proclaimed Manuel Fraga, Spanish minister for information and tourism from 1962 to 1966. His dictum poses an initial and crucial question for the study of popular literature. In numerous contexts of comparative study, Spain has found itself excluded: it seems that the Pyrenees have constituted a barrier that is more than physical. The presence of Spanish culture in the current volume provides the opportunity for us to explore whether in this context Spain really is different or just comparable but distinct, resonating and occasionally contrasting with popular literature elsewhere in Europe.

My subtitle alludes to the winding, complex, but ever eventful history of popular literature in Spain. The mouse in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* declares that "my tale is a long and a sad one" – long, winding, and diminishing towards its tip. In part, this shape resonates with the form and growth of popular literature in Spain, at least of the type that is the primary material for this chapter, the *pliego suelto* (literally "loose folded piece"), or chapbook, a genre that has strong early beginnings but scant, or rather a different, existence in modern times. But Carroll's mouse's tale also tells of a legal wrangle with no certainty that there is evidence for the conflict, and that, too, is an appropriate image for popular literature in Spain which is notable for having been, at least through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a contested critical territory. But we might also be aware that one of the things the mouse says is not applicable to popular literature in Spain: it is not clear that the tale will be a sad one. The evidence we have for popular literature in Spain – patchy and difficult to put together, and still more to interpret, though it may be – is that it was vigorous, that it inspired affection and enthusiasm, and that it formed a major part of Spain's culture over several centuries.

The setting for "difference" in the case of Spain can be sketched out initially with reference to the country's physical nature and location. Geographical realities have consistently been to the fore in Spain's history, both political and cultural. There are notable internal differences between the regions, with tough, impenetrable chains of mountains and vast, arid inland stretches contrasting with a fertile seaboard on which outward-looking ports have been situated for centuries.[1] This geography poses problems for travel in general and for the transmission of goods, printed matter included. Yet while the Pyrenees on the north-eastern boundary impose a type of limitation within Europe, the coastal borders with the Atlantic and the Mediterranean act not just as a barrier to be overcome but also as a route to communication and trade overseas.

Defining the Field

It will be evident to the reader that the authors in this volume have a high degree of agreement about the nature of their field. But each of us will need to define our own limits according to the type of content we are dealing with. I am concerned primarily with *pliegos sueltos* and associated forms such as the *aleluya*. I shall also make reference in passing to other forms such as *goigs*, a short form of religious publication usually combining text and image.[2] Spain also had, in common with other European countries, its share of ephemeral publications of a broadly political nature. These *hojas volantes* (literally "flying sheets"), printed usually on one side, were produced in times of political stress and excitement – and, curiously, they can frequently be identified by the fact that the title begins with "A", indicating that they are addressed to the

[1] There are linguistic differences, too, observable in terms of lexical and phonetic variation but also separately defined languages such as Basque and Catalan. In relation to popular literature these are less obvious, with the exception of the varieties of Catalan that can be observed through the nineteenth century, and occasional examples of *gallego* or *aragonés*. References to Andalusia and texts that in part aim to give the impression of an *andaluz* accent constitute a separate case and suggest an early awareness of Andalusia as somehow internally exotic. See, for example, *Colección de canciones andaluzas* (Madrid: Imprenta á cargo de José M. Marés, plazuela de la Cebada, núm. 96) [London, British Library, 11450.f.24.(16.)]. Here and elsewhere in this chapter original spelling is used. The nature of linguistic variation in Spanish popular literature requires separate study.

[2] See Josep Martí, "Los *goigs*: Expression de religiosidad e identidad local en Cataluña", in *Palabras para el pueblo*, ed. Luis Díaz G. Viana, vol. 1, *Aproximación general a la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), pp. 191–225.

population, or a specific sector of the population.[3] They imparted information, or purported to do so, but rarely without a specific slant or agenda. Spain also saw, in common with much of Europe, the publication of almanacs and similar materials such as calendars.[4]

The *pliegos sueltos* constitute a genre that falls within what Botrel has termed *el no libro* ("what is not in book form") and the discussion here takes note of Botrel's recommendation for a flexibility of approach that responds to a lack of definition, an approach that is ecological and evolutionary as opposed to "eternal" or "structural".[5] The material under discussion is thus distinct from bulky publications such as novels intended for a popular audience, different from newspapers (although sometimes produced by the same printers), and with an unclear relationship to *hojas volantes* (broadsides).[6] In common with the chapbook in Britain, it has a history of being difficult to define.[7] More usefully within the Spanish context, the field can be understood as *literatura de cordel* ("string

[3] See Carmen Ortiz García, "Papeles para el pueblo: Hojas sueltas y otros impresos de consume masivo en la España de finales del siglo XIX", in *Palabras para el pueblo*, ed. Luis Díaz G. Viana, vol. 1, *Aproximación general a la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), pp. 145–90; Jesusa Vega, "Fernando VII: Resistencia y deseo", *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 14 (2014), 348–99. The nature of *hojas volantes* is problematic for cataloguing; if catalogued alphabetically by title and not by either date or subject matter it is difficult for the reader to narrow down specific fields of interest.

[4] See Honorio M. Velasco, "Cultura tradicional en fragmentos: Los almanaques y calendarios y la cultura 'popularizada'", in *Palabras para el pueblo*, ed. Luis Díaz G. Viana, vol. 1, *Aproximación general a la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), pp. 121–44.

[5] Jean-François Botrel, "El género de cordel", in *Palabras para el pueblo*, ed. Luis Díaz G. Viana, vol. 1, *Aproximación general a la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), pp. 41–69 (pp. 42, 50). Botrel's work is fundamental for our understanding of this field in Spain, as is the Luis Díaz G. Viana (ed.), *Palabras para el pueblo*, vol. 1, *Aproximación general a la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000) volume. For some summary and discussion of definitions, see Inmaculada Casas-Delgado, "Ecos de modernidad y paneuropeísmo en la literatura española (1750–1850)" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Seville, 2017), p. 21 and n. 2 http://hdl.handle.net/11441/61292.

[6] See the example of Rafael García Rodríguez y Cuenca (17¿?–1844), of Córdoba discussed by Inmaculada Casas-Delgado, "Marcas del sur: Autores e impresores andaluces en la literatura de cordel", *Cuadernos de Ilustración y el Romanticismo*, 24 (2018), 437–65.

[7] See Laurence Fontaine, "Colportage", in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du livre*, ed. Pascale Fouché, Daniel Péchoin, and Philippe Schuwer, 4 vols (París: Éditions du Cercle de la Librairie, 2002–11), I, 578.

literature"), a reference to the way in which publications on sale were hung on strings or cords, either on a stall or to accompany the seller.[8] The *pliego* is slight, habitually a single sheet folded once or twice, cheaply produced, and was sold (typically and traditionally by a blind person) in the street or by travelling pedlars.[9]

Reaching the Audience

There are two ways in which we can consider reaching the audience: how did the material in question travel across Spain? and how did it reach and touch the lives of individuals, many of whom were unable to read? Geography impinges on the first question and education and culture on the second. Both can be considered within the context of wider trans-European transmission.

The nature of *literatura de cordel* is such that research into its internal and external dissemination is tantalizing, but insufficient. Certain kinds of information can be ascertained from the contents of catalogues and some work has been done on the activities of specific printers and cities. Catalogues can give us some idea of what happened at specific dates and in specific places but leave us without a sense of the overall picture in Spain for the period under discussion. We can see where there is a coincidence between texts and titles produced in different cities, whether at the same period or at different times, which suggests that the material did indeed travel within Spain, but we have not yet been able to map just how this happened or by what means.[10]

Most useful among the catalogues are those from the history of bookselling, notably the landmark work of Rodríguez-Moñino and more

[8] Botrel, "El género de cordel", esp. pp. 41–47, 47–49, on the physical aspects of the genre; Juan Gomis, *Menudencias de imprenta: Producción y circulación de la literatura popular (Valencia siglo XVIII)* (Valencia: Institución Alfonso el Magnánimo, 2015), pp. 29–146; Casas-Delgado, "Ecos de modernidad", pp. 65–139. The work that most directly addresses the genre at large is the classic study by Julio Caro Baroja, *Ensayo sobre la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1969).

[9] Further details in Gomis, *Menudencias de imprenta*, pp. 39–44.

[10] Items catalogued by the "Wrongdoing in Spain, 1800–1936: Realities, Representations, Reactions" project https://www.wrongdoing.mml.cam.ac.uk/ reveal a number of repeated printings: *La renegada de Valladolid* (27), *El Alarbe de Marsella* (15), *El Conde de Alarcos* (14), *Josefa Ramírez* (14), and *El maltés en Madrid* (13). For discussion of *La renegada de Valladolid* and *Josefa Ramírez*, see the chapter by Casas-Delgado and Gomis in this volume.

recent work by Rueda and Agustí.[11] Here we can see which titles they have in common, albeit listed for different printers and locations. The catalogue of the printer Agustín Laborda, studied in depth by Gomis, reveals that this printer had an extensive and closely connected chain of distribution agents located in numerous parts of Spain, including Madrid, Cádiz, Cuenca, and Málaga, who bought popular material in bulk for sale across the whole of the country.[12] It should also be noted that printers did not necessarily limit their activity to the production of *sueltos* and other comparable items (what Gomis terms *menudencias* or "slight forms"), so our view of what they actually did probably needs to conceptualize the idea of a mixed market rather than one operating according to a cultural dichotomy.[13]

Whatever the degree to which we might be able to ascertain just *how* items of popular literature went from one place to another in Spain (and it is probably destined, at least for the time being, to be a patchy mapping of the ground), there are two further problems. The term "popular" is an area of debate as much in Spanish as in other languages, the difficulty arguably exacerbated by the political weighting that the term *pueblo* ("the people") has come to have. There are two further aspects to the question: to what degree was the population in Spain through the period in question able to read? and secondly, in the case of those who were not able to read, how might they have related to this literature?

Literacy in Spain has been variable according to region, gender, and whether people lived in cities and towns or in rural areas. The period under discussion is no exception to this. A recent overview of literacy in Spain

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[11] Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino, *Historia de los catálogos de librería españoles (1661–1840): Estudio bibliográfico* (Madrid: Montero, 1966); Pedro Rueda and Lluís Agustí (eds), *La publicidad del libro en el mundo hispánico (siglos XVII–XX): Los catálogos de venta de libreros y editores* (Barcelona: Calambur, 2016).

[12] See Juan Gomis and Antonio Serrano, "Una aproximación comparada a la imprenta popular del siglo XVIII en España y Gran Bretaña: Agustín Laborda y Cluer Dicey", *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo*, 24 (2018), 303–26. Laborda's catalogue is reproduced by Jaime Moll, "Catálogo de pliegos sueltos de la imprenta de Agustín Laborda y Campo", *Cuadernos de bibliofilia*, 8 (1981–82), 57–66 http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/un-catalogo-de-pliegos-sueltos-de-la-imprenta-de-agustin-laborda-y-campo/.

[13] Gomis, *Menudencias de imprenta*, p. 141, and more generally pp. 299–490. One line of investigation open to us is to run the information about individual printers not only against the overall profile of printing that can be derived from a major digital catalogue (see below) but also against the data on printers in Alison Sinclair, *Madrid Newspapers 1661–1870: A Computerized Handbook* (Leeds: Maney and Son, 1984).

through the nineteenth century sets the question in a European context and also discusses the limits of "city" and "country" as terms.[14] In addition, there are various snapshots of literacy and its forms in Spain. The 1860 census revealed a population of which 80 per cent were illiterate.[15] The study by Gómez Bravo of prison populations in the nineteenth century (incarceration proved a good source for written records) found that by 1885 some 46 per cent of that specific population could neither read nor write.[16] While there was an evident contrast in terms of literacy between rural and urban populations, there were also marked differences between north and south.[17]

In many cases references in records to literacy will have meant not "reading" in the sense of "reading books" or "reading items of literature" but rather the competence to sign a contract or to make out words in a simple manner. This limits the extent of a "fully reading" population. But

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[14] Rafael Barquín, Pedro Pérez, and Basilio Sanz, *Literacy in Spain in the 19th Century: An Econometric Analysis*, Asociación Española de Historia Económica, Documentos de trabajo, July 2016 [ISSN 2174-4912, consulted 19 June 2018]. See also Jacques Soubeyroux, "La alfabetización en la España del siglo XVIII", *Historia de la educación*, 14–15 (1995–96), 199–233; Jacques Soubeyroux, "L'alphabétisation dans l'Espagne moderne: Bilan et perspectives de recherche", *Bulletin Hispanique*, 100.2 (1998), 231–54; Jaime Reis, "Economic Growth, Human Capital Formation and Consumption in Western Europe before 1800", in *Living Standards in the Past: New Perspectives on Well-being in Asia and Europe*, ed. Robert C. Allen, Tommy Bengtsson, and Martin Dribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 195–225; Carlo Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

[15] Mercedes Vilanova and Xavier Moreno Juliá, *Atlas de la evolución de analfabetismo en España de 1887a 1871* (Madrid: Centro de Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1992), p. 62. For a full discussion of the 1860 census in Spain, see Vicente Gozálvez Pérez and Gabino Martín-Serrano Rodríguez, "Spain's Population Census in 1860: Its Methodological Problems – The Introduction of Social Variables to the Censuses", *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, 70 (2016), 515–20. For further discussion, see Alison Sinclair, *Trafficking Knowledge in Twentieth-Century Spain: Centres of Exchange and Cultural Imaginaries* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009), p. 140. On regional variation, see Jean-François Botrel, *Libros y lectores en la España del siglo XX* (Rennes: Jean-François Botrel, 2008), for an overview of how the situation evolved into the early twentieth century.

[16] Gutmaro Gómez Bravo, *Crimen y castigo: Cárceles, justicia y violencia en la España del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Catarata, 2005), p. 222.

[17] Sinclair, *Trafficking Knowledge*, p. 140; Botrel, *Libros y lectores*, p. 11; Adrian Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 145–53.

it still leaves the question of how a population that was not literate in the modern sense of the word might have related to the popular literature made available to it. It is one thing to talk of the ability to read, another to think of how the illiterate exist in relation to a literate world. Botrel argues for the recognition of a relationship between the illiterate and the surrounding context of a written culture, given that written culture is multifaceted and not limited to a pure form such as books or newspapers. Those who lived – indeed, those who now live – in a world of public announcements, advertisements, and other forms of communication will have had to find a way to navigate through information to which they did not have direct access.[18]

The Mediation and Activity of Printers

Others in this volume rightly insist on the importance of mediation between popular literature and its consumers. The prime players in mediation have been the printers, who at least in the case of Spain outstrip editors or publishers in importance for the transmission of popular literature to readers (and listeners) via the printed word. Data about printers allow us to dig deep into the history of this literature, providing two types of information: what was published when and where, and (in some cases) the amount of material produced. Our information about printers of *pliegos sueltos* comes primarily from the colophons of items printed, but they are not always complete. At times there is no date of printing, at times no place of publication. In contrast, at times there is almost more information than one would wish. A mid-eighteenth-century *suelto* on the infamous doings of Pedro Vázquez and his brothers informs the reader or purchaser that it could be found "En la imprenta de Francisco Xavier Garcia, se hallarà en la Lonja de papel de Andrès de Sotos, mas abaxo de la Porteria de San Martin" ("In the printing shop of Francisco Xavier Garcia, to be found in the Andrès de Sotos Paper Market, below St Martin's Gate").[19] Some individual *sueltos* printed on their last page details

[18] Jean-François Botrel, "Los analfabetos y la cultura escrita (España, siglo XIX)", in *Culturas del escrito en el mundo occidental: Del Renacimiento a la contemporaneidad*, ed. Antonio Castillo Gómez (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2015), pp. 251–67.

[19] *Nuevo y curioso romance donde se da cuenta de la vida, prision y muerte de siete hermanos vandoleros y en que se refieren las grandes crueldades, insultos, muertes y robos que hizo Andrès Vazquez y sus hermanos como lo verà el curioso letor* [. . .] (en la imprenta de Francisco Xavier Garcia, se hallarà en la Lonja de

of other related material produced by the same printer, as in the case of *El parto del gallego*.[20]

The information available from printers' colophons is one way in which details about production activity can be studied. The law also offers a way in which we can track activity. One might imagine that having *literatura de cordel* made available through blind street sellers was a less than official channel, but that is not the case. Pura Fernández has studied the relationship between the law and blind street sellers, and the discussion of how *venta ambulante* was regulated by (primarily local) legislation reveals a public awareness of a market that was mobile and marginal but clearly visible.[21] Gomis has examined disputes between the *hermandad de ciegos* ("brotherhood of beggars") in eighteenth-century Valencia and other would-be purveyors of the *sueltos* that they sold, giving us access to details of production as well as an insight into early (and perhaps unexpected) levels of trade unionism in this field.[22]

Collecting, Stewardship, and Selection: Questions of Ownership and Attitude

A prime question for those who work on popular print culture is that of how the items studied came to be in the collections in which they are currently found. The nature of this material is such that it has traditionally evaded the blanket collection that would apply to "serious" items. Disparate,

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papel de Andrès de Sotos, mas abaxo de la Porteria de San Martin, con licencia en Madrid, 1761) [London, British Library, T.1957.(13.)].

[20] *El parto del gallego* (Barcelona: en casa Juan Llorens, calle de la Palma de Sta. Catalina, 1858) [London, British Library, 11450.f.27.(66.)]. In this case, some of the material referred to constitutes popularized domestic information.

[21] Pura Fernández, "El estatuto legal del romance de ciego en el siglo XIX: A vueltas con la licitud moral de la literatura popular", in *Palabras para el pueblo*, ed. Luis Díaz G. Viana, vol. 1, *Aproximación general a la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), pp. 71–120.

[22] Gomis, *Menudencias de imprenta*, pp. 275–380. Here Gomis follows the line of discussion advanced by Botrel in his work on the *hermandad de ciegos de Madrid* (Brotherhood of the Blind in Madrid), where the blind are seen as fundamentally supporting state power of the time. See Jean-François Botrel, *Libros, prensa y lectura en la España del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez, 1993). Gomis's one reservation is that, even if in the eighteenth century the monarchy granted to some brotherhoods of the blind the right to sell *pliegos*, that does not mean that the blind were necessarily always submissive mouthpieces for official propaganda. See also Fernández, "El estatuto legal del romance de ciego en el siglo XIX".

fragile, and fragmented, these brief pieces of literature originally sold on the street are known for their ephemeral nature. What we have is what has (generally) been collected by individuals rather than institutions, so the matter of provenance – indeed their passage through the book trade to library or archival collections – becomes of interest. Survival is clearly variable.[23] Subsequent to the initial purchase others may have perused and interpreted the original purchases and they may have been considered "unworthy" forms of literature. An example is the relegation to the Tower of Cambridge University Library of items that fell under copyright and were therefore automatically lodged with the library but that were not thought suitable material for an academic library. These items, the oldest of which date from 1710 and the most recent from the early twenty-first century, were catalogued only in 2014.

This "unworthy" or "less than official" status has been a part of the history of popular literature in Spain, and here we enter the arena where the collecting and understanding of the genre has become political. Certain collections were acclaimed as part of the history of the genre at the same time as they were appropriated for what was thought to be their status in relation to the Spanish national "character" or "nature". Among prominent Spanish collectors we might single out Cecilia Böhl de Faber (pseudonym Fernán Caballero), the daughter of German Hispanists, whose ballad-collecting activity dates back to 1819.[24] The two thousand *romances* (ballads) collected by Agustín Durán and published in 1851 represent the most substantial reprinting of a significant body of popular material.[25]

It is here that we enter, in the words of Jordana Mendelson, "contested territory".[26] Here, too, it is enlightening to turn to the landmark study by Caro Baroja, produced towards the end of the Franco years, which is not a

[23] On the survival of early material, see Alexander S. Wilkinson, "Bum Fodder and Kindling: Cheap Print in Renaissance Spain", *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 90 (2013), 871–93 (pp. 881–85). I am extremely indebted to him for information both within and outwith this article.

[24] Carmen de la Vega de la Muela, "Fernán Caballero, pionera en la recolección del romancero de tradición oral moderna", *Revista de humanidades*, 19 (2012) http://www.revistadehumanidades.com/articulos/28-fernan-caballero-pionera-en-la-recoleccion-del-romancero-de-tradicion-oral-moderna.

[25] Agustín Durán, *Romancero general o colección de romances castellanos anteriores al siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1851).

[26] Jordana Mendelson, "Contested Territory: The Politics of Geography in Luis Buñuel's *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin pan*", *Locus Amoenus* [Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona], 2 (1996), 229–42. The discussion of Las Hurdes as a region appropriated for political meaning by others is apposite to the interpretation of popular literature, albeit an extreme case.

collection or a recopying of material but an assessment and an interpretation. The following features are of note. First, the study is the work of an anthropologist intent upon understanding the *meaning* of objects in the widest possible cultural and social framework. Secondly, it is largely based upon the rich collection of *pliegos sueltos* amassed by his uncle, the twentieth-century novelist Pío Baroja. This was supplemented by a collection of a little under five hundred items belonging to Gerónimo Fuenmayor y La Fuente, but there was little consultation of what is referred to as a substantial holding of *pliegos sueltos* in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.[27] Lastly, the study is marked by an ongoing critical reappraisal of the work of others in the field at the same time as it reveals at every step the warm enthusiasm with which Caro Baroja approached his subject matter. Contrasting with some of his predecessors who entertained a critical dislike for various aspects of the material, Caro Baroja embraces the field wholeheartedly. Consonant with his enthusiasm is his observation that Durán was "very severe" both with those who wrote *romances vulgares* ("common ballads") and with those who enjoyed them. For Durán the items of *literatura de cordel* were "detestable" because they contained the traces of a civilization that was "degraded".[28]

Behind some of this disapproval there is, as Francisco Aguilar Piñal noted in the introduction to his own collection of popular ballads of the eighteenth century, a type of class-based difficulty.[29] The "degraded" form of popular poetry (Aguilar Piñal uses the term "plebeian") found towards the end of the seventeenth century was something of an embarrassment because the genre was held to be part of the "national soul" – an idea that lay behind at least some of the nineteenth-century collections, arguably influenced at least in part by ideas about the *Volk* from German Romanticism. If the poetry was not as good as its elite supporters would have wished, or if its supposed social origins were less than ideal, it was difficult to take it on without reservations.[30]

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[27] Caro Baroja, *Ensayo sobre la literatura de cordel*, p. 50.

[28] Luis Díaz G. Viana, "Se venden palabras: Los pliegos de cordel como medio de transmisión cultural", in *Palabras para el pueblo*, ed. Luis Díaz G. Viana, vol. 1, *Aproximación general a la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), pp. 15–38 (p. 16).

[29] Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *Romancero popular del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: CSIC, 1972), p. xiii.

[30] See Viana, 'Se venden palabras', p. 16 ff., for a full discussion of the difficulties posed by collections of popular literature and their conflicts with various agendas. For background, see Derek Flitter, *Spanish Romanticism and the Uses of History:*

A somewhat kinder approach to the material so spurned by some of its collectors would be adopted by Edward Wilson, a specialist in Golden Age literature, when he announced to an audience in 1984 that he would talk about "popular" poems, adding that "these poems seem to me to be very bad" but one should nonetheless pay attention to them in order to acquire a complete picture and "to see the masterpieces in perspective" – "This afternoon we shall go slumming."[31] It is relevant that Wilson himself was a major collector of popular material from which Cambridge University Library has benefited.

Pliegos sueltos and *aleluyas*: Show and Tell

Pliegos sueltos and *aleluyas* carry images as a fundamental part of their communication but the nature of the images is different because of the different formats of the two genres. The *pliego suelto*, as noted above, was a folded piece of paper. The terminology therefore refers to the physical nature of the object and not to its subject matter. But the other prime feature of the *suelto* is the use of images as well as text. Normally, illustration took the form of a single image, or a range of images, on the first page. At times a *suelto* might be in two parts with a second image used to head the second part, but such instances are relatively rare. The norm is a visually striking but often artistically crude image which, in combination with a long written title, full of promises of excitement in the tale to be told, provides an instant prompt to the audience either to buy or to linger and listen to a full recitation.[32] This format was used from the earliest examples of the *suelto* through to the twentieth century, although more modern publications often dispense with the visual appeal to the purchaser or reader.

The images used in *sueltos* were originally woodcuts, and if calculated as part of the basic cost of a publication the illustration represented, then

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Ideology and the Historical Imagination (London: Legenda, 2006); also the full account and references in Casas-Delgado, "Ecos de modernidad", pp. 27–57.

[31] Edward M. Wilson and Kathleen Kish, '"Some Spanish Dick Turpins, or Bad Men in Bad Ballads", *Hispanic Review*, 52 (1984), 141–62 (p. 141).

[32] On excitement in the *sueltos*, see Jean-François Botrel, El sensacionalismo en la era premediática", in *Sensacionalismo y amarillismo en la historia de la comunicación*, ed. Celso Almuiña Fernández, Ricardo Martín de la Guardia, and José Vidal Pelaz López (Madrid: Editorial Fragua, 2016), pp. 25–37; Alison Sinclair, Against Seemliness: Excess and Limitations in Popular Literature", in *Writing Wrongdoing*, ed. Alison Sinclair and Samuel Llano (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2017), pp. 107–23.

as now, a major investment. As a result we find, particularly with earlier items, some duplication of material. One imagines a text coming into a printer's shop and the craftsman in charge of putting the item together looking at a range of figures and emblems to see which might be most suitable. A slightly more enterprising approach was to put together two images, which did not necessarily have the same proportions. The frequently reproduced story of Rosaura de Trujillo illustrates this well.[33] A feature of *sueltos* that were so popular that they were printed many times over is that sometimes they carried images from an earlier period, such as the eighteenth century, while actually appearing in the nineteenth century. This happens with various *sueltos* that commemorated the lives and deaths of famous bandits, so those executed in the late eighteenth century were still having their stories, with the accompanying account of their executions, circulated well into the following century.[34] Later, the images would be made by engraving which allowed them to be more subtle. There are some cases where it is not possible to tell whether the image is a woodcut or an engraving, but when images are more akin to the illustrations in novels and a clear narrative is conveyed the mode of production is probably the more sophisticated one.[35]

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[33] See Alison Sinclair, "Historias de dos desgraciadas: Estereotipos de la culpa en la literatura popular española de los siglos XVIII y XIX", in *Gentes de mal vivir: Ejemplaridad e infamia en el siglo XVIII*, ed. Juan Gomis and Alison Sinclair, *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo*, 22 (2016), 57–78 (pp. 68–71).

[34] For a discussion of some of these images and their re-publication, see Sinclair, "Historias de dos desgraciadas"; Alison Sinclair, "Que se le eche la culpa a la criada: Historias de ejemplaridad y culpabilidad en la literatura popular española de los siglos XVIII y XIX", in *Mujeres a contraluz: Criadas en la literatura española de los siglos XVIII y XIX*, ed. Eva María Flores Ruiz, *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo*, 20 (2014), 75–91. For the many versions of Diego Corrientes, see Jean-François Botrel, "Diego Corrientes ou le bandit généreux: Fonction et fonctionnement d'un mythe", in *Culturas populares: Diferencias, divergencias, conflictos*, Actas del Coloquio celebrado en la Casa de Velázquez, los días 30 de noviembre y 1–2 diciembre de 1983, ed. Yves-René Fonquerne and Alfonso Esteban (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1986), pp. 241–66.

[35] Examples of differences between crude woodcuts and more sophisticated illustrations can be seen in Sinclair, "Que se le eche la culpa a la criada", and Sinclair, "Historias de dos desgraciadas". The references to *sueltos* in these articles are to items digitized by the "Wrongdoing in Spain, 1800–1936" project. For further examples and discussion, see Henry Ettinghausen, "The Illustrated Spanish News: Text and Image in the Seventeenth-Century Press", in *Art and Literature in Spain, 1600–1800: Studies in Honour of Nigel Glendinning*, ed. Charles Davis and Paul Julian Smith (London: Tamesis, 1993), pp. 117–33. For a discussion of illustration in early religious publications, see Pierre Civil, "Iconografía popular en