Children and Cheap Print in Europe: Towards a Transnational Account, 1700–1900

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It is widely accepted that children have long been part of the audience for street literature. Nevertheless, their role in the cheap print trade remains obscure. As far as Britain is concerned, chapbooks specifically aimed at children have been the subject of different studies from the late 1960s onwards.[1] These studies show that, before the publishers of the early nineteenth century revamped street literature in order to lure an emerging juvenile audience with children's chapbooks, cheap print was already being enjoyed by younger audiences, sometimes as listeners.[2] The decision to issue children's chapbooks has therefore been interpreted as a consequence of the appreciation that young audiences showed for cheap print. The underlying idea is that popular literature satisfied children's need for entertainment better than the moral and educational tracts otherwise available to them.[3] One example of this is that of Elisabeth Wrather, who as a little girl in the

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[1] See M. O. Grenby, 'Before Children's Literature: Children, Chapbooks and Popular Culture in Early Modern Britain', in *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*, ed. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts, and M. O. Grenby (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 25–46. For more recent research, see Jonathan Cooper, 'The Development of the Children's Chapbooks in London', in *Street Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century: Producers, Sellers, Consumers*, ed. David Atkinson and Steve Roud (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), pp. 217–37; Valentina Bold, 'Children's Chapbook Literature in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Land of Story-Books: Scottish Children's Literature in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Sarah Dunnigan and Shu-Fang Lai (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2019), pp. 42–61.

[2] M. O. Grenby, 'Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature', *The Library*, 7th ser., 8 (2007), 277–303; Grenby, 'Before Children's Literature' (which includes a discussion of definitions of chapbooks and chapbooks for children, pp. 27–33); Bold, 'Children's Chapbook Literature in the Nineteenth Century', p. 44.

[3] This idea is developed throughout Victor Neuburg's works on literacy and cheap print: Victor E. Neuburg, *The Penny Histories: A Study of Chapbooks for Young Readers over Two Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Education in 18th Century England* (London: Woburn Press, 1971), esp. chapters 4–5; Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide, from the Beginning of Printing to the Year 1897* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

1770s hid her treasure, a collection of seven chapbooks, in the chimney of her parents' house.[4]

Chapbooks continued to represent a reading option for children, especially those of limited means, *after* what is referred to as 'the birth of children's literature'.[5] This might have been very specific to England, or to Britain and Ireland,[6] but similar forms of street literature were also present across Europe.[7] Nonetheless, a trans-European study of cheap print for children is still lacking. The omission is regrettable because it is well known that the so-called *bibliothèque bleue*, cheap booklets printed first in Troyes and then in many other French provincial cities, included a wealth of educational texts, sometimes aimed directly at schoolchildren. Other kinds of cheap print were widespread across Europe; among the most interesting examples are almanacs for children and illustrated broadsides, the latter resembling modern comics.

The research in progress described here is intended to collect data on European cheap print explicitly aimed at children, and, in parallel, to gather evidence of children consuming cheap print that was not specifically addressed to them.[8] I shall therefore provide examples of

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[4] Cooper, 'Development of the Children's Chapbooks in London', p. 217.

[5] Grenby, 'Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature'; Grenby, 'Before Children's Literature'.

[6] Although Scottish chapbooks were produced on a large scale, only recently has attention been paid to children as readers of chapbooks in Scotland. See Kirsteen Connor, 'Youth's Poison?: The Creation and Evolution of Children's Chapbooks in Scotland, 1800–1870' (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010) http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1938. For Ireland, see Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750–1850* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

[7] The first transnational account was provided by Roger Chartier, 'Letture e lettori "popolari" dal Rinascimento al Settecento', in *Storia della lettura nel mondo occidentale* (Roma and Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 1995), pp. 317–35 [English translation: 'Reading Matter and "Popular" Reading from the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century', in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 269–83]; followed by research on specific genres such as Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink et al. (eds), *Les lectures du peuple en Europe et dans les Amériques (XVIIe–XXe siècle)* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2002). More recently, the transnationality of cheap print has been the object of a new wave of studies, exemplified by David Atkinson and Steve Roud (eds), *Cheap Print and the People: European Perspectives on Popular Literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019); and Matthew Grenby, Elisa Marazzi, and Jeroen Salman (eds), *The European Dimension of Popular Print Culture: A Comparative Approach*, special issue of *Quaerendo* (forthcoming, 2021).

[8] The Children and Transnational Popular Print (1700–1900) (CaTPoP) project is funded by the EU-H2020 MSCA scheme grant agreement no. 838161. Prior to this, Matthew Grenby and I circulated a survey among European specialists in either

types of popular print that have been identified as specifically printed for children or read by them. This will be followed by a discussion of the different sources that allow us to assess the relevance of juvenile audiences to the history of cheap print.

Cheap print and children, defining the undefinable

Anyone acquainted with book history will know how problematic defining 'cheap print' is. The adjective 'popular' has also often been used to refer to what is at the core of my interest, but that, too, is a slippery adjective.[9] 'Popular culture' has become an historiographical category in the wake of Peter Burke's foundational work,[10] which provides an important acknowledgment that defining some cultural expressions as 'popular' does not mean that they were confined to the peasants or working classes at all.[11] The French adjective *populaire*, which implies low status, has ignited a particularly inflamed debate in France where the expression *culture populaire*, as in the title of Robert Mandrou's pioneering study of the *bibliothèque bleue*,[12] has been called into question for not reflecting the actual nature of the bibliographical corpus, which drew on a culture that was shared across different social classes until at least the sixteenth century. Moreover, it is now widely accepted that an interest in cheap print was shared by the whole of early modern society, in spite of contemporary (mainly post-seventeenth-century) judgements of value.[13]

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popular print or children's literature and discussed the results at a workshop on Popular Children's Literature in Europe (1450–1900) held at the University of Milan in March 2018 and co-funded by the research network European Dimensions of Popular Printed Culture (EDPOP). I am grateful to all the participants for the fruitful discussions that have stimulated some of the reflections included in this article. In particular, I would like to thank Laura Carnelos and Emmanuelle Chapron for making me aware of some sources referenced in this paper.

[9] M. O. Grenby, 'Introduction', in *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*, ed. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts, and M. O. Grenby (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1–20 (p. 1).

[10] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978).

[11] For a discussion of the debate around this, see Jonathan Barry, 'Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective', in *Popular Culture in England*, *c.1500–1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 69–94. See also Steve Roud and David Atkinson, 'Introduction', in *Street Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century: Producers, Sellers, Consumers*, ed. David Atkinson and Steve Roud (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), pp. 1–6 (p. 4).

[12] Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire aux 17e et 18e siècles: La bibliothèque bleue de Troyes* (Paris : Stock, 1964).

[13] Roger Chartier 'Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France', in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth*

Although such debates are far from over, focusing on materiality can allow us to overcome the historiographical conundrum. One could object that the adjective 'cheap' concerns the economic value, or, more trivially, the price, of a product, not its materiality. Indeed, it can be difficult to determine prices for these kinds of publications, although it is widely believed that chapbooks could be sold for 1*d.* or less.[14] In some cases prices are noted down in ledgers or included in book catalogues, but such documents are hard to find, especially for minor publishers. Consequently, in this sub-field of book history it is unlikely that prices can be compared across Europe.[15] There is, however, a shared knowledge among specialists on how to identify printed products that were cheaply produced, and consequently cheaply sold, based on production and dissemination.[16] So it is possible to take into account the various printed items that are recognized as having been cheaply published and widely circulated: chapbooks, under their different national descriptions (*bibliothèque bleue*, *pliegos sueltos*);[17] illustrated broadsides, in their transnational varieties (*aleluyas*, penny-prints, *imagerie d'Épinal*, *Bilderbogen*, *stampe popolari*);[18] ballads; songs; almanacs and calendars; books of secrets; religious tracts; catechisms; ABCs; primers; and so on.[19]

Century, ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin and New York: Mouton, 1984), pp. 229–53. The debate is summarized by Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'Bibliothèque Bleue, Verte Erin: Some Aspects of Popular Printed Literature in France and Ireland in the 18th and 19th Centuries', *Revue LISA/LISA e-journal*, 3.1 (2005) https://doi.org/10.4000/lisa.2519.

[14] Although children's chapbooks could cost 6*d.* or sometimes even more (Grenby, 'Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature', p. 278).

[15] The Evidence-Based Reconstruction of the Economic and Juridical Framework of the European Book Market (EMoBookTrade) project http://emobooktrade.unimi.it/ led by Angela Nuovo will undoubtedly provide new data and a tested methodology, but cheap print still remains elusive.

[16] Besides the works previously published by the editors of this volume, who give thorough definitions of the field in their introductory articles, useful accounts are provided by Laura Carnelos, 'Popular Print under the Press: Strategies, Practices and Materials', and Jeroen Salman, 'The Dissemination of European Popular Print: Exploring Comparative Approaches', in *The European Dimension of Popular Print Culture: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Matthew Grenby, Elisa Marazzi, and Jeroen Salman, special issue of *Quaerendo* (forthcoming, 2021).

[17] A preliminary typology of different European varieties of widely circulated print is provided by Chartier, 'Letture e lettori "popolari" dal Rinascimento al Settecento'.

[18] It is important to note that in different languages the terms used differ between what such publications were actually called when they were in circulation (e.g. *Bilderbogen*), and what collectors or scholars have later called them (e.g. *imagerie d'Épinal*, or just 'Epinals' in English). In France the label *imagerie populaire* was printed on the sheets, whereas in Italy *stampe popolari* is a later term. Illustrated single sheets printed across Europe are briefly catalogued in Juan Gomis and Jereon Salman, 'Tall

What is the current project searching for within this corpus? The aim is to gather evidence about items that were intentionally targeted at children, and about those that were in different ways handled, looked at, read, listened to, or sometimes just overheard by children. This implies spending some words on a second rather undefinable concept, that of childhood. It is not possible here to give an account of the historiographical and pedagogical debate that has followed Philippe Ariès's work on the evolution of adult attitudes to children as a result of social and cultural changes during the early modern period.[20] It is now widely recognized that the eighteenth century was a watershed, when the earlier stages of life came to be perceived as a phase during which individuals needed to be disciplined and instructed. At the same time, it is increasingly accepted that children have probably always read, even before books started to be offered to them by educators and publishers.[21] Young people must therefore have shared their reading materials with adults, and the simplest and most attractive reading materials that the early modern world could offer them lay in the fictional narratives published in chapbooks and cognate cheap publications across Europe.[22] It can be objected that children needed to be literate in order to do so, which reflects their social status as well as many other variables that could differ from one region to another. Nonetheless, cheap print is also known to have circulated widely by oral means: for instance, through collective

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Tales for a Mass Audience: Dutch Penny Prints and Spanish Aleluyas in Comparative Perspective', in *The European Dimension of Popular Print Culture: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Matthew Grenby, Elisa Marazzi, and Jeroen Salman, special issue of *Quaerendo* (forthcoming, 2021).

[19] It is not possible to cite here the wealth of studies published on such topics in recent decades, but extremely valuable for their comparative approach are Atkinson and Roud (eds), *Cheap Print and the People*, and Massimo Rospocher, Jeroen Salman, and Hannu Salmi (eds), *Crossing Borders, Crossing Cultures: Popular Print in Europe (1450–1900)* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

[20] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (London: J. Cape, 1973 [Paris: Plon, 1960]).

[21] Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 1; Grenby, 'Before Children's Literature', p. 25.

[22] See, for example, Francesco Montorsi, '"Un fatras de livres a quoy l'enfance s'amuse": Lectures de jeunesse et romans de chevalerie au XVIe siècle', *Camenulae*, no. 4 (février 2010) https://lettres.sorbonne-universite.fr/sites/default/files/media/2020-06/montorsi.pdf; Marina Roggero, 'Des enfants et des livres: Remarques sur des souvenirs d'enfance du monde anglo-saxon', *Études de lettres*, 1–2 (2016) https://doi.org/10.4000/edl.878.

readings or performances by street-sellers and artists.[23] It is likely, therefore, that non-literate and pre-literate individuals, including children, were very much acquainted with the materials of cheap print.

In consequence, historians are largely agreed that the development of children's literature can be traced back to the eighteenth century, although this observation is not globally valid and entails a wealth of specificities.[24] Once pedagogues became keen on disciplining the behaviour of individuals from the early stages of their lives specific books began to be targeted at young readers. In parallel, awareness grew among printers and authors that the young could represent a new, profitable audience.[25] Fostered by publishers for commercial reasons, children's literature was thenceforth perceived as a tool in the hands of educators and parents to keep children off the streets.

This process also included the production of chapbooks *for* children. The relationship between cheap print and children's literature has been widely discussed, resulting sometimes in totally opposed arguments – from the death of chapbooks to the need for educational works to include a pinch of popular culture in order to make them more attractive.[26] As research advances, it seems more likely that, in Grenby's words, 'the rational and moral children's literature of the later eighteenth century actually fostered the chapbook, at least in this new, nineteenth-century, specially-for-children form, rather than contributing to its demise'.[27] This might be true for Britain, although (as we will see) different kinds of chapbooks that were not specifically aimed at an audience of children continued to proliferate. In the rest of the Europe, however, there is no evidence (thus far) of anything comparable. The market for children's books

[23] For an account of oral encounters with literature, especially romances, in early modern Italy, see Marina Roggero, *Le carte piene di sogni* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2006), pp. 121–208.

[24] The timing of the implementation of mass education, for example, had an effect on the earlier or later development of juvenile audiences in some areas of western Europe. See Laura Carnelos and Elisa Marazzi, 'Children and Cheap Print from a Transnational Perspective (1500–1900)', in *The European Dimension of Popular Print Culture: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Matthew Grenby, Elisa Marazzi, and Jeroen Salman, special issue of *Quaerendo* (forthcoming, 2021).

[25] Brian Alderson and Felix De Marez Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise: Origins of Children's Book Publishing in England* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press; London: British Library, 2006), pp. xi–xii. Similar patterns are traced for the Netherlands by Jeroen Salman, 'Children's Books as a Commodity: The Rise of a New Literary Subsystem in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic', *Poetics*, 28 (2001), pp. 399–421.

[26] See Grenby, 'Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature'.

[27] Grenby, 'Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature', p. 303.

was often limited, at least in the eighteenth century, to the more affluent sections of society. The majority of children, on the other hand, were likely to have been acquainted with the cheaply printed products that were sold, read, sung, and retold in the streets.

The boundaries of the juvenile audience can be very blurred, with upper-class children reading predominantly, though not exclusively, instructional and educational works from a young age, and lower-class children sticking to fictional and often coarse publications, potentially for their whole lives. Moreover, the conventional age ranges for childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and so forth are in constant evolution. It is therefore not possible to select a particular age range as defining juvenile readers. Instead, juvenile readership will be treated here in a pragmatic way and will also include the 'marriageable youth' towards which a wealth of cheaply printed products were directed.

Establishing the corpus

When attempting to infer from their contents, or even from their paratexts, which cheaply printed products might have been enjoyed by children, pitfalls are almost unavoidable.[28] Reading is a volatile practice, a 'mystery', as Robert Darnton puts it, and 'our relation to [. . .] texts cannot be the same as that of readers in the past'.[29] Moreover, historians have stressed how the intended audience of a work or collection hardly corresponds to its actual audience.

Nevertheless, it is tempting to point to a couple of early prints that, to the modern reader, appear to have been conceived with a young audience in mind. One is an eighteenth-century piece called *The Parents Pious Gift; or, A Choice Present for Children*, which takes the form of a dialogue between a religious father and an extravagant son, 'containing a dispute about bad company, or evil communication, pride, drunkenness, riotous living, and all the vanities of a vicious course of life'.[30] With a happy ending in which the son takes control of himself and rejects his bad habits, it was meant to present 'an

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[28] For example, Grenby, 'Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature', p. 282, observes that Margaret Spufford was prone to deducing the readership of chapbooks from their contents.

[29] Robert Darnton, 'First Steps Towards a History of Reading', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 51 (2014), 152–77 (p. 154). Darnton's seminal essay was first published in *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 23 (1986), 5–30; reprinted in Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), pp. 154–87.

[30] *The Parents Pious Gift; or, A Choice Present for Children* (printed in the year 1704) [ESTC T55106] (subtitle text from a later printing).

excellent pattern for all young persons to set before them in these present sinfull times'. The second example is an early seventeenth-century ballad titled *A Table of Good Nurture*, 'wherin is contained a schoole-masters admonition to his schollers to learne good manners: the father to his children to learne vertue: and the hous-houlder to his seruants to learne godlinesse'.[31] Also found in early modern ballads is the topos of the mother on her deathbed providing her children with advice for their future lives.[32] Although the warnings were applicable to the whole of society, it is not unlikely that juvenile audiences might have been in the writer's mind.

In the same direction, texts instructing young women and men about the joys and sorrows of marriage occur frequently in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century printed collections of popular songs. These songs seem addressed to young people, offering them an educational moral regarding their future steps in life, warning them, for example, not to break their vows, sometimes by means of gruesome stories, as in *The Perjur'd Maid Who Foreswore Herself for Riches*.[33] This kind of instruction was not limited to songs and can be found in chapbooks like *Mother Bunch's Closet Newly Broke Open*, in print since the late seventeenth century, which contained 'rare secrets of art & nature, tried and experienced by learned philosophers, and recommended to all ingenious young men and maids, teaching them, in a natural way, how to get good wives and husbands'.[34] This kind of text was so common that it was parodied in a misogynistic chapbook called *John Thompson's Man; or, A Short Survey of the Difficulties and Disturbances that May Attend a Married Life*.[35] Unsurprisingly, advice on how to behave in life, and in marriage, is found in literature for young adults across the centuries.

Another example from the British tradition of street literature can be drawn from the so-called gallows literature, which, in general, has little to do with children.[36] Nevertheless, the educational interest for

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[31] *A Table of Good Nurture* (printed at London, for H. G.) [ESTC R215850].

[32] For example, *A Hundred Godly Lessons* (printed for F. Coles, T. Vere, J. Wright, and J. Clarke) [ESTC R178307].

[33] *The Perjur'd Maid Who Foreswore Herself for Riches* [. . .] *to which are added, Willy's Lovely Vocie; O Sweet Sleep; Sweet and Smart* (Glasgow: printed by J. & M. Robertson, 1800) [ESTC T123740].

[34] *Mother Bunch's Closet Newly Broke Open* (printed and sold in Aldermary Churchyard, London) [ESTC T67116].

[35] *John Thompson's Man; or, A Short Survey of the Difficulties and Disturbances that May Attend a Married Life* (licensed and enter'd according to order) [ESTC T27872].

[36] See Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, 'La letteratura del patibolo: Continuità e transformazioni tra '600 e '800', *Quaderni Storici*, 49 (1982), 285–301; also Una

an audience that included children is apparent in a gallows story like that of John Harris, a young man executed for murdering his father, mother, and maidservant, and robbing and setting fire to the house, which includes a 'dying exhortation to all young people'.[37] Nevertheless, we cannot be sure that children took an interest in publications like these, and we cannot take them as evidence that early modern writers of street literature specifically intended to address children. They merely confirm the general assumption that cheap print was meant for an audience that comprised people with a 'rudimentary literacy', including children.[38]

Conversely, there is evidence that chapbooks *for* children were widely published in Britain in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Bibliographies and studies have been devoted to those issued in Banbury and York,[39] but printers in Derby, Gainsborough, Wellington, Alnwick, Edinburgh, and Glasgow also put much effort in printing chapbooks for children. For a long time publishers in London were left out of this picture until the recent work by Jonathan Cooper who traces chapbooks for children printed in the capital from 1795, although with the warning that before 1800 there were perhaps fewer than ten titles available in London.[40]

Earlier items printed in Britain and Ireland are likely to emerge. The Cotsen Children's Library holds a book of riddles published in Dublin in 1785, 'adorned with 59 beautiful cuts' (dab-coloured in the exemplar viewed), and explicitly intended 'for the entertainment of youth'.[41] A similar chronology can be traced for Scotland, as shown by Kirsteen Connor who has tracked down a few titles available in the very late 1790s, although (unlike the collections printed in York and Banbury) it is not always possible to ascertain from Scottish examples

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McIlvenna, Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, and Juan Gomis, 'Singing the News of Punishment: The Execution Ballad in Europe, 1550–1900', in *The European Dimension of Popular Print Culture: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Matthew Grenby, Elisa Marazzi, and Jeroen Salman, special issue of *Quaerendo* (forthcoming, 2021).

[37] *A Dreadful Warning to Disobedient Children* (licensed and entered, 1800)[ESTC T165734].

[38] Grenby, 'Before Children's Literature', p. 33. Grenby's argument concerning chapbooks can easily be extended to cheap print at large.

[39] Roger Davis, *Kendrew of York and his Chapbooks for Children* (Collingham: Elmete Press, 1988); Leo John De Freitas, *The Banbury Chapbooks* (Banbury: Banbury Historical Society, 2014).

[40] Cooper, 'Development of the Children's Chapbooks in London', p. 222.

[41] *The Most Diverting Riddle Book* […] (Dublin: B. Cocoran, 1785) [Princeton, NJ, Cotsen Children's Library, Eng 18 26395].

whether a chapbook was specifically meant for children.[42] Some publishers neither specialized in the juvenile market nor issued dedicated collections, but advertised different kinds of popular printed products, including educational items, which showed an interest in the new juvenile audience.

This pattern seems also to have been followed south of the border, where the Angus firm in Newcastle issued a considerable number of narrative chapbooks *c.*1800–10. They included romances, folktales, fairy tales, and jests from the traditional chapbook repertoire. Some of their imprints include text advertising the firm's premises, 'where is always kept on sale a choice and extensive assortment of histories, songs, children's story books, school books, &c. &c.' Although not specifically directed at children, some of their chapbooks do make mention on the title page of either a juvenile audience or an educational intent. *The Merry and Entertaining Jokes of George Buchanan*, for instance, were offered 'for the entertainment of youth'.[43] The principle of combining instruction and delight emerges from the rhyming title page of *The History of Valentine and Orson*:

> Reader, you'll find this little book contains,
> Enough to answer thy Expence and Pains;
> And if with Caution thou wilt read it through,
> 'Twill both instruct thee, and delight thee too.[44]

It is well established that Newcastle chapbooks were also sold north of the border.[45] Research on how chapbook texts and woodcuts migrated across Britain and Ireland would require extraordinary effort but could shed further light on the patterns of cheap print. For instance, some of the Newcastle chapbooks have a title-page woodcut depicting what looks like a family group of three singers, two adults and a child, offering for sale a broadside or chapbook, and a very similar (not identical) title-page image is found with chapbooks published by the Glasgow firm of J. and M. Robertson.[46]

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[42] Connor, 'Youth's Poison?'.

[43] *The Merry and Entertaining Jokes of George Buchanan* [. . .] Number I (Newcastle: printed by M. Angus and Son) [ESTC T39265] (includes Numbers II and III).

[44] *The History of Valentine and Orson* (Newcastle: printed by M. Angus & Son, in the Side; where is always kept on sale a choice and extensive assortment of histories, songs, children's story books, school books, &c. &c.) [ESTC T36563].

[45] John Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 107.

[46] Compare, for example, *A Garland of New Songs, containing 1. Abraham Newland; 2. Crazy Jane; 3. The Ghost of Crazy Jane; 4. The Adventurous Sailor; 5. The Soldier's Cloak*

Nonetheless, these chapbooks circulating in northern England and Scotland remain hybrids, although they winked at children by means of the paratextual elements mentioned above. Was investing fully in a juvenile audience a less profitable choice in this area, or at this time? At this stage it is impossible to say, but these hybrids not only demonstrate the capacity of cheap print for evolution and adaptation, but show this process in the making.[47]

In search of new audiences?

Recent analyses have highlighted how the corpus of cheap print was broadly the same across different areas of western Europe, stressing the transnationality of some narratives (one of the possible examples is the aforementioned *Valentine and Orson*, which is known to refer to the French tradition).[48] A study of how transnational was the progressive adaptation of cheap print to children still needs to be undertaken and is one of the aims of the research in progress. Is it possible to trace a similar tendency in the French chapbooks? This is difficult to argue at present, but previous scholarship has shown that popular books for educational purposes represented a part of the *bibliothèque bleue*. In Troyes, the 1789 inventory of the Garnier family, printers of French chapbooks, shows that about 5 per cent of their production consisted of ABCs, primers, conduct books, and arithmetic, and 12.7 per cent comprised religious education, partly for children.[49] These are the only statistics available so far, but other relevant data are likely to be found in the catalogue of the *veuve* (widow) Oudot, in whose Paris shop chapbooks produced in the provinces were sold; dating from *c.*1720, this was the first catalogue devoted to didactic publications.[50]

([colophon] Angus, printer) [London, British Library, 11606.aa.23.(14.)], and *The Crafty Miller; or, The Mistaken Batchelor; to which are added, Farewel to Spring; Thundering Roaring Guns; Beautiful Nancy; A Favourite Hunting Song* (Glasgow: printed by J. & M. Robertson, Saltmarket, 1802) [London, British Library, 11606.aa.23.(95.)]. On Robertson's publications for children, see Connor, 'Youth's Poison?', pp. 60–68.

[47] Grenby, 'Introduction', p. 19.

[48] Rita Schlusemann and Krystyna Wierzbicka-Trwoga, 'Narrative Fiction in Early Modern Europe: A Comparative Study of Genre Classifications' in *The European Dimension of Popular Print Culture: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Matthew Grenby, Elisa Marazzi, and Jeroen Salman, special issue of *Quaerendo* (forthcoming, 2021).

[49] Henri-Jean Martin, 'Culture écrite et culture orale: Culture savante et culture populaire dans la France d'Ancien Régime', *Journal des savants*, 3 (1975), 225–82.

[50] I owe this information to Emmanuelle Chapron, whom I also thank for the previous reference and for fruitful discussions on this topic.

Indeed, in many of the countries involved in the project children came into contact with cheap print through booklets conceived for use in school or informal education.[51] The main tools used for learning to read in the romance-language countries are extraordinarily similar. The *cartilla* in Spain, *croisette* in France, and *salterio* or *salteriolo* in Italy consisted of a book of prayers/catechism, preceded by the alphabet, preceded by the sign of the cross. These have been studied and discussed by historians across Europe,[52] but their production and distribution through the traditional channels of cheap print need to be further analysed.

In Protestant countries, the so-called *hanebok* ('rooster primer'), an ABC fronted by a woodcut depicting a rooster, was the standard means for learning the alphabet (there are also occasional Catholic examples of such books).[53] How and why did this tradition develop in areas that shared the same linguistic and/or confessional roots? Was the rooster a popular symbol, or a sort of commercial ploy, that enabled illiterate people immediately to recognize an ABC book when they met with a pedlar? Another fascinating aspect of the history of cheap print is the reuse and copying of woodcuts, which can provide further knowledge on transnational contacts in the early modern world.[54]

If the religious implications of what we can loosely describe as catechism primers are self-evident, religious education was also pursued in England by means of tracts, which were supposed to keep people away from less elevated reading, mainly in the form of chapbooks.[55] Surprisingly, tracts published from the late eighteenth century in the wake of the Evangelical movement also circulated in

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[51] Cf. Carnelos and Marazzi, 'Children and Cheap Print from a Transnational Perspective'.

[52] For a transnational account, Carnelos and Marazzi, 'Children and Cheap Print from a Transnational Perspective'. Recently, a dedicated research group has focused on the trans-European history of catechism primers, leading to the publication of B. Juska-Bacher, W. Sroka, and T. Laine (eds), *Catechism Primers in Europe* (forthcoming). For Spain, see also Antonio Castillo Gómez, 'Apprendere a leggere e a scrivere nella Spagna della prima età moderna', in *Maestri e pratiche educative dalla Riforma alla Rivoluzione francese: Contributi per una storia della didattica* (forthcoming).

[53] Juska-Bacher, Sroka, and Laine (eds), *Catechism Primers in Europe.*

[54] On this topic, see Philippe Kaenel and Rolf Reichardt (eds), *Interkulturelle Kommunikation in der europäischen Druckgraphik im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 2007); Alberto Milano (ed.), *Commercio delle stampe e diffusione delle immagini nei secoli XVIII e XIX* (Rovereto: Via della terra, 2008).

[55] On 'voices [. . .] raised against chapbooks', see Neuburg, *Penny Histories*. On religious tracts, see also Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, pp. 249–64.

Catholic countries.[56] Alice Colombo has tracked down at least twenty-four translations of Evangelical tracts in English translated into Italian and printed in the peninsula in the early nineteenth century.[57] In order to allay the suspicions of the Roman Catholic church, these tracts were presented as educational books for English or Protestant children living in Italy. Similar research is needed into publications of the French evangelical society in order to investigate possible links with tracts issued in Britain.[58]

Educational cheap print, although also used by adults, can readily be included in a corpus of cheap print for children. This is less evidently the case when it comes to the almanac, probably the most globally successful genre of cheap print.[59] Almanacs were, broadly speaking, annual publications containing a calendar, prognostications for the year to come, and a variety of instructional and/or entertaining short texts. They were also transnational. Not only was the same format used in different countries, and almanacs were among the first printed items to be exported along the routes of colonization,[60] but titles and contents were often shared across geographical and cultural

[56] Susan Pedersen, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), pp. 84–113; Dennis Butts and Pat Garret (eds), *From the Dairyman's Daughter to Worrals of the WAAF: The Religious Tract Society, Lutterworth Press and Children's Literature* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2006).

[57] Alice Colombo, 'The Translational Dimension of Street Literature: The Nineteenth-Century Italian Repertoire', in *Crossing Borders, Crossing Cultures: Popular Print in Europe (1450–1900)*, ed. Massimo Rospocher, Jeroen Salman, and Hannu Salmi (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), pp. 143–58 (p. 155). A specific Anglo-Italian tract is analysed in Alice Colombo, 'Translation, Book History and the Transnational Life of "Street Literature"', *Translation Studies*, 12 (2019), 288–307.

[58] An almanac addressed to families and children was printed by the French evangelical society from the 1820s to the twentieth century under the title *Almanach des bons conseils, pour la famille et la jeunesse* (some issues are preserved in Marseille, Centre de conservation et de ressources du MuCEM, 1.pr.57.3). From the 1820s the society published educational texts for all audiences. Analysis of the tracts might open new perspectives on the transnational circulation of confessional cheap print.

[59] Almanacs probably represent the most widespread kind of cheap print across Europe, and show many similarities across borders. Following the foundational work on French almanacs by Geneviève Bollème, *Les almanachs populaires aux XVII et XVIII siècles: Essai d'histoire sociale* (Paris and La Haye: Mouton, 1969), scholars have investigated a wealth of publications, enabling transnational comparisons.

[60] The best-known examples were in northern America; see Lüsebrink et al. (eds), *Les lectures du peuple en Europe et dans les Amériques*. An almanac was also printed by the Danish mission in Tranquebar, discussed in a paper presented by Niklas Thode Jensen at the Medical Knowledge and Publication Strategies in European Perspective (1500–1800) conference, Prague, November 2016.

borders.[61] Another peculiarity of almanacs was their ability to evolve over time, often in order to enhance their status and satisfy the interests of wealthier, urban readers, in the form of city guides, court almanacs, almanacs for ladies, and so on. Rural almanacs continued to be printed, however, and were increasingly adapted to educational purposes, such as fostering new agricultural techniques or supporting public health and temperance movements. Given this ability to evolve, when publishers started to consider children as an audience it was natural that they should introduce juvenile versions of almanacs.

Almanacs were cheap; they had readers even in the most remote villages of the countryside, where they were sold by pedlars; and they were accessible to the semi-literate, thanks to the use of symbols. More importantly, almost anyone in the early modern world would recognize an almanac and agree upon its usefulness. Juvenile versions of almanacs started to appear as early as the 1750s, such as the British *Youth's Entertaining and Instructive Calendar for the Jubilee Year 1750*.[62] Almanacs for children were also issued in the Netherlands and in Germany before the end of the eighteenth century.[63]

Leafing through early children's almanacs it is sometimes difficult to identify the elements that, in the minds of the publishers, transformed them into juvenile booklets. Some Dutch examples show that ordinary almanacs were simply collated with new pages containing educational stories. Perhaps this was initially a commercial strategy to increase the opportunities for selling cheaply assembled products aimed at the new juvenile audience.[64] With time, the calendar part was combined with (coloured) woodcuts or even engravings, and the contents were progressively adapted to suit what were understood to be the needs of children (alphabets, short stories, moral tales, riddles, fairy tales). This happened, for instance, with the German

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[61] See Lüsebrink et al. (eds), *Les lectures du peuple en Europe et dans les Amériques*.

[62] *Youth's Entertaining and Instructive Calendar for the Jubilee Year 1750* (printed for W. Owen, near Temple Bar; and sold by R. Goadby, at Sherborne; B. Hickey and J. Palmer, at Bristol; J. Hildyard, at York; and by all other booksellers in town and country) [ESTC T146012].

[63] So far, I have examined *Prentjes almanach voor kinderen vor het jaar 1799* [Princeton, NJ, Cotsen Children's Library, Euro 18 3466]. There are records of this title from 1794 to 1839, with some issues held in Dutch libraries accessible online. On Dutch almanacs for children, see J. Salman, '"Die ze niet hebben wil mag het laaten": Kinderalmanakken in de achttiende eeuw', *Literatuur*, 17 (2000), 76–84.

[64] Elisa Marazzi, 'Almanacs for Children: The Transnational Evolution of a Classic of Popular Print', in *Transnational Books for Children: Producers, Consumers, Encounters (1750–1900)*, ed. Charlotte Appel, Nina Christensen, Matthew O. Grenby, and Andrea Immel (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, forthcoming).

Taschenkalender zur belehrenden Unterhaltung für die Jugend und ihre Freunde (*c.*1795), which combined the traditional format of the almanac (including the genealogy of major royal families) with short stories for children and educational content.[65] In many instances, this revamp meant a rise in the cultural and social status of children's almanacs, leading to very refined products being issued in the late nineteenth century. Examples include *Mère Gigogne: Almanac des petits enfants*, printed in Paris from 1850 for at least four decades, and *Barbadoro, figlio di Barbanera: Lunario per ragazzi*, printed in Florence in 1902.

Illustrated broadsides for all

Anyone living in the twenty-first century would associate children's literature with coloured illustrations. This was not the case for the vast majority of the items mentioned so far. But there were some printed products that circulated widely in the early modern world and that relied more on images (sometimes coloured) than on texts – illustrated broadsides. Scholars have suggested that in many different countries they represented a 'popular mass medium' for both the old and the young.[66] Across Europe the kind of illustrated broadside known as a (catch)penny print had a standardized appearance: printed on one side of a single sheet, it consisted of four to eight rows of woodcuts with captions, which when read together narrated a story. These broadsides had different names according to geography and chronology; *pliegos de aleluyas* (or just *aleluyas*) in Spain and *centsprenten* in Dutch-speaking areas constitute probably the earliest examples (beginning, roughly, in the seventeenth century). The use of lithography, and later chromolithography, in the nineteenth century extended their reach into France, where they were known as *imagerie populaire*,[67] Germany, where they were known as *Bilderbogen*, mainly printed in Neuruppin,[68]

[65] *Taschenkalender zur belehrenden unterhaltung für die Jugend und ihre Freunde* (Bayreuth: [1795]) [Princeton, NJ, Cotsen Children's Library, Euro 18 46214].

[66] Jeroen Salman, 'An Early Modern Mass Medium: The Adventures of Cartouche in Dutch Penny Prints (1700–1900)', *Cultural History*, 7 (2018), 20–47. See also Gomis and Salman, 'Tall Tales for a Mass Audience'.

[67] Now known as *imagerie d'Épinal* after the name of the town where the printer Pellerin first developed these kinds of sheets. Before the nineteenth century illustrated broadsides by Pellerin had a different format, with a central figure surrounded by columns of text, more like earlier religious prints. A good account is provided by Jean Mistler, François Blaudez, and André Jacquemin, *Épinal et l'imagerie populaire* (Paris: Hachette, 1961).

[68] See Heimatmuseum Neuruppin, *'Was ist der Ruhm der Times gegen die zivilisatorische Aufgabe des Ruppiner Bilderbogens?': Die Bilderbogensammlung Dietrich Hecht* (Berlin: Kulturstiftung der Länder, Stadt Neuruppin, Land Brandenburg, 1995).

and later also Belgium and Italy.[69] Their spread was often driven by family networks, and partnerships (which still need to be investigated) enabled their export to the Scandinavian market,[70] and across the Atlantic.[71]

A wide range of topics travelled across borders by these means: retellings of popular romances and tales, historical events, professions and costumes from around the world, religion and devotion, proverbs, amusing stories that circulated widely through popular print, such as 'the world upside down' and 'the henpecked husband'. Their format – heavily illustrated (often hand- or dab-coloured), relying on the images more than the captions – suggests they might have been particularly enjoyed by children. Moreover, the border with play was quite blurred. Especially in Spain, this material was tightly intertwined with lottery games, where the broadsides were cut into as many pictures as there were printed illustrations, which were then used to play the lottery.[72]

With the development of a juvenile audience, publishers of sheets of images (which in France were commonly known as *feuilles d'images*) started to address themselves to children, gradually changing their repertoires and adapting the sharper elements of some of the folk tales to what was perceived at the time to be more suited to the juvenile sensibility.[73] The adoption of lithography in the nineteenth century further expanded the possibilities for printers, who added to their stocks cheap board games or paper toys. With the latter, the principle was that the purchaser could paste the sheet on to thick paper or cardboard and then cut out and fold the images in order to build theatres, characters, and other objects. Henry Mayhew recorded

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[69] Alberto Milano, in collaboration with Sergio Ruzzier (eds), *Fabbrica d'immagini: Gioco e litografia nei fogli della raccolta Bertarelli* (Milano: Vangelista, 1993), pp. 13–21.

[70] German *Bilderbogen* for the Danish market are mentioned in Konrad Vanja, 'Themen des europaeischen Bilderbogens in der Sammlung Hecht', in *'Was ist der Ruhm der Times gegen die zivilisatorische Aufgabe des Ruppiner Bilderbogens?': Die Bilderbogen-Sammlung Dietrich Hecht* (Berlin: Kulturstiftung der Länder, Stadt Neuruppin, Land Brandenburg, 1995), pp. 16–57.

[71] A set of Épinal broadsides printed in Kansas City and preserved at Princeton, NJ, Cotsen Children's Library, French Popular Print 149986 (Box 1), contains exactly the same illustrations as corresponding French broadsides, but the captions are printed in English. The colophon mentions both the Humoristic Publishing Co. and *Imagerie d'Épinal*, perhaps indicating a transatlantic partnership.

[72] Pedro Cerrillo and Jesús Maria Martínez González, *Aleluyas: Juegos y literatura infantil en los pliegos de aleluyas españoles y europeos del siglo XIX* (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, 2012).

[73] François Blaudez, 'L'histoire de l'imagerie d'Épinal', in Jean Mistler, François Blaudez, and André Jacquemin, *Épinal et l'imagerie populaire* (Paris: Hachette, 1961), pp. 69–138 (p. 113).

that this also happened in nineteenth-century London, where similar illustrated sheets of engravings sold in the streets provided 'the winter-evenings' amusements of the children of the working-classes. The principal street customers for these penny papers were mechanics, who bought them on their way home for the amusement of their families. Boys, however, bought almost as many.'[74] This was the era of Victorian movable picture books and paper theatres, and these printed sheets extended the market for ludic products to less affluent audiences.[75]

In search of the readers

Although debate around Mayhew's work has shown the limits of his account, his pages on the street book trade in London are part of the wealth of evidence available on the dynamics of cheap print in nineteenth-century Britain.[76] Other kinds of evidence include fiction, autobiography, essays, and critical exchanges about education and literature – which, unfortunately, were in many cases 'circumstantial, subjective and tendentious', as Matthew Grenby has observed, with accounts tailored in favour of chapbooks (by the Romantics) or against them (by religious pamphleteers).[77] Historians are agreed that autobiographical writings can be problematic in their representations of reality. Nevertheless, while we do not always know what the writers wanted to show about themselves, from the list of chapbooks purchased by the young Samuel Bamford, which roughly corresponds to the core repertoire of English chapbooks,[78] to the penny-dreadfuls

[74] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 4 vols (London: Griffin, Bohn, 1861–62), I, 287.

[75] See Hannah Field, *Playing with the Book: Victorian Movable Picture Books and the Child Reader* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

[76] Richard Maxwell, 'Henry Mayhew and the Life of the Streets', *Journal of British Studies*, 17.2 (1978), 87–105; Paul Thomas Murphy, 'The Voices of the Poor?: Dialogue in Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor', *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, 25 (1998), 24–44. Despite criticisms of his methods, data collected by Mayhew can be used profitably, as shown by Isabel Corfe, 'Sensation and Song: Street Ballad Consumption in Nineteenth-Century England', in *Media and Print Culture Consumption in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul R. Rooney and Anna Gasperini (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 131–45.

[77] Grenby, 'Before Children's Literature', p. 34; also Grenby, 'Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature'.

[78] Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical and Early Days*, ed. Henry Dunckley, 2 vols (London: T. F. Unwin, 1893), I, 87. Chapbooks mentioned by Bamford are *Jack the Giant Killer*, *Saint George and the Dragon*, *Tom Hickathrift*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, *Fair Rosamond*, *History of Friar Bacon*, *Account of the*

read in shop windows by Robert Louis Stevenson,[79] we do learn that chapbooks were an important part of children's experience.[80]

At the same time, such narratives are scarcely representative in terms of gender, ethnicity, or social status. This is true for other European countries, too. Consider Valentin Jamerey-Duval, born in 1695. Raised as a shepherd in Lorraine, he studied as an autodidact and later became librarian of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. In his memoir he describes how he taught himself to read through volumes of the *bibliothèque bleue*, in particular Aesop's Fables and French *chansons de gestes*.[81] Knowing by heart some of the stories, which he had heard at communal gatherings, once he had the book in his hands he was able to match the words with the stories he already knew. It is known that schoolmasters and priests also exploited the intersection between learning by heart and learning to read: for example, learning to read by means of prayers and catechisms.[82] At the same time, we should bear in mind that autobiographical accounts have a tendency to exaggerate the author's vicissitudes.[83]

A cautious attitude towards the sources does not mean that this wealth of evidence is to be totally discarded. Some historians observe that fiction, although intrinsically untrue, is still based on the

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Lancashire Witches, *The Witches of the Woodlands*, *Robin Hood's Songs*, *The Ballad of Chevy Chase*.

[79] Marie Léger-St-Jean, 'Serialization and Story-Telling Illustrations: R. L. Stevenson Window-Shopping for Penny Dreadfuls', in *Media and Print Culture Consumption in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul R. Rooney and Anna Gasperini (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 111–29.

[80] On nineteenth-century autobiographies, see David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth Century Working Class Autobiography* (London: Methuen, 1981). See also Roggero, 'Des enfants et des livres'.

[81] Jean Hébrard, 'Comment Jamerey-Duval apprit-il à lire ? L'autodidaxie exemplaire', in *Pratiques de la lecture*, ed. Roger Chartier (Paris and Marseille: Éditions Payot and Rivages, 1993 [1985]), pp. 29–76. Aesop's Fables were also the jewel in the collection of James Raine, born in Yorkshire at the end of the eighteenth century. See Margaret Spufford, 'Women Teaching Reading to Poor Children in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, Writing and Childhood 1600–1900*, ed. Mary Hilton, Morag Styles, and Victor Watson (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 47–62; also David Whitley, *Samuel Richardson's Aesop*, in *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, Writing and Childhood 1600–1900*, ed. Mary Hilton, Morag Styles, and Victor Watson (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 65–79.

[82] Cf. Darnton, 'First Steps Towards a History of Reading', p. 168.

[83] See Fabian Brändle, 'Pitfalls in Reading Popular Self-Narratives', in *Mapping the 'I': Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland*, ed. Claudia Ulbrich, Kaspar von Greyerz, and Lorenz Heiligensetzer (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 190–205.

experience of its authors.[84] The same is true of iconography, which can deliver depictions of reading scenes, albeit influenced by the tastes and manners of a given period.[85] For instance, an eighteenth-century Venetian painting shows a young girl in a coffee shop holding in her hand an illustrated broadsheet which she is using as a fan (*fogli per ventola*).[86] The scene comes from a relatively affluent milieu, showing that upper-class children could facilitate the circulation of cheap print between social classes.[87]

It is arguable, therefore, that literary and pictorial evidence provides potentially useful data, if analysed in the right context.[88] Context can be provided by official sources, for example, which are inherently less subjective. Remaining in Venice, we can trust the schoolmasters who reluctantly declared that they made use of abridged chivalric poems as textbooks because these were the books the children brought to school; this happened in the sixteenth century, but a later Venetian inquiry confirms that this practice was still going on in the eighteenth century.[89] Similarly, Niall Ó Ciosáin has found evidence that in the early nineteenth century the majority of books used in Irish schools were chapbooks.[90]

The French situation is less clear. There is evidence that in Angers, as early as 1678, bishops banned from schools the use of 'Les livres de fables, les romans et toutes sortes de livres profanes dont on se sert pour commencer à leur [les élèves] apprendre à lire' ('tales, romances

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[84] Antonio Castillo Gómez, *Leggere nella Spagna moderna: Erudizione, religiosità, e svago* (Bologna: Pàtron, 2013), p. 15, and his own use of literary sources, pp. 106–08. See also Roggero, *Le carte piene di sogni*, p. 8.

[85] This is widely discussed, as far as pictorial representations of reading women are concerned, in Tiziana Plebani, *Il 'genere' dei libri: Storie e rappresentazioni della lettura al femminile e al maschile tra Medioevo e età moderna* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2001), pp. 154–63. On reading represented in printed illustrations, see Jean-François Botrel, 'Les images et l'évolution de la lecture (France, Espagne, XIXe siècle)', in *Lire en Europe: Textes, formes, lectures (XVIIe–XXIe siècle)*, ed. Lodovica Braida and Brigitte Ouvry-Vial (Rennes: PUR, 2020), pp. 45–76.

[86] The painting, *La bottega del caffé*, by a follower of Pietro Longhi, is preserved in Vicenza, Palazzo Leoni Montanari https://progettocultura.intesasanpaolo.com/patrimonio-artistico/opere/la-bottega-del-caffe/.

[87] Roggero, *Le carte piene di sogni*, pp. 67–68.

[88] See Amelia Yeates, 'Space and Place in Nineteenth-Century Images of Women Readers', in *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Common Readers*, ed. Jonathan Rose (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 96–115.

[89] Roggero, *Le carte piene di sogni*, p. 85; Laura Carnelos, *'Con libri alla mano': Editoria di larga diffusione a Venezia tra '6 e '700* (Milano: Unicopli, 2012), pp. 30–32.

[90] Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland*, p. 50.

and all kinds of secular books used to teach [pupils] to read').[91] No similar bans have been found so far concerning other areas of France, and (unlike other countries) the titles of the banned texts were not listed. In this case it could be argued that the official source is nonetheless contentious, forbidding something that might have not been in actual use. This appears more likely when we examine the Rapport Grégoire, a survey conducted by Henri Jean-Baptiste Grégoire into linguistic uses in the French countryside of the 1790s. Grégoire sent his correspondents, among other things, some questions about the texts that were used in the schools of their provinces, but no books other than ABCs, catechisms, and devotional books were ever reported.[92] Did correspondents lie for some obscure reason, or did French children from the countryside encounter cheap print only at home, where any family would own devotional books but also at least an almanac and sometimes 'Quelques mauvais contes de près de deux cents ans d'impression' ('some bad tales that had been in print for nearly two hundred years')?[93]

There are several possible answers to this question. First, according to Emmanuelle Chapron, there could have been an implicitly shared school culture which rejected secular books in the name of a supposed decency; even so, informal education might have been completely bypassed by a survey such as that conducted by Grégoire.[94] A second hypothesis is that, unlike the reluctant teachers who admitted they had to use romances as primers, Grégoire's correspondents (who were notables and religious living in the areas covered by the inquiry) might have wanted to conceal what they thought to be bad practices in the schools in their region. Thirdly, instead of making an accurate survey of what people actually read and learned, correspondents might have written down their own ideas about rural schools and homes without ever visiting them.

[91] Helwi Blom, *'Vieux romans' et 'Grand Siècle': Éditions et réceptions de la littérature chevaleresque médiévale dans la France du dix-septième siècle* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Utrecht University, 2012). I am grateful to Helwi Blom for bringing this to my attention.

[92] The documents of the inquiry are published in Augustin Louis Grazier (ed.), *Lettres à Gregoire sur les patois de France, 1790–1794* (Paris: A. Durand and Pedone-Lauriel, 1880). See also Michel de Certeau, Dominique Julia, and Jacques Revel, *Une Politique de la langue: La Révolution française et les patois, l'enquête de Grégoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

[93] Grazier (ed.), *Lettres à Gregoire sur les patois de France*, p. 245, from a correspondent in St Calais, Sarthe.

[94] A point made by Chapron at the workshop on Popular Children's Literature in Europe (1450–1900), Milan, 2018.

In the end, the average French child living in the countryside might have had fewer opportunities to read secular cheap print. Evidence about young peasants' ownership of books from eighteenth-century police reports usually concerns psalters or books of hours. Officials would discover booklets on small corpses lying by the roadside, or in the pockets of children caught out in small thefts or left to drive their herds in the fields, and rural officers would sometimes seize these books as security in order to force children to comply with court orders.[95] Irrespective of the absence of secular cheap books from young French peasants' reading matter, these documents provide evidence that encounters between cheap print and children were manifold.

Conclusions

Since the 1960s, studies of cheap print have proliferated, allowing deeper insights into the kinds of printed items that circulated across Europe. Much has been done from the point of view of production and distribution, less from the point of view of reception, which presents a real challenge, especially when dealing with 'common readers', in particular the younger ones.[96] Nevertheless, recalling the possible methods proposed by Robert Darnton, and thanks to further advances in scholarship,[97] we are now in a position to collect, catalogue, and discuss the different types of cheaply printed products that were likely to be handled, looked at, read, listened to, and even overheard, by young people in different areas of western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Research into rural life, education, and literacy has provided information on children's encounters with cheap print, showing that they took place in similar ways in different places (and although the research presented here is limited to Europe, a wealth of cheap print travelled further as a

[95] Françoise Bayard, 'Au cœur de l'intime: Les poches des cadavres, Lyon, Lyonnais, Beaujolais, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle', *Bulletin du centre d'histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise*, 2 (1989), 5–41; Philippe Martin, *Une religion des livres (1640–1850)* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2003). Once more I am grateful to Emmanuelle Chapron for drawing my attention to this evidence, which is also discussed in Carnelos and Marazzi, 'Children and Cheap Print from a Transnational Perspective'.

[96] See Sasha Roberts, 'Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems', *Critical Survey*, 12.2 (2000), 1–16 (pp. 5–6).

[97] There are some encouraging examples of how research into the cultural life of people who have left scarce written records is possible, such as Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, 2nd edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010). See also Jonathan Rose (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Common Readers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

consequence of colonization).[98] Further research should make it possible to assess whether a shared culture existed across Europe, with children consuming similar materials with similar stories in different parts of the continent.

Some important issues need to be kept in mind. First, there is the divergence between intended and actual use. Just as children read products that were not specifically intended for them, such as eighteenth-century chapbooks, it was not always the case that works for encouraging literacy or moral tales were intended to be read by a juvenile audience. In some Mediterranean areas, for instance, the category of learners might include adults and older people.[99] Similarly, if children were mentioned on the title page of a booklet, this did not necessarily mean that it was actually read by children; some tracts intended for the education of the common people may never have been read at all. This may be apparent from survival rates; survival is often a poor guide to commercial success and items that survive in large numbers may well have been unsold, commercially unsuccessful, products. In contrast, the pamphlets and broadsides that were read the most were likely to have been passed from one generation to the next and consequently worn, torn, and destroyed.

The variety and diversity of sources does not allow for comprehensive accounts of all the different geographical areas. Some of the sources pose particular problems: for example, the unreliability and unrepresentative nature of autobiography; the difficulty in evaluating fiction and iconography as historical evidence; the scattered nature of legal and official sources; the possible biases in surveys and analyses produced in the past. The difficulty of finding documents about the lives and businesses of key figures from the cheap print trade, such as publishers and settled or itinerant sellers, does not leave much space for adding to what is already known (in contrast to other sectors of the print trade, such as textbooks or highbrow children's literature).[100]

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[98] I think, for instance, of the transatlantic travels of *cartillas*, or the *New England Primer*, but there is much more work to be done on a global perspective. Matthew Grenby discussed this in his paper 'Going Global: Transnational Networks and the Spread of Cheap Print for Children', presented at the Books for Children: Transnational Encounters, 1750–1850 conference, Princeton, NJ, Cotsen Children's Library, 31 October–2 November 2019.

[99] Carnelos and Marazzi, 'Children and Cheap Print from a Transnational Perspective'.

[100] Cf. Salman, 'Children's Books as a Commodity'; Alderson and De Marez Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*. Cf. also the work of Jean-Yves Mollier in France and Giorgio Chiosso in Italy.

Combining different approaches – from social history to the history of publishing, from the history of education to research into the commercial networks of the past – can reduce the scope for error and allow a deeper understanding of printing in the early modern world. For instance, new light can be shed on informal education processes, which often involved individuals less likely to have left written records. It may be that in some regions, especially where literacy rates were lower, cheap print was the only reading and teaching material that circulated among the young before the later nineteenth or even the twentieth century. Collecting information about the juvenile use of cheaply printed products is also likely to provide further knowledge about issues related to production and distribution, such as the trade in and reuse of woodblocks and lithographic stones, publishing partnerships, and transnational commercial networks, as in the case of the *Épinals* and *Bilderbogen*.

This preliminary survey, albeit limited and not systematic, leads us to argue that juvenile audiences played a role in the reception of street literature, something that has not been the specific object of research so far. Reassessing the part played by juvenile audiences in the cheap print trade therefore allows us to reconsider the importance of popular print within the publishing trade and, more ambitiously, in early modern society.