

CFP. Subaltern Writing and Popular Memory in the Early Modern World

Antonio Castillo Gómez, Universidad de Alcalá

Miguel Martínez, University of Chicago

This issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* seeks to interrogate how common men and women used different modes of writing to keep, shape, and contest social memory in the early modern world. Studies on popular senses of the past, such as Andy Wood's, have brought to light the complex interrelation between custom, collective memory, and social struggle. A usable past was key in conflicts over economic and political resources in the present. As the systematic regulation of reading and writing (Guillory), literacy allowed for relatively rigid forms of exclusion—particularly when gender and racial regimes of inequality intersected with class. But literacy was also a site of contestation. Subalternity did not entail a complete deprivation of access to the written word, and scholarship on partial literacies, collective reading, or informal schooling, among other topics, increasingly emphasizes the centrality of the letter in the daily lives of the popular classes (Petrucci, Castillo Gómez). Memory and writing played a crucial role in litigation, local political culture, and the everyday economies of the poor and middling sorts. This special issue aims at building on this scholarship by focusing on the role of subaltern writing and popular literacies in the production, transmission, and dispute of the historical in local communities throughout the early modern world.

In Europe, the printing press, the Reformation, and the so-called 'educational revolutions' all contributed significantly to the raise literacy rates during the early modern period, although institutional contexts and learning experiences varied widely—and hierarchically—throughout the period. The military revolution, on its part, gave way to large-scale modes of socialization that relied, to a certain extent, on writing and reading (Amelang). Moreover, the mobilization associated with the 'first globalization' prompted or accelerated the emergence of a number of genres of writing that circulated widely and throughout a heterogenous social body, from *relaciones*, to *avvisi*, newsheets, broadside prints, etc. At the same time, European imperial aggression and expansion destroyed or radically transformed very disparate literate cultures, writing ecologies, and cultures of memory. To what extent did these large-scale historical developments affected the role of writing in the spatial and material plotting of popular memory at the local or regional levels?

In colonial Latin America, as Ángel Rama argued in his influential *The Lettered City*, imperial bureaucracy was not only an instrumental conglomerate of administrative practices, people, and institutions to conduct government, but also a perfect exclusionary machine to build and maintain colonial power through the unequal distribution of literacy. Several scholars, however, have substantially qualified Rama's claims: mestizos, indios, and people of African descent challenged this exclusionary system and used writing, translation, and interpretation in strategic and creative ways to build a place for themselves in colonial society, as well as to contest the memory of conquest and colonization (Rappaport, Jouve Martín, Brewer-García, etc.).

While specific uses and traditions of popular writing are many times too fragile or invisible, several strands of scholarship have striven to retrieve and interrogate them. Scholars have studied the different historical regimes of preservation and destruction, the kinds of policies and institutions have allowed for the storage or disappearance of subaltern written memory. Historians such as Arlette Farge, Natalie

Zemon Davis, Armando Petrucci, among many others, have insistently reminded us of the importance of recovering the written traces of the popular classes's cultural and political agency. The intrinsic difficulties of working on popular writing in the early modern period is also related to the relative scarcity of studies of memory for the same period. The boom of memory studies in the last few decades has tended to be focused on the twentieth century.

Among the textual modes of remembrance that may be relevant to study plebeian senses of the past in the early modern world are artisan autobiography, letters, vernacular historiography, grassroots memorials, pamphlets, pasquines, print ephemera, popular epigraphy and graffiti, ballads, etc. Family and workplace memory, writing and rebellion (Justice, N. Smith), writing and custom, indigenous memory, vernacular historical cultures, memory and subaltern subjectivities, or the role of narrative or popular literature in the collective construction of memory as a conflictual process are among the thematic areas we envision for this special issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*.

What role, then, did writing and reading play in common sense notions of living historically? How did common men and women in different parts of the world use writing to defend, reinterpret, or dispute custom? How did writing and reading contribute to the creation or resignification of community 'sites of memory' (Nora)? Did the interplay between orality and writing have a significant role in the ways historical events were remembered, commemorated, or forgotten? We invite scholars working in different geographical areas and disciplinary traditions to use these questions as a point of departure to think broadly about the relationship between subaltern writing and popular memory in the early modern world.

Topics may include, but are certainly not limited to:

Vernacular historiographies
Private writing and public memory
Chorography and local memory
Common women writing
Writing and revolt
Indigenous literacies and memory
Artisan autobiography, letters and other ego-documents
Memories of sexual dissidence
Local topographies of memory
Popular epigraphy and graffiti
Landscape and memory
Grassroots memorials
Memory and performance
Collective intentional forgetting
Forgetful remembrance (Beiner)
Archival silences
The materiality of writing and memory
...

Main deadlines

1 July, 2022

Please send your proposal (ca 300 words) and working title to the guest editors:
(antonio.castillo@uah.es and martinezm@uchicago.edu)

20 July, 2022

Notification of proposal acceptance.

30 April, 2023

Submission of articles to the guest editors (antonio.castillo@uah.es and martinezm@uchicago.edu).

Please note that articles must comply with the editorial norms and must not exceed 12,000 words, including footnotes and bibliography. Articles may include up to 10 images (for publication they need to be submitted in 600 dpi resolution and with publication permit). All articles are published in English.