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Cordel

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The essay adresses the cordel literature as part of a broader set of popular printed literature produced in various countries from 15th to 20th centuries. It examines the cases of Brazil, Portugal, Chile and Spain, regarding themes, texts, materiality, authors, editors and readers.

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Over history, intergenerationally transmitted oral genres in verse and prose, in both daily situations and in rituals, have been produced and documented in various parts of the world. These include poems, songs, chants, tales, romances, epic narratives, myths, and legends, which fulfill various roles: preserving and

transmitting group memory; contributing to social cohesion and to the definition of the roles of various actors; ritualizing important stages of life; entertainment; playing; and bringing beauty and imagination to the ordinary and banal. These different traditions obey certain, relatively stable, formulae, certain rhythmic and narrative patterns, which facilitate memorization. In the recitation and/or narration of these poems/stories, corporal *performance* is central. Gestures, words, and music compose, in an inseparable manner, the instant of their realization. Poets, *romanceiros*, troubadours, *repentistas*, *brincantes*, *griôs, akpalôs,* storytellers, on the one hand, and the public, audience, listeners, on the other, are responsible for a moment which, although to a great extent reproduces what has already been said, is unique and unrepeatable.

In turn, in various countries, principally at the moment of the dissemination of typographies in urban centers, a proliferation of printed material can be found, such as newspapers, pamphlets, and posters, which served as a political tribunal, source of information, and also of diversion. Much of this printed material contained, in verse or in prose, news of present events and stories which already circulated in the oral tradition. At the same time that this proliferation of printed material expressed the existence of an expanding reading public (or listening, since many times contact with writing was mediated through orality) it also contributed to expand it.

In this context, which can be located between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, depending on the country, alongside book publishing there can be found the creation of a type of printed material which sought, with low costs and a specific distribution network, to reach this incipient reading/listening public. This printed material which, in recent decades, has been labelled 'widely circulating' by cultural historians, [1] was/is produced on cheap paper, of low quality and grammage, in a small format (normally *in-quarto* or *in-octavo*), with large print runs, sold at a low cost and with 'popular' themes, in other words ones which were widely accepted.

In the confluence of these cultural practices -- oral genres transmitted from generation to generation, erudite literature, other printed material, the observation of daily life -- a specific type of written and printed literature was born, which although it assumes particularities in each country has common traits which are found above all in a specific form of publishing. This publishing formula is recognized in its singularities by the different actors of the communication circuit, [2] such as its authors, publishers, sellers, and readers/listeners.

In Brazil, this type of literature was designated by those studying it, principally from the 1960s onwards, as *cordel* literature, a name that came from Portugal, where it was also found. The name is related to how it was sold, hung on string. In Brazil, perhaps because this form of sale was not the predominant one, at the time of its apogee (from 1920 - 1950) its public called them 'pamphlets,' 'novels,' or 'fair books,' [3] denominations linked to their format, to one of the subgenres, and to the place of sale, respectively. In Spain, the denomination *cordel* literature can also be found, but most common is perhaps *pliegos sueltos* (or *pliegos de cordel*), which in turn is related to its mode of publishing. In France, it is called *bibliothèque bleue*, due to the color of the covers on which it was printed in the formula spread by Troyes publishers, or *literatura de colportage,* in reference to how it was sold, through street sellers [4] In Naples, similar to what happened in the Iberian Peninsula, it is called *literatura muricciolaia*, or *la mura* (paredes), since the pamphlets or *libretti muriccioli* were hung on string on walls in squares and buildings. [5] In England they were called *chapbooks*, an expression related to how they were sold — by the *chapman*. [6] This type of literature is also found in other countries in the Americas, such as Mexico, Chile,

Argentina, and Peru, where it is generically called *corridos*, a direct reference to forms of oral poetry found in those regions. In each of these countries, it can also have a particular name, such as in Chile, where it is known as *lira popular*.

Based on this brief introduction, we can state that the *cordel* is a type of printed material located between the oral and the written (and between the written and the oral); between the popular and the erudite (and between the erudite and the popular); between the urban and the rural (and the rural and the urban); between different European countries; between European countries and Arab cultures; between Ibero-American, African, and European countries. In the analysis of this literature, there is thus no space for the idea of 'origin;' as above all it is a question of cultural 'circulation,'. [7]

Although *cordel* is thus part of a broader set of widely circulating printed material produced in various countries, in the impossibility of dealing with all the cases here, we will instead highlight some elements related to the genre found in Brazil, Portugal, Chile, and Spain. We consider that it deals with an initial exercise of connection between territories which, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, had experienced moments of close relationship in their histories: as colonizers (Portugal and Spain) and colonized (Brazil and Chile), as part of the same state (in the case of the Iberian Peninsula), as users of the same official languages (Portuguese for Portugal and Brazil; Spanish for Spain and Chile), and as a result of social, cultural, and ethnic-racial influences of indigenous, Iberian, and African peoples. We are thus not looking to establish comparisons between the cases, but only to indicate possible relations between them. A more complete and complex exercise would certainly indicate other Spanish or even Portuguese speaking countries located in the Americas and elsewhere, such as Africa and Asia.

A brief trajectory of the genre in different countries

In Brazil, the first pamphlets of this type located date from the end of the nineteenth century. Many scholars attribute to the Paraíba poet Silvino Pirauá de Lima (1848-1913) the idea of rhyming traditional stories. This is the opinion of Câmara Cascudo (1953), who believes that de Lima was the first to write the stories in verse, in other words, "changing them from urban prose to the *sertaneja sextilhas* in the usual formula of ABCBDB." (p.12). This poet actually represents an existing and consolidated tradition, principally in the *sertões* in the states that are now part of the Northeast region, under strong indigenous influence — and also, although to a lesser degree, African and probably also Iberian — of the holding of *cantorias*, *pelejas,* and *desafios*. Alongside him, other well known singers from that time included Agostinho Nunes da Costa (1797-1858), Inácio da Catingueira (1845-1881), who was a slave, and Francisco Romano (1840-1891). They sang on plantations, but also in cities, in public and private parties, and in markets.

During the same period Portuguese *cordels* also circulated in the region, which had Brazilian editions. In 1888, Sílvio Romero [8] stated that these books could be found in Brazil in the most important cities of the Empires, at the doors of theaters, in train stations, and other points. Consulting the "Catalogue for the Examination of Books to Leave the Kingdom with the Destination of Brazil" in the National Archive of *Torre do Tombo*, in Lisbon, Márcia Abreu (1999) analyzed the requests for authorization from *Real Mesa Censória* to send printed material to Brazil. The latter was responsible for deciding on whether or not the license should be granted in accordance with the nature of the books. Of the 2600 requests analyzed by the author, in the period between 1769 and 1886, 250 were Portuguese *cordel* titles. Pernambuco was among the principal states to which books were sent: 45 books. She found 71 sent to Rio de Janeiro, 55 to Bahia, 40 to Maranhão, and 22 to Pará.

Leandro Gomes de Barros (1865-1918), born in Pombal, also in Paraíba, is seen as responsible for the beginning of the systematic printing of rhyming stories in pamphlets. The first was probably printed in 1893, the moment when printing shops/typographers were multiplying all over Brazil. From 1909 onwards, already settled in Recife, one of the most populous cities in the country at that time, which came to be the main center for the production of pamphlets in the twentieth century, Leandro began to live exclusively from their production and sale, becoming at the same time author, publisher, and owner. Another poet who was important in the process of producing and publishing pamphlets was Francisco das Chagas Batista who established in the first decade of the twentieth century a specialized typography in Guarabira, Paraíba.

The apogee of *cordel* literature in Brazil would occur between the 1930s and 1950s, when some titles would have print-runs of 200,000 copies. In this period, networks were established for the production and distribution of pamphlets, hundreds of titles were published, a public was created, and the publisher stopped being just a poet. Initially found in the typographers, in authors' houses, in bookshops, or sent by the post office, the pamphlets came to be predominantly sold in fairs, markets, and squares, by poets or 'resellers,' found in various urban centers. Of particular importance in this process was the poet and publisher João Martins de Athayde, based in Recife, who introduced innovations in the printing of these booklets, consolidating the format by which they would be known in later decades. In addition to the publication of Leandro's works, Athayde also became a publisher of various other poets and his own works. In 1949, Athayde, by now sick, sold the copyright to the works of various authors to José Bernardo da Silva, from Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará. Initially circumscribed to the urban space, principally from this period on, these booklets gradually came to circulate more widely in the rural zone.

In the 1960s, *cordel* went through a serious crisis, once again becoming a new center of interest from the 1970s onwards, this time principally on the part of tourists, Brazilian university students, and foreigners: it became the subject of study and curiosity. At this moment, it also came to be published in other formats (in a larger size, on better quality paper, and with colored illustrations), principally by Prelúdio Publishers (afterwards renamed Luzeiro), based in São Paulo, aiming at a public predominantly formed of migrants. In recent decades, the Brazilian *cordel* booklet has gone through a series of transformations, although some of its characteristics have remained. Currently, the verses, which continue to obey traditional meter and rhyme, are published in a still more diversified format, as in books (including children's literature) and the internet. Moreover, the themes have expanded indefinitely. The emergence of other forms of circulation can be seen: they can be found in bookshops and craftwork centers and on the internet. They continue to be read in a collective and oral manner, but also in an individual and silent one. Institutions have multiplied — such as the *cordel* academies — and the competitions and festivals which they promoted, as well as their use in the school space. Here we will center our analysis of the Brazilian case on the period of the apogee of its production.

What type of Portuguese *cordel* literature circulated in Brazil before the emergence of the strictly Brazilian genre? In Portugal, the publication of cheap pamphlets appears to have begun in the sixteenth century and was initially linked to the work of Gil Vicente, whose plays, although they were essentially aimed at the representation in court and public places, widely circulated in this format. [9] From the eighteenth century onwards, with the authors of the so-called '*Vicentina* school,' *cordel* literature structured itself as a publishing area. [10] Standing out in this process is the work of Baltasar Dias, a blindman from Madeira, considered the 'nationalizer of European romances,' for having made Portuguese versions of many popular stories from other European countries, many of which came from the medieval period, and which until then had been read in Portugal only in Spanish or French translations. [11] The apogee of Portuguese *cordel*

literature can be located in the eighteenth century, which witnessed a revival of this literature after the Iberian Union (1580-1640), expressed in a vast production, with a multiplicity of themes. [12] As well as theater and traditional stories, reports of events, saints' lives, and other themes can be found, both in verse and prose. This material had its own distribution network, which included various types of agents, such as blind people and *volanteiros*, who sold from door to door in cities and also in rural areas, as well as bookshops and booksellers. The publication of this type of material lasted until the middle of the twentieth century.

Portuguese *cordel* literature is in turn inseparable from Spanish, with which it shared a name, as well as diverse characteristics. In Spain the emergence of this type of publishing formula, at the end of the fifteenth century, is related to brief poetic plays and the *cancioneiro* tradition: short printed works on cheap paper, written to be either read or sung. [13] They could be in verse or in prose and included both the traditional narratives and doctrinaire books, news, and reports of events. [14] The greatest specificity of the Spanish case perhaps resides in its publishing and distribution circuit, dominated by blind people congregated in brotherhoods who achieved a monopoly (in Madrid) of the printing and sale of material with less than four pages between the middle of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. [15] Recited, sung, or read, the *pliegos* were sold by these agents, alongside the gazettes, almanacs, calendars, catechisms, novenas, and songs, on roads, squares, in the premises of brotherhoods, in the houses of blind people. Initially, concentrated in the large urban centers, they gradually also reached rural areas. The *pliegos* were displayed in cases, but also in *puestos*, semi-fixed structures formed by two trestles set up vertically, between which was tied string on which were hung the material — this structure gave rise to the Catalan expression for *cordel* literature: *literatura de canya i cordill*. [16] Print runs varied between 500 and 9000 copies. [17] In the nineteenth century, the production of *pliegos*, concentrated in the hands of a few local printers, began to decline, despite innovations (use of binding color, for example) and being sold at even lower prices. At this moment, the number of *pliegos* in prose grew, sold by peddlers, as well as in markets, fairs, and pilgrimages. It ultimately ended in the 1940s. [18]

As in the Brazilian and Portuguese cases, the connections between *cordel* literature found in Spain and Chilean *lira popular* are not direct and nor can they be explained by notions such as importations, adaptations, or appropriations, which would certainly erase the specificity and strength of this production. In Chile, this type of printed material began to circulate in the principal urban centers in the 1860s, based on the work of someone considered to be the country's greatest popular poet: Bernardino Guajardo (1812 ? -1886), author of many verses about the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). Spanish *pliegos* and books were already circulating in the country at this moment, as well as poetic forms also found in the Iberian Peninsula, such as the *romance*, *contrapunto* and *décima*. In a pioneering study about this type of printed material Rodolfo Lenz (1919), a German ethnologist who lived for four years in Santiago, also highlights the role of indigenous people, who at that moment composed the majority of the rural population, in the configuration of the genre. *Cuecas* and *tonadas* (which, in turn, had a large Arab influence) were also printed in *hojas*. The apogee of this type of literature which, as in the Brazilian case, was solely produced in verses, occurred between the last decade of the nineteenth century and approximately 1920. Traditional stories, reports of events, and religious themes were recurrent in this material. In this period, the titles had print runs of between three and ten thousand copies, according to a poet interviewed by Lenz (1919). Publishing and circulation circuits were similar to what was found in Brazil: poets had copies printed and sold them — after singing, reciting, or reading them — on streets, in fairs, in markets, and train stations, principally in Santiago and other urban centers. Selling them at low prices, vendors of newspapers and other periodicals also acted as agents for the distribution of printed material. In addition, the *verseros* also

reached the interior of the country and gradually, similar to what occurred in the other spaces studied, *pliegos* began to be read and heard in rural areas. According to Lenz (1919), railways contributed in a significant manner to the dissemination of the genre all over Chile. As in Spain, the last examples, located date from the 1940s.

The themes and the form of construction of the text

Various scholars have sought to classify this literature, which is not always an easy task since sometimes the criteria resides in its material form or its textual genre, sometimes in the subjects it deals with. Here we will seek to indicate the thematic similarities and distinctions found in the four countries studied.

In all of them, the existence of traditional stories was found. Some of these narratives, repeatedly reworked over numerous, sometimes even hundreds, of years, were labelled 'books of the people' by Câmara Cascudo (1953) and were written —many based on the medieval oral Arab tradition— between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries in European countries. Probably they were brought to the Americas between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, principally through Spanish and Portuguese publications. [19] Originally, they appeared not to be aimed at 'popular' readers and in various countries were adapted, including in other 'languages' (such as theater and music), to be made suitable to a much vaster public. [20] This was the case, for example, of *Carlos Magno e dos doze pares de França,* originally published in Frencin French in 1490; *Donzela Teodora,* of Arab origin, translated into Castilian at the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth; *Pierre e Magalona* (or *Princesa Magalona)*, from the end of the fifteenth century; *Roberto do Diabo*, published in Spain in 1509; *João de Calais*, published in France in 1723. Many of these narratives were translated to Spanish and Portuguese based on the French *bibliothèque bleue*. In each of the countries studied, these stories became *cordel* literature, with greater (the case of Portugal) or lesser intensity (the case of Chile, where the only reference located is *A batalha de Oliveiros*, belonging to the *Carlos Magno* cycle). In Brazil these narratives were denominated by the poets and readers/listeners of '*romances*,' which normally possessed more than 32 pages and told stories of love, suffering, struggles, princes, fairies, and enchanted kingdoms. [21] Some of these *romances* were not adaptations of stories created in other places, but were produced in the country, such as *O pavão misterioso*, by José Camelo Rezende successively republished for almost one hundred years.

A second group of themes found in the four countries studied deals with reports of events. In Brazil, these were called 'journalistic' or 'event pamphlets,' in Spain and in Chile *relaciones*. As Botrel (1993) stated, the selection of events which appeared in the printed material appeared to obey two criteria: due to their national importance, as in the case of wars and battles, economic and political crises, electoral disputes, historic events, large catastrophes (such as earthquakes and tremors); or due to their extraordinary and sensationalist nature, as is the case of crimes, deaths, floods, droughts, prodigious phenomenon, accidents, murders, tragedies, and miracles. Of special importance in Brazil in this group are pamphlets about the life and death of Getúlio Vargas and a large part of those written by Leandro Gomes de Barros, which constitute a political, social, and moral critique of the country in the first years of the Republic. [22] Also deserving mention are the so-called 'cycle of the cow' and the 'cycle of the *cangaço*' — which gave rise to dozens of titles about people such as Lampião and Antônio Silvino, some of which were quite satirical, as in the case of the best-seller, republished for decades, *A chegada de Lampião no inferno*, by José Pacheco.

There is also a third group of themes found in the four countries: religion and mysticism. In Spain and in Portugal, as well as in France, this material was an important instrument in the Catholic Counter-Reformation, being used for religious propaganda. [23] Mostly hagiographies, devotionals, and stories of

biblical characters were printed. In Chile, this type of production is principally concentrated in the work of one author: Rosa Areneda, classified by Lenz (1919) as the principal representative of the 'song to the divine.' Many of these verses were sung in the country, in wakes. In Brazil, in turn, the production classified in this group appears to have had a less romanticized nature: in addition to pamphlets freely based on biblical stories, notably from the Old Testament, such as *Samson and Dalila,* there is a strong presence of printed material which thematized the life and death of the pious, such as Antônio Conselheiro, Padre Cícero, and more recently Frei Damião. The devil was also the subject of various leaflets, but dealt with in a satirical manner. [24]

In the fourth group found in the four countries can be encountered themes which are adapted from so-called erudite literature. In Brazil, authors such as José de Alencar were put into verse and printed in pamphlet form. In Chile, Lenz (1919) analyzed the transposition to the metric of the *hojas*, made by the poet Rolak, of one of the most read books in "*Gauchesca*" literature: *El gaúcho Martin Fierro* by José Hernandes, published in Buenos Aires in 1872.

Another group of printed material was located, in a significant way in the studies consulted, in Brazil and Chile: this involved *pelejas*, *cantorias* and *ABCs* in the Brazilian case, and *payadas* and *contrapuntos* in the case of Chile and other South American countries. Poetic disputes were part of the repertoire of traditional oral poetry in various countries, including among the Iberian *cancioneiros*. Although we are referring here more to the form of the poem than its content, in general this material discussed 'knowledge and science' and aimed at showing the 'wisdom' of the poet (or one of the poets, in the case of disputes, in which one of the two poets was proclaimed winner). This type of composition was already common before becoming written and printed. According to Abreu (1999), "singers called 'singing in science' the proposition of riddles and questions about Geography, History, Graeco-Roman Mythology, Sacred History," (p.78). Lenz (1919) adds to this repertoire, for the Chilean case, knowledge about literature, astronomy, and philosophy, which had to be shown by the *palladores*.

We also located in three countries —Brazil, Portugal, and Spain— references to pamphlets which narrated adventures of heroes and antiheroes, such as *Cancão de Fogo*, Pedro Malasartes, Pedro Urdemales, João Grilo, João Leso, and *Camões*, all with weak bodies, but capable of causing trouble, overcoming obstacles, and tricking the powerful. The figure of the 'wily' and 'astute' hero was always very popular, both in the western and eastern tradition. João José da Silva, one of the most important *cordel* publishers in the 1950s and 1960s in Brazil, classifies the pamphlet *Proezas de João Grilo* as the 'king' of comic books, with around 100,000 copies published by the end of the 1950s. [25]

In addition, we also identified the presence of the theatre and its subgenres in *cordel* literature, covering various themes though only in Portugal and Spain, [26] : *autos*, *estremezes*, farces, comedies, and tragedies constitute, in some historical moments, the principal collection of Portuguese printed material.

Finally, there are various other themes or genres which, since they are a minority in the four countries, will not be dealt with here. In Spain, for example, *cordel* literature also included anthologies of traditional lyric poetry and 'micro-genres' exclusive to *cordel* poetry, such as testaments, questions, "*dialoguillos, chistes, disparates, perqués*, etc.". [27] In Chile there were specific *hojas* to be read, sung, and/or recited in novenas and in wakes. [28] Additionally there were *brindis*, which exalted certain professions— such as carpenters, shoemakers, and blacksmiths -, highlighting the social position they occupied, the tools used, and the virtues of those who exercised them. In Brazil we also have the "naughty pamphlets", generally read/heard by men.

In relation to the construction of texts, in Portugal and in Spain prose, theatrical texts, and poems coexisted. When based on traditional books, these narratives, which corresponded to the supposed abilities of a broader public, suffered various interventions and adaptations, mainly implemented by the publishers, as is shown in detail in studies of the French case. [29] The narrative patterns found in it are very similar, with an emphasis on the plot and action, centered on the struggle between good and evil. Even with these characteristics, often the *romances* published in Portuguese pamphlets had a rhetorical preparation with a certain complexity in form, involving the presence of long sentences, interspersed phrases, and a lexicon that at times is erudite. [30] In the Spanish case, prose came to predominate in relation to verse, especially from the nineteenth century onwards [31] while the syntax used often had characteristics associated with orality, with redundancy, and a succession of circumscribed phrases. [32]

Turning to *cordel* literature in verse, in Portugal in the sixteenth century traditional quartets or narrative *cantigas* were predominantly used, [33] as well as octosyllabic verse attributed by Theophilo Braga (1867) to the Arab presence in the Iberian Peninsula. Baltasar Dias, considered one of the greatest authors of the genre, wrote in heptasyllabic quintiles —a metric also found in medieval oral poetry—, to the detriment of classical structures. [34] In the Spanish case, assonant octosyllabic verses predominated, which also facilitated memorization. In turn in *romance de ciego* quintiles and other forms of popular metrics predominated, although erudite forms were also used, such as the sonnet. [35]

In Chile and in Brazil, this type of literature is found in verse. In Brazil quartets (ABCB), sextiles, and seven syllable or decasyllabic *décimas* (ABBAACCDDC) were the most common forms of compositions. In the sextile, the verses rhymed in the ABCBDB form. More rarely septiles were also used (ABCBDDB). According to some authors this formal delimitation characteristic of *cordel* literature was used in texts in order to make them more easily memorizable by poets and by the public. The metric and the rhyme are so defining of Brazilian *cordel*, that they became over time two of the most important criteria to judge the quality of a poem. In recent research, by studying the metatextual consciousness of poets in relation to the *cordel* genre, Melo (2017) found that those who did not know how to conjugate 'meter, rhyme, and phrase' (an expression coined by the poet Manoel de Almeida Filho in the 1970s), could not be considered good *cordelistas*. The phrase was the equivalent of textual coherence and cohesion —in the words of the poets, the 'subject could not be avoided' in the name of the quality of verses

In Chile the compositions printed in *hojas* were also in verse. The predominant form was the octosyllabic *décima* (with ABBAACCDDC rhymes), known as '*espinela*,' the fixation of which was attributed to the Spanish poet Vicente Martínez Espinel (1550-1642), since very similar stanzas with the distribution of rhymes had been used in Spanish courtly poetry since the fifteenth century. The poems began with a quartet, in which the theme was introduced, followed by the *décimas* and finally by a quintet (called *pie* or *estrofa de despedida*), which closed the poem. Lenz (1919) gives various examples of poetry found in collections of Spanish *romanceiros* and *cancioneiros* to show their similarities with those found in popular Chilean poetry -- the principal difference in the metric was in the introduction of the fifth stanza in the *hojas*. This poetic structure, similar to what happened in Brazil, also facilitates the memorization of verses, both by poets and by their readers/listeners. They are also found, albeit in a lesser number, in the Chilean *hojas*, quintiles normally dedicated to erudite poetry, and the *tonadas* and *cuecas*, originally composed to sing and dance.

Materiality, authors, publishers, and readers

One of the most defining aspects of the publishing formula which gives a certain unity to *cordel* literature and similar genres in different countries is its materiality. Although with quite striking distinctions, some elements approximate the various types of this printed material.

In the four countries analyzed (and in others, such as France, England, and Italy), the paper used for printing was cheap, with low grammage and quality. The print type used was frequently worn out and barely legible. Nogueira's analysis (2012) of the Portuguese case can be expanded to the other countries studied: "The precariousness of the publishing tells us that above all economy was sought: careless printing, asymmetrical distribution of the ink, numerous typographic mistakes, grainy poor quality paper, non-existing or erroneous pagination, an incipient paperback," (p.199). In the Brazilian case, in previous research. [36] it was found, through the analysis of typographic characteristics of a hundred pamphlets, that at the beginning of the production of the genre, between the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, greater care was taken with the publishing, with the above profile being reached at the moment of its popularization, starting in the 1930s.

Another common element is related to the presence of illustrations which in general were of a reduced number (one or two), normally preceding the text, and sometimes appearing on the cover. These images were produced in stone (lithography), metal (zincotype), or wood (xylography). When they were specifically produced for printing, they were normally made in wood, as occurred with the majority of the Chilean material. In Brazil xylography became predominant, principally from the 1950s onwards. [37] In the four countries, as also occurred in other places, the practice could be observed of the reuse of plates originally produced for other purposes: the image not always related to the text, but it was a powerful aid for the identification of the theme being dealt with. It also fulfilled an aesthetic function, making the printed material more 'beautiful' in the eyes of readers/listeners and apparently more carefully treated from the publishing point of view, as occurred in Brazil. [38] In the country, when the peak of the *cordel* production coincided with the proliferation of cinema, many pamphlets contained stereotypes of Hollywood characters, reusing material for publicizing films. [39]

In turn, the formats and number of pages differed in the cases studied. In Brazil the classical form of *cordel* pamphlets measured 11cm x 16cm, corresponding to the *in-octavo* format, in other words, to a sheet of paper (whose standardized size was 32cm x 44cm) folded three times, resulting in pamphlets with a number of pages that was always a multiple of eight. Pages were sewn together in order to compose a single volume. Among the poets and readers/listeners, the number of pages was linked to the content of the pamphlet: if it had 32 to 34 pages it was a "*romance*", in other words, stories based on traditional narrative or prepared by the poet and containing fantastical elements; the shortest (between eight and 24 pages) were in turn recognized as 'leaflets' and dealt with events and the life and death of personalities, amongst many other themes. [40] In Portugal, pamphlets had a greater heterogeneity of size, with those considered mid-sized predominating, measuring 12cm x 15cm or 15cm x 20cm. [41] In relation to the number of pages these varied between eight and 64, although pamphlets with an odd number of pages were not rare. [42]

In Spain, *cordel* literature was initially printed in *in-folio*, which corresponded to 22cm x 32cm. This was the format traditionally adopted by *cancioneiros*. [43] In the sixteenth century, it came to have the format which would be more used since then: it was printed in *in-quarto*, in other words a sheet of paper (from one to four) was folded twice, resulting in a booklet measuring 16cm x 22cm, with in general between one and eight pages. [44] Botrel (1996) indicates however that other formats also coexisted, such as the one with

just one page (the *volante* or flyer), printed on the front and back *(recto-verso)*, or just one side (*recto*), and collections with up to seven booklets sewn together. However, in the Spanish case, the number of pages was related to the content of the material: *histórias* (prose narratives) were longer and the other subgenres, which had a lower number of pages, were called *libretos*.

In Chile, the predominant format was the single page, normally printed just on one side, on which four to eight *décimas* were published, all by the same author. The *pliegos* were headed by engravings and by a title printed in very large letters, which in general referred to one or two of the five or six poems contained in it. In some cases, *cuecas, tonadas, cantares,* and other forms of Chilean oral poetry were printed in the spaces that were left, so the paper could be used completely. [45] The name of the poet was published on the page, with their address so that the reader could acquire the printed material. Some authors published in other formats, as is the case of Bernardino Guajardo, whose works were published in nine small volumes (in *in-16*), with 96 pages each. [46] Initially the pages measured 26cm x 38cm, but it was possible to find at the time Lenz (1919) carried out his study— at the end of the nineteenth century —the verses printed in larger sizes: 35cm x 56cm and even 55cm x 75cm.

In the process of the creation and establishment of this publishing formula, the different actors involved in its production had distinct roles and importance in the four cases analyzed. The authors seemed to be decisive in the Brazilian and Chilean cases. They were popular poets who lived on poetry: *repentistas*, *cantadores*, poets, singers, *verseros*. With some exceptions they were from the rural environment, often uneducated *mestiços*, who migrated to the urban sphere so that they could have means to print their verses. The written language they used approximated the usual standard, except when they created some characters with strong dialectal marks, as in the case of the Chilean *huaso* or the Brazilian *matuto*.

In Brazil, authorship was gradually erased by the figure of the publisher-owner, through the purchase of copyright, and who could even assume its authorship. In this process, the role of João Martins de Athayde is important. However, unlike what happened in other countries, it can be said the publisher of Brazilian pamphlets interfered little with the text itself. In an already cited study, [47] we identified changes in the *mise-en-page* of the verses (stanzas could be 'cut' when they passed from one page to another, suggesting a silent reading; afterwards they came to be placed on the same page, related to oral reading) and in the graphic quality of the pamphlets. This, together with other data, indicates a popularization of the genre during the first six decades of its history.

In Spain and Portugal, the profile of the authors and their role in the consolidation of the genre —in relation to publishers— appears to have been a little different. First, the presence of authors from erudite literature can be observed, whose works were adapted for the new publishing formula, in a much large dimension. Among the eighteenth century Portuguese *cordel* authors, there were popular poets —such as Bathasar Dias— and almost anonymous teachers, doctors, priests, soldiers, and actors who, according to Nogueira (2012), contributed to *cordel* theater being considered prestigious, often identifying Gil Vicente and other authors from the 'Vicentine' school. In the eighteenth century, although theater was the predominant genre, many translations of books to *cordel* literature were identified. In addition to the already cited works, there were adaptations of writers such as Molière, Corneille, and Voltaire, for example. [48] Many of these works were translated into Portuguese and reproduced without mentioning authorship. Publication rights belonged, as would later occur in Brazil, to the publisher — and not to the author.

In Spain, a similar process seems to have occurred, although with a greater presence of unknown authors and popular poets. Once again, the role of the blind was important. Rarely were they the authors of the works, rather they played the role of reciters, publishers, and sellers. According to Botrel (1993), when they needed a text about some event, for example, they resorted to professionals. They were then held responsible for the construction of the works, carrying out, as in the Portuguese case, various adaptations of the originals, both oral and written. Often in this process the name of the author was suppressed, which made this genre, according to Botrel, more anonymous than individualized. They thus had the *pliegos* printed in small print shops, hired for this purpose. In addition, they appear to have some autonomy in relation to the communication circuit of their works: they created, wrote (or asked someone to write it), published (or had published) and sold (or hired resellers) the printed material.

This process was aimed at reaching a vast public, which although it did not have precise contours was predominantly composed, at least at the peak of the production and establishment of the genre in Spain, Brazil, and in Chile, of the urban lower classes, with low levels of education (or who were illiterate) who through oral and collective reading approximated written culture [49]. Gradually, this type of printed material became more rural, which was facilitated by the presence of peddlers, the post office, and railways, depending on the case. In Portugal the public seemed to be more diverse, since between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries it was composed, according to Nogueira (2012), of the lesser nobility, landholders, some wealthy peasants, artisans, and merchants. Nogueira also states that in the nineteenth century the public also came to include rural readers/listeners. These readers/listeners thus had a very heterogenous profile. In all cases, *cordel* appears to have fulfilled for these readers informative and utilitarian roles, but also and perhaps especially, aesthetic and leisure ones, as occurs with any literary work. In the words of one of the interviewees for previous research, who was a reader of/listener to Brazilian *cordels* in the 1930s and 1940s in Pernambuco: "It made life better, right? It killed the fear of life. People were overwhelmed, read one of these stories and even... challenged the others." [50]

Final Considerations

By way of conclusion, we can affirm that *cordel* literature has common elements among the four cases studied, but also specificities. Among the similar aspects are the use of low quality and low grammage paper; the existence of its own network for publishing and distributing this type of material; the presence of a reading public little familiarized with written culture — with exceptions; the occurrence of themes and, in some cases, narratives common to various countries; hybridism between the oral and written in the modes of writing and reading. In turn, the format has distinctions, although in all cases as concern with the rational use of paper was observed.

In Brazil and in Chile they are only written in verse and the meter and rhyme —although distinct between themselves— are both quite controlled and defining of the genre; the role of the author, often also an oral poet and, at the same time, publisher, appears to have been more important that the publisher in a strict sense, even when print shops became specialized and professionalized; some genres found elsewhere, such as theater, are absent; blind people, with one or another exception, did not play an important role in the configuration and dissemination of this type of printed material.

The analysis carried out also allows the complex relations established between different spaces and temporalities to be understood, in the constitution of this publishing formula, providing subsidies to break away from idea of origin and influence (in the singular and in a unique direction) and to rethink supposed

cultural hierarchies. In this sense, carrying out more profound studies on a broader scale, involving a greater number of countries, is fundamental.

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NOTES

1 see Chartier and Lüsebrink, 1996

2 Darnton, 1990

3 Galvão, 2001

4 Bollème, 1971; Chartier, 2003/1987)

5 Marques, 2018

6 Ashton, n.d./1882

7 Bakhtin, 1993/1965

8 Romero, 1977/1888

9 Braga, 1867; Nogueira, 2012

10 Nogueira, 2012, p.205

11 Abreu, 1999

12 Abreu, 1993

13 Intantes, 1996

14 Botrel, 1996

15 Botrel, 1993

16 Botrel, 1993, p.127

17 Botrel, 1993

18 Botrel, 1993

19 Cascudo, 1953; Abreu, 1999; Braga, 1867; Nogueira, 2012

20 Meyer, 1996; Abreu, org., 2008; Augras, 2017

21 Souza, 1976; Galvão, 2001

22 Terra, 1983

23 Nogueira, 2012; Botrel, 1993; Infantes, 1996; Chartier, 2003/1987

24 Diégues Júnior, 1986/1972

25 Campos, 1977/1959

26 Botrel, 1996; Nogueira, 2012

27 Infantes, 1996, p.292

28 Lenz, 1919

29 Bollème, 1971; Chartier, 2003/1987

30 Nogueira, 2012

31 Botrel, 1996

32 Botrel, 1993

33 Nogueira, 2012

34 Nogueira, 2012; Abreu, 1999

35 Botrel, 1993

36 Galvão, 2001

37 Souza, 1981

38 Galvão, 2001

39 Souza, 1981; Galvão, 2001

40 Souza, 1976; Diégues Júnior, 1986/1972; Galvão, 2001

41 Nogueira, 2012

42 Nogueira, 2012, p.203

43 Infantes, 1996

44 Botrel, 1993 and 1996

45 Lenz, 1919

46 Lenz, 1919

47 Galvão, 2001

48 Abreu, 1999

49 Galvão, 2001

50 Zé Moreno *apud* Galvão, 2001