

BEYOND THE TEXT. INTERPRETATION AND MATERIALITY OF EARLY MODERN MANUSCRIPTS AND PRINTS

MÁS ALLÁ DEL TEXTO. INTERPRETACIÓN Y MATERIALIDAD DE MANUSCRITOS E IMPRESOS DE LA ÉPOCA MODERNA

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How can research on different historical contexts be brought together? What are the advantages of exploring the material remains of the past from an interdisciplinary perspective?

For librarians, archivists, paleographers, and conservators, written artifacts are bearers of meaning beyond their textual message. As such, these professionals pay close attention to the materials from which historical evidence was made. By looking at parchments, papers, ink, and bindings structures, they value the products of the action expressed by the Latin verb *texere* – to construct something with elaborate care. Seen as carefully constructed artifacts, early modern printed and handwritten messages are the material outcomes of skilled hands. Furthermore, they are also testimonies of the social context in which they were produced and circulated, the conditions through which they have been preserved, and the methods by which they are cataloged and accessed in private or public collections. These various aspects for which early modern written artifacts are both testimony and bearers of meaning are explored in this Theme Issue by scholars of the interdisciplinary research group *Metamorphose*.³

Metamorphose is based at the Department of History at the University of Brasília and collaborates with the working group *Companhia das Índias* at the Institute of History at the Fluminense Federal University in Brazil. It aims to foster academic studies that analyze early modern manuscripts and prints beyond their textual message. By doing so, we intend to contribute to the international debate on print and manuscript studies that explores the social materiality of early modern

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3. The research group *Metamorphose* | *Materiality and Interpretation of Early Modern Manuscripts and Prints* is registered at the CNPq, Brazil; grupometamorphose@gmail.com

written artifacts.⁴ In this perspective, the papers included in this Theme Issue raise questions and explore themes related to the authorship of manuscripts, the graphical organization of information on paper, and the collective work involved in (re)producing texts and images in the Early Modern period.

In the first paper, Rodrigo Bentes Monteiro analyzes a handwritten report on the Vila Rica Revolt in 1720, which took place within the captaincy of São Paulo and Minas do Ouro in the State of Brazil. By combining material and hermeneutical analysis of this manuscript, Bentes Monteiro takes a comparative approach to establish its graphic and intellectual authorship and follow its trajectory through many collections. On the one hand, the paper shows how the report – or *Notícia* – resembles the handwritten news that circulated among a select and learned audience in Portugal in the first half of the eighteenth century. On the other, the traces that were left on paper throughout the pages of the *Notícia* as a result of erased words and expressions come to the foreground. Following this path, Bentes Monteiro shows that the quill corrected and updated expressions previously written in a second, though more polished, manuscript by the same hand. He concludes by suggesting that the manuscript has been prepared to be converted into print.

The second paper in this Theme Issue addresses the editorial mediations involved in the handwritten reproductions of a much-quoted eighteenth-century narrative in Brazilian historiography and its many printed editions. Here, Maria Aparecida de Menezes Borrego focuses on the dissimilarities between different versions of the travel account of D. Antonio Rolim de Moura to show how these dissimilarities compromise the apprehension of its textual content. She explores many extant handwritten and printed copies of D. Antonio Rolim de Moura's narrative from intellectual, material, and editorial perspectives. After carefully establishing the graphical and intellectual authorship of different handwritten copies of the same travel account and exploring some difficulties in cataloging the many printed and handwritten versions of the *Relação da viagem*, Borrego concludes by drawing attention to the benefits of a closer dialogue between historians, librarians, and archivists when unveiling the extratextual universe of any written testimony of the past.

Indeed, until recently, historians interested in exploring the seditious papers that circulated in Bahia during the so-called «Revolution of the Tailors» would have found their original eighteenth-century handwritten documents dispersed in the archive. The reasons for such dispersion and the paleographical arguments for their correct attribution are presented by Alícia Duhá Lose in the third essay. In 1798, papers, quills, ink, and documents of suspects in triggering the political movement were confiscated by the local government and analyzed by experts in the art of writing to attribute authorship to them. Many decades later, researchers cast doubt on the accuracy of the paleographic analysis made in the eighteenth century in identifying the expressive hands of a seditious mind. In her paper, Lose looks beyond the textual content of the seditious papers to argue that the condemned

4. See, paradigmatically: Daybell/Hinds, 2010. McKenzie, 2005. Chartier, 2014. Bouza, 2001. Castillo Gómez, 2014. Petrucci, 2019.

person is undoubtedly their graphic author. Yet, these originals are probably not the papers read and mentioned by researchers who analyzed the documentation miscataloged in the archive until 2016, but rather their handwritten copies.

Federico Palomo's contribution to this Theme Issue concerns how catalogs and inventories of libraries were conceived and produced in the eighteenth century. In his paper, Palomo analyses the *Index Bibliothecae D. Rochi* by paying close attention to the traces left by the quill when managing information. Therefore, he explores the written records beyond the text to show how bibliographic information was shaped. This drastic increase in available handwritten and mostly printed texts in the Early Modern period resulted in the development of sophisticated methods of selection, organization, classification, and indexing of bibliographic information. Palomo shows how this information aimed, in turn, at providing sources of authority and commonplaces required for readers when writing new texts. He, therefore, argues that a library catalog should also be seen as an instrument for the practice of writing. Yet not only bibliographic information was managed and shaped in the eighteenth century by the quill, but also visual information.

In the fifth paper, Andréa Doré explores the construction of Early Modern geographic knowledge based on seventeenth-century Portuguese manuscript maps and their likewise handwritten copies. In her analysis of an anonymous atlas, dated 1633-1650, Doré explores the process of copying maps as analogous to textual translation. Following this approach, the many differences in textual and visual information displayed on paper come to the foreground. Here, copyists' errors and deliberate changes are examined to follow the different functions that maps were expected to fulfill in their original contexts. She argues that how information was differently displayed on paper can contribute to distinct ways of interpreting and assigning meaning to descriptions of spaces in the form of texts or images.

Whereas Doré focuses on the context of production of visual information in Early Modern maps, André de Melo Araújo asks, in the last paper, what was at stake when documentary evidence was examined through visual reproductions. To answer this question, Araújo examines four different eighteenth-century metal engravings of the same historical evidence from distinctive perspectives, including the graphical, material, and editorial. Here, he highlights how far eighteenth-century scholars were aware of the mechanisms of reproduction and transmission of information in and across different media. Araújo argues that this awareness is also required when analyzing Early Modern written artifacts, including any additional graphical material that might have accompanied them. He shows that when historical documents were examined through reproductions, the artifacts of greatest evidentiary value are not what they visualized but, instead, the artifacts through which historical information – much beyond the text – was conveyed.

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