Editorial

Welcome to issue no. 14-15 of the EPOP newsletter, the last one of the first series connected with the implementation of the project submitted to the European Commission on October 2007. In fact, EPOP – Popular Roots of European Culture through Film, Comics and Serial Literature, started on November 24, 2008, officially ended on May 24, 2010. All the planned activities were realised and the project goals achieved by that date. However, the EPOP network is not going to vanish in the future; on the contrary, the cooperation among the former co-organisers of the EPOP project, reinforced by the accomplishments of this first experience, will continue. The positive results of the project encouraged the EPOP teams in Bologna, Limoges, Louvain and Leiden to agree on planning new initiatives for the next years, and, in particular, strengthening our belief that such a networking activity is necessary to contribute to the birth of a European association of researchers working on the history of popular culture with a strong transnational and transmedia approach.

In this issue, you will find an overview of what the members of the EPOP network produced with this trailblazing work; information about further initiatives already planned; and presentations of some of the groups and people who have assisted the project so far. We certainly hope to be able to continue to collaborate with them in the future.

EPOP hopes to contribute this way to strengthen both its network and ties between other national and international associations, and to contribute to the cultural exchange among researchers and institutions working on popular culture around Europe.

With best wishes,
EPOP Publication Committee
I. Final Report

1.1 The Virtual Museum: www.popular-roots.eu

The EPOP Virtual Museum must count as the main output of the project. It is an online exhibition containing texts in four languages (English, French, Italian and Dutch), more than 500 images, and hundreds of bibliographic, filmographic and online references, offering therefore a vast and diversified introduction to the history of European popular culture.

The Museum is conceived as an educational and popularisation tool specifically addressed to young people and high school students.

The Virtual Museum consists of eleven ‘rooms’ divided into two sections (five historical-thematic rooms and six monographic rooms). In the first section, the socio-cultural, technological and political context of the birth and development of popular culture in Europe is discussed, stressing the connection between modernity and the evolution of mass media, and demonstrates how the European scale of these phenomena becomes immediately evident when one pays attention to transnational and transmedia processes. The peculiar modes of production, the careers of the most influential authors, the transformation in readership and spectatorship, the crucial role of images, and the relevance of the cultural relationships between Europe and America reveal the endless exchanges permitting the circulation of popular fictions throughout the European continent and beyond.
Through a panorama of immortal heroes such as Rodolphe de Gerolstein, Allan Quatermain, Captain Nemo, Le Bossu, Scaramouche, Sandokan, Maciste, Dracula, Carmilla, Sherlock Holmes, Rouletabille, Harry Dickson, Dick Turpin, Rocambole, Lupin, Fantômas, Tin Tin, Milady, etc., these ‘rooms’ deal with several crucial issues of European cultural history: the relevance of the new metropolitan environment and the birth of the social novel; the nationalist background of the colonial fictions; the ‘scientific romance’ and the birth of the fantastic novel; the ideologies and social conflicts revealed by the intermingled figures of the detective and the outlaw; the subaltern yet gradually emerging role of the woman in modern society.

The Virtual Museum graphic and technical work was done by Farid Boumediene at the University of Limoges, with the collaboration of Pixight.net.
1.2 The Database

The Database is a research tool which was used initially to help the EPOP researchers to store information and images useful for the construction of the virtual museum. It currently contains data on 125 characters, 280 audiovisual works, 350 written works, and almost 700 pictures. Its concept, however, was developed with the goal of providing researchers from different countries and different fields with a powerful instrument allowing to find careful and detailed data on specific texts, information about their transnational and transmedia circulation, and the possibility of generating graphic representations to be used for quantitative research.

The EPOP researchers will continue to insert new data, and future collaborations with archives and libraries, such as the BNF, are currently under discussion.
The EPOP exhibition, formed by 60 large-size, colour panels following the Virtual Museum structure, was held in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) and in Pescara (Italy) during April 2010. It was hosted by the University of Louvain-la-Neuve and the Museo delle Genti d’Abruzzo in Pescara. It allowed EPOP to promote its initiatives to a wider public, including local media. Guided tours and project presentations were offered to high school students.

The EPOP exhibition panels (in French and Italian) are still available for new initiatives. In the future, they could be used again by the other project co-organisers or lent to any association or institutions which would require it.
1.4 The Exhibition Catalogue

The 272-page, full-colour book has the two exhibition languages (French and Italian), as well as a full English translation in the back. A general introduction is followed by ten sections (Modes of Productions, Readers and Spectators, Young Europe and Old America, Imagery, The Urban Mysteries, The Adventure Hero, The Fantastic, The Investigator, The Outlaw, The Heroine), following the structure of the EPOP exhibition.

It was published in 1000 copies and will be distributed free of charge to high schools, libraries and universities, and, while stocks last, to anyone expressing an interest.
1.5 The EPOP Conference

On December 9, 2009, a study day devoted to the public presentation of the activities of the EPOP network was held in Bologna by the Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo of the University of Bologna. The project’s goals and outputs were announced to a public composed by students, scholars and citizens: from the project conception to its potential future developments, the EPOP teams discussed their work from a theoretical, methodological and technical point of view.

A series of presentations dealt with characters, genres, and themes that were also treated in the Virtual Museum, while the final round table was dedicated to the problems and the perspectives of the preservation and valorisation of European popular culture. Thanks to the participation of colleagues working in libraries and archives, this meeting was a first attempt to involve new subjects and institutions in the EPOP network.

1.6 The Seminars

During April and May 2010, a series of lectures and presentations were given by the EPOP researchers in high schools in Pescara and Limoges. The virtual museum, the catalogue and the other project outputs were presented to students and teachers in order to explain why and how the history of European popular culture can be introduced in educational programmes. Emphasis was placed on the possibility to address sociocultural and historical themes, and to discuss hot issues concerning contemporary European identity, through the study of the history popular fictions. The lasting heritage of nineteenth and early twentieth-century popular culture proved to be (pleasantly) surprising for young students: while heroes such as Lupin are still known thanks to Japanese adaptation and stories such as *A Christmas Carol, Journey to the Center of the Earth, Alice in Wonderland* have become Hollywood 3D attractions, only few are still aware of their historical European origins.
2. Future Initiatives

The EPOP network will continue its activities after the end of the project. A series of initiatives have indeed already planned for the next year.

2.1 The Limoges Workshop (Oct-Nov 2010)

The University of Limoges is organizing a workshop this Autumn to discuss future EPOP work. During the two-day meeting, three main topics will addressed:

1) A session will be dedicated to the seminar which Irène Langlet will conduct from 2010 to 2012, titled ‘Les littératures populaires en France aujourd’hui’.

2) Another session will deal with the online journal Belphégor, whose structure and functioning is probably going to be changed and improved.

3) A first brainstorming session devoted to the future of EPOP and, in particular, to the development of the database. This powerful research tool, conceived during the first phase of EPOP, can be still improved and the data it contains should be utilized by the network.

A second workshop will possibly follow, in the first months of 2011.

2.2 The Louvain Conference (Spring 2011)

The University of Louvain-la-Neuve is planning to organize a conference on the EPOP topic of the history of European popular culture (1850-1940) during Spring 2011. More details will become available in the next months.

2.3 A new Association for Research on European Popular Culture

The main goal of the future cooperative initiatives will be the constitution of a formal association dedicated to the study of the history of European popular culture.

In order to achieve this ambition, the EPOP members will promote networking activities among European researchers during the next year so as to reach the largest number of people interested in such an organisation.

2.4 The Fantômas Conference and Exhibition (Autumn 2011)

To celebrate the first centennial anniversary of a crucial figure of European popular culture (Fantômas, born 1911), the University of Limoges will organize an international conference to be held in Autumn 2011. The event will focus on the transmedia and transnational success of the archetypical anti-hero created by Allain and Souvestre, asking researchers to concentrate their attention to the ability of such a character to embody the fears, hopes and contradictions of European society in past and present.

Two exhibitions will be prepared by the EPOP network members, connected to the conference topics. A virtual one is to be hosted in the EPOP virtual museum, and an actual one is to be held at the conference venue.
3. Partner presentations

Les Amis du Roman Populaire


Dès ses débuts, l’association a proposé des publications. Tout d’abord un bulletin, qui connut une vingtaine de numéros, et une revue d’études, Tapis-Franc, dont 7 numéros ont paru. En 1997, naît, pour leur succéder, Le Rocambole — dont vient de paraître le n°47 — qui est unanimement reconnu dans la communauté littéraire et soutenu par le Centre National du Livre.


Enfin, l’association a réuni, par voie d’achats ou de dons, une très importante collection d’ouvrages, de documents et d’illustrations qui, de fait, constitue la source d’un centre documentaire de premier intérêt — sachant que certains de ces documents sont très rares, parfois absents des grandes bibliothèques ou médiathèques publiques. D’autres gisements de documentation lui ont été promis par diverses personnes privées, dès lors que ce centre documentaire potentiel serait concretisé par l’installation d’un réel centre de ressources. Le catalogage de ces ouvrages et leur inscription dans une base bibliographique en ligne est déjà bien avancé.

Cet état de fait, lié à la volonté de l’association de participer, en tant qu’acteur associé, à la future mise en place du centre de diffusion culturelle de Flixecourt, a décidé ses responsables — qui ont reçu immédiatement le soutien de principe de la DRAC de Picardie et du Conseil Régional de Picardie, ainsi que du Conseil Général de la Somme — à créer en 2007 un Centre de ressources européen du Roman populaire. La mission de ce Centre est double: d’une part, rassembler le maximum d’informations et de documents concernant la production de fiction dans le domaine populaire et principalement la presse et l’édition populaire; d’autre part, de diffuser ces informations et de mettre à disposition ces documents en direction des publics spécialisés — chercheurs, bibliothécaires, enseignants… — ou des publics scolaires, des lecteurs des médiathèques de Picardie, ainsi que, de manière plus vaste, à tout public par le biais d’un site Internet alimenté par des documents numérisés et une puissante base de données bibliographiques et encyclopédiques.

C’est ainsi que l’association réalise, depuis la création du Centre Rocambole, avec l’aide de ses partenaires, des expositions itinérantes sur les thèmes du roman populaire.

Marginalia

Founded in november 1993, by (now retired) professor Norbert Spehner, Marginalia is a quarterly (partially) annotated bibliographic newsletter of secondary sources about popular literature and film. Main topics are science-fiction and fantasy, the fantastic, horror and the gothic, mystery and detection, noir, espionnage, westerns, war stories, love stories and erotica, the historical novel, comics and cartoons, and the adventure
stories. *Marginalia* is multilingual and international in scope, with references from the USA, England, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain and other countries.

There is a printed version (with a small subscription fee) and an electronic version distributed free on demand. *Marginalia* is also available online (you can consult/download/print issues 28 to the most recent: 65), on the following websites:

- www.cerli.org
- www.scribd.com/marginalia
- marginalia-bulletin.blogspot.com

On these websites, you can also find special issues devoted to the western (film and literature), film and roman noirs, the war film, Sherlock Holmes (1 & 2), Jules Verne, Dracula (1, 2 & 3), etc.

For more info, please contact Norbert Spehner: nspehner@sympatico.ca, or at the following address: 565, rue de Provence, Longueuil, (Qué.), Canada.

**Yesterday’s Papers**

John Adcock began *Yesterday’s Papers* as a website, which followed the progress of boys’ story papers in England from the nineteenth-century penny dreadfuls to the Amalgamated Press era. The original website, created in January 2003, is still hosted at [http://yesterydayspapers.150m.com](http://yesterydayspapers.150m.com). These days Yesterday’s Papers is a blog featuring research into various aspects of serial penny literature of the Victorian period, from penny dreadfuls to comic periodicals. Yesterday’s Papers is hosted at [http://john-adcock.blogspot.com/](http://john-adcock.blogspot.com/).

John Adcock’s paper ‘Spring-heeled Jack and the Spirit of the Age,’ will appear in *Spring–heeled Jack: Sources & Interpretation*, edited by Mike Dash; the first detailed, fully–referenced study of the Victorian legend. The contents of the book include essays contributed by an international team of scholars, a full calendar of sources, transcribed folklore narratives and more. *Spring–heeled Jack* will be released in 2010. For further information and advance orders contact mike@mikedash.com.

**Centre de documentation des livres à plat historié**

The Centre de documentation des Livres à plat historié (Centre for the study of historiated hardcover books) was founded in 2008, and housed in the Librairie Jean-Etienne Huret, 9 rue de la Pompe, 75116 Paris (jehuret@wanadoo.fr).

The Centre is involved in the study of the historiated books, which are now scarce, but when they were produced, a century or more ago, they were intended for a large reading public, mainly from the expanding middle classes. Today, they are generally considered to have been especially aimed at children and young people, mostly because they bear illustrated covers. Indeed, many of them are entertaining adventure novels offered to young people for Christmas or New Year’s Eve. But this appears to be not generally true, because a great number of these books also include serious scholarly or learned contents (on geographic or historical matters, including mathematical, engineering or technical subjects, etc.).

The Centre publishes a quarterly newsletter (eight issues to date), available free on request, and enclosed in the catalogues. The newsletter presents
historical studies about subjects, both of general and specific interest: a publisher, a technique, or actors in the field: a bookbinder, an artist, etc., complete with reader’s columns, news, etc. In its second part, the newsletter is filed with notes about particular books (more than 20 different ones in each issue): each one is shown in full colour illustration, with a bibliographic description. Each note also contains a detailed study of the book itself, its author, illustrators, publisher, its characteristics, its history, its general importance in the field, and explaining anything of interest related to it. Each book included is the subject of a comprehensive search intending to elucidate all the relevant circumstances surrounding its publication. Each book is presented in the best physical state, from the collector’s (or book dealer’s) point of view, because they are intended to be sold to individuals, institutions, libraries or else, wishing to acquire them for their future preservation, because the Centre is not a preservation centre in itself but a source of information, providing material for knowledge on book publishing.

The aim of the Centre is to share these materials with other collectors, and thus to enlarge knowledge of neglected, and even unknown, aspects of the history of book publishing. Anyone interested in the subject is invited to contact or to visit the Librairie Jean-Etienne Huret.

About the Project:
The EPOP Project (Popular Roots of European Culture Through Film, Comics and Serialized Literature) is a research and popularization project funded by the European Commission's Culture Programme 2007 carried out by the Department of Music and Performing Arts of the University of Bologna, the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Limoges, the Pallas Institute for Art Historical and Literature Studies of the University of Leiden, the GRIT (Groupe des Recherche sur l’Image et le Texte) of the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, and the Department for Culture of the Province of Pescara. The project started on 24 November 2008 and was completed on 24 May 2010.

About this Newsletter:
EPOP Project Newsletter provides news about the development of the project activities and circulates information on research, initiatives and events concerning the history of European popular culture. The newsletter will normally be published monthly. To be removed from our mailing list, just click reply, and put ‘remove’ in the subject line. We will immediately remove your email address from our mailing-list. This publication reflects the views only of its authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.