

Critical Review on *Catálogo dos Contos Tradicionais Portugueses (com as versões análogas dos países lusófonos)*

Catalogue of Portuguese Traditional Folktales (including the analogous versions of Lusophone countries)
by Isabel David Cardigos and Paulo Jorge Correia 2015

2 vols., s.l.: CEAO da Universidade do Algarve / Edições Afrontamento, ISBN: 978-972-36-1407-7.

Sandra Boto

Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (CIAC / Universidade do Algarve e CLP / Universidade de Coimbra)

This paper proposes a critical assessment on *Catálogo dos Contos Tradicionais Portugueses*,¹ the *Catalogue of Portuguese Traditional Folktales (including the analogous versions of Lusophone countries)*, under the scientific responsibility of Isabel David Cardigos and Paulo Jorge Correia, published in 2 volumes at the end of 2015. It was a joint edition by *Centro de Estudos Ataíde Correia* and *Edições Afrontamento*, which, in this way provide a powerful query tool to the reader interested in the field of Oral Tradition Literature.

Published in December 2015 by Centro de *Estudos Ataíde Oliveira*, University of Algarve, in partnership with *Edições Afrontamento* (funded by National Funds through *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, FCT*, in the framework of a project of *IELT – Instituto de Estudos de Literatura e Tradição*), the two volumes of *Catalogue of Portuguese Traditional Folktales (including the analogous versions of Lusophone countries)* - the 1st vol. with 965 pages, and the 2nd vol. with 895 - conveniently illustrate the vitality of Portuguese oral tradition with regard to folktale. These 2 volumes give, above all, an account of the persistent and rigorous investigation work that, in the past decades, this research centre has dedicated to Portuguese folktale, through the scientific responsibility of the authors for this publication. Thereby, the present work is the culmination of this intensive labour.

It is worth highlighting that its authors, Isabel Cardigos and Paulo Correia, are two of the most prominent experts of Portuguese folktale, therefore, a fact that raises expectations about the quality of the Catalogue. Isabel Cardigos, PhD in 1993 from King's College,

London, boasts a longstanding commitment to the Portuguese folktale, theme of her PhD thesis published in 1996 in the prestigious Finnish collection "Folklore Fellows Communications" entitled *In and Out of Enchantment: Blood Symbolism and Gender in Portuguese Fairytales*. She was the founder of *Centro de Estudos Ataíde de Oliveira*, in 1994, and of UAlg's magazine, *Estudos de Literatura Oral (ELO)*, which she directed, as well as the Centre. Paulo Correia, trained in anthropology, integrates, since 1997, the same research structure, where he has conducted research around oral tradition literature, in particular on folktale and legend.

Though it may seem legitimate to understand this Catalogue as a milestone mark within the framework of folktale research, however, it was not born as an isolated experience. In reality, an earlier version of 2006 was published by Isabel David Cardigos (with the collaboration of Paulo Correia and J. J. Dias Marques) in the same "Folklore Fellows Communications": I refer to *Catalogue of Portuguese Folktales*.² Hence, we are not aware of more suitable hands for the preparation of this bibliographical tool.

¹ Portuguese version (editor's note).

² English version (editor's note).

Nevertheless, if this publication regards itself as heir to the 2006 English version, notoriously pursues more demanding challenges. As Cardigos explained, we need only to consider that the new catalogue includes a third more versions of the Portuguese folktales, over the previous one. And - an unprecedented and very important detail – defines itself as a catalogue with Lusophone ambition, which records analogous versions of Portuguese-speaking countries, with the addition of the territories of Goa and Bombaim. Thus, in each entry of the first volume were added the bibliographical references to access the Brazilian, African, Timorese, etc. versions, when they exist, corresponding to each tale-type. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that this referral doesn't claim to be exhaustive, since ultimately, the focus is on the Portuguese tale.

Then, may I insist, for what reason do I consider so relevant the parallel versions brought from the Lusophone universe? Fundamentally, because the provision of bibliographical information on these oral traditions, along with the previous construction of a formal matching typology with the Portuguese oral tradition, open an extremely rich line of research on tale in Portugal. I refer to the specific possibility of extending research on each tale-type with a comparative methodology. Obviously, this comparative methodology is not new to the authors of the catalogue, but it can eventually be deployed at a finer level, in order to define more accurately the structural characteristics that identify precisely the "type". By this, I emphasize the indelible potential that the methodology applied to Lusophony versions might have on the perception of trends at the speech level (traditional formulae, common folkloric motifs in Lusophony's framework, amongst others), still envisaging the expected impact for the study of the traditional style, understood as permanent tension between creativity and memory. Note this type of approach registers, broadly, the poor adhesion of the researchers who devote themselves to the folktale, perhaps due to the lack of resources allocated to the printing of Portuguese oral tradition. This leads me to resolutely greet authors that incorporate bibliography

concerning the versions of Portuguese speaking-countries.

In detailed assessment of this book, considering the two volumes have different approaches and distinctive objectives, in the first volume are listed 9.500 versions of folktales, which belong to *Arquivo Português de Contos Tradicionais* (APCT) (Portuguese Archive of Folktales). As the figure suggests, this is a magnanimous documental fund deposited at *Centro de Estudos Ataíde Oliveira* – the largest archive of folktales in the country– a corollary of a research effort of about 20 years' period during which they compiled, transcribed, classified, and revised versions of tales collected on Portuguese territory or amongst the Portuguese communities residing abroad. Many of these versions are, in fact, provided by collections incorporating the archive (such as those carried out by students of "Oral Literature", of University of Algarve, for 12 years), although many others were obtained from libraries, collections or publications of restricted access. We are, indeed, in face of an archive that aims at collecting exhaustively the total versions of Portuguese tales, an ambitious goal directly transposed to this catalogue.

In the second volume, acknowledging the impossibility of globally provide the textual content of the archive (limitation of the printed paper, which could be overcome by digital means), the authors offer to the reader an ample compendium of tales (exactly 618), representative of the different tale-types present in Portuguese oral tradition, edited by Susana Mendonça. By way of brief comment to the fixation of these versions, it can be useful to devote some attention to the criteria presented at the beginning of the second volume, which I positively point out. By this, I refer to editorial options such as the deletion of dialectal marks or unnecessary comments, that is, the suppression of all elements that disturb the legibility of the texts. This notion guided (and well, I may add) the fixing of the versions of the tales included in this volume, in the sense of the adoption of standard criteria. It is important to stress, therefore, the publisher's good judgment, unfortunately not very

commonly found in the editorial practice of literary texts of oral transmission, as is known.

From the operational perspective, as expected, the authors make use of some concepts of the field of studies of oral tradition literature. Let us think particularly of terms such as “type”, “version”, “variant”. Both authors, Isabel David Cardigos and Paulo Jorge Correia, are aware of the terminological obstacles and, for that reason, they clarify the reader with precise and brief definitions (for example, in the first volume, Isabel David Cardigos in a note to p. 11, and Paulo Jorge Correia on p. 20). Praise, therefore, the manifested diligence they placed in the clarification of the theoretical operating mechanisms that underpinned the organization of the catalogue. If, on the one hand, this disposition constitutes a manifesto of scientific integrity, on the other, it elucidates the less specialised public to dilute the obstacles that the terminology certainly causes.

The reader is faced, then, with a work that presents bibliographical and structural information on 9.500 versions of tales of Portuguese oral tradition, deposited at Portuguese Archive of Folktales (published and unpublished versions) arranged into 1.011 different types and accompanied by more than 3.000 references from analogous versions of the Portuguese speaking world; in turn, the Portuguese corpus is represented through a selection of 618 texts of oral tradition, in the second volume of the work.

Given these high figures, obstacles handling the Catalogue should be expected. They do exist, let us not circumvent them. However, taking into account the need to cross-check as many data and information such as those Isabel Cardigos and Paulo Correia do not relinquish to provide the reader, expert or not, the initial constraint is immediately overcome from the moment we are familiar with the query procedures. Such a concern was not unpredictable to the authors that effectively provide with the guidelines to the Catalogue, explaining the motivations underlying each decision, acronym or code. The predicament is disentangled with the introduction to the first volume

of the Catalogue (“*Apresentação*”), responsibility of Paulo Correia, and with the foreword to the second volume (“*Prefácio*”), signed by both authors. The search in the two volumes is not intuitive, but complex (especially the first, more specialized, less of the second, to be more appealing to the general public).

In this sense, it is important to mention that the first volume of the work (the catalogue itself) follows the criteria of typological classification best recognized by the international community, the ATU system (created by the Finnish Antti Aarne in 1910; revised by the American Stith Thompson in 1927 and 1961; and, finally, added by the German Uther, in 2004). This designation retrieves the initials of the three scholars and is composed by an alphanumeric acronym and a title in English. In the absence of ATU classification, the authors follow other classification methods, identified properly.

Each entry to the catalogue is, thus, guided by ascending the acronym ATU in numerical order, followed by the corresponding generic title, in order to enter the macro and micro structural descriptions of the tale-type, according to the respective versions of Portuguese. Thereafter, are listed all the versions held in the Portuguese Archive of Folktales. Moreover, the disposition of the versions of each entry/type is ascribed by numerical order for the abbreviation for each version of the mentioned archive, associated with the individual bibliographical reference, particular features of the narratives of each version (designated “variants”) and the contamination with other types.

Notice that the book does not necessarily differentiate between published and unpublished versions (although in the second volume it is assumed the priority given to unpublished versions). Consequently, this distinction is solely marked with a tag on the individual quota of the version included in the APCT, by adding (I) for unpublished. The designation (CD) is added to the quota in the event of a CD-ROM audio record. In the case of unpublished versions instead of an individual bibliographical reference, information is

given on the metadata of the version: place of deposit (CEAO), year, informant, collection site and collector. It is relevant to retain the APCT is understood, for the purpose of this paper, as the core foundation of the catalogue, which always refers to the location of each version contained in the mentioned archive, preparing the reader / researcher to access on-site the physical document. Finally, for each tale-type, following the Portuguese versions, when applicable, there is information on the Spanish versions (areas in the proximity of the Portuguese border) and Lusophone versions, although, as indicated previously, these are not part of the APCT nor their incorporation in the catalogue observe exhaustive criteria.

Therefore, we could understand the first volume as an indispensable bibliography for the query of Portuguese tale, without false modesties. By the same token, I understand as being essential the bibliography provided by the authors in the end of the same volume (*"Fontes bibliográficas e outros"* – "bibliographic Sources, and other"), organizing this way the bibliographic information that had been scattered along the hundreds of descriptive pages. Furthermore, special reference to the attention given to the elaboration of the final indexes in the same volume, true auxiliaries of the query that reflect the thorough work of cross-checking data the authors deliver.

From the point of view of the arrangement of the tales in the catalogue (both in the body of the first volume as in the sequence of the tales in the second), it naturally follows the order established by the Aarne – Thompson – Uther classification of Folk tales, translated and adapted to Portuguese, namely: I. "Animal tales" (and its particular kinds) – Aesop's fables are obviously represented; II. "Classic tales" – subsections: "Tales of Magic", "Religious tales", "Realistic tales or novelle", "Tales of the stupid giant (devil)"; III. "Anecdotes and jokes" – usually these are brief tales that relate to situations with comic ending; IV. "Formula tales" - that reflect a clear link to the traditional songbook, in some cases.

Of the above categories the "Classic tales" is, without a doubt, the most expressive in number of versions - perhaps due to the mechanisms of censorship operated on researches about other tale typologies, or they were for long time neglected by collectors. But, in general terms, the vitality of the tale – that doesn't require greater evidence than the publication of this monumental work - borrows from its blurred association with other traditional genres, problematic otherwise observed on the structural classification of the catalogue (see the case of the poorly understood relationships with the novel *"Donzela que vai à Guerra"* (*"Maiden who goes to war"*), but also the proliferation, under the heading of "folktale", of abundant narratives of etiological or mythical character that we find here, or even the close bond that can be appreciated between the formula tale and some themes of traditional songbook, to provide just a few examples).

This work, taking in to account the objectives it pursues and the very structure that guides it, couldn't provide with a critical reflection on these phenomena. However, it has the added value of being able to promote, in the future, the debate on the frontiers of the literary genres of oral tradition. What clearly defines a tale? Can any narrative in prose or semi-prose be classified under such category? Here, we do not point out more than a topic for reflection raised by the reading of this catalogue which well illustrates the immense advantage that any researcher focused on the oral tradition literature can withdraw from this sublime tool that is the Catalogue of Portuguese Traditional Folktales.