

Congratulamo-nos, pois, com o presente catálogo e fazemos votos para que em breve surja uma versão expandida do mesmo.

Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales. A Classification and Bibliography*, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004, 3 volumes: FFC 284 (619 pages) + FFC 285 (536 pages) + FFC 286 (284 pages)

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For all those who, like ourselves, carried the task of classifying a regional corpus of folktales, this third revision of the Aarne-Thompson catalogue was the best news we could hope for. In fact we were all acutely aware that the “AT” was a research tool with as many qualities as it raised problems. One of these was the gap between the aim of its scope—to cover the whole folktale world—and the poor representation of certain geographic areas in terms of versions included. Also, the precariousness of so many types based solely on one or two versions and the scarce descriptions provided for many of the entries. We therefore hail the immense effort of Hans-Jörg Uther to fill in many gaps connected with those problems, namely the fact that the types have been restated taking into account a large number of new versions coming from all the continents. It should nevertheless be said that, in spite of the universality of the catalogue remaining the aim of the catalogue organizer, its adequacy to the universe of the pan-European traditional narrative as the catalogue’s main strength remains very much a fact.

Hans-Jörg-Uther is a member of the editorial staff of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* in Göttingen, and he had developed an enormous amount of folktale research within the scope of that monumental project. His herculean task of completing, updating and remodelling the indispensable but imperfect 1961 edition of *The Types of the Folktale*, at the head of a small editorial staff—Sabine Dinslage, Sigrid Fährmann, Christine Goldberg and Gudrun Schwibbe—is now the object of this review: three volumes of impressive research, the first two containing the type catalogue, and the third one the appendices: a bibliography (pp. 29-131) with additional references (132-133), a subject index (pp. 134-285); and indices of new, discontinued and changed type numbers as well as of motifs (pp. 8-28).

The introduction to the catalogue which opens the first volume is in itself a long declaration of methodological intentions and, from now onwards, a key text to “think” the classification systems of folk literature. Uther’s revision of the old catalogue attempts, we are told, “to meet the objections

of previous critics of the Aarne / Thompson catalogue without forsaking the traditional principles of how the tale types are presented” (p. 7). Ten major criticisms to the 1961 catalogue are listed and, accordingly, a list of proposals are presented to “eliminate or mitigate” those faults (p. 8). For the sake of space, let us mention just three of the measures systematically adopted all along the present catalogue:

- The bibliography, entailing thematic monographs, folktale collections (literary and oral) and regional catalogues, has been updated until 2003. The exponential growth of written sources (quite overlooked in the AT) —not unknown to the search for a “literary history” of the oral versions— should be noted.

- All the type descriptions were re-written based on versions existing in the E.M. archive and a large number of titles were modified.

- Many AT types were also reduced by being compacted, often in “miscellaneous types.” Around 250 new types have been added (III, p. 12), twice as many were displaced (III, pp. 10-11), and around 750 types were discontinued (vol. III, pp. 8-9). Besides confining itself to duplications, this last measure is also applied to folktales belonging to one single ethnic group and “for which no more information is available”. This more controversial measure, justified on the importance of “widely distributed types” in an international catalogue, raises the following problem: if in the future other similar versions are taken account of, how can they be classified and saved from being lost in the relative anonymity of regional catalogues? A telling example for this case is the non-existence in the present work of a type classified in Ulrich Marzholph’s catalogue of Persian folktales⁵ with no. *122F, *Flucht im Kürbis*, where it appears with six versions in Iran and the mention of its presence in Pakistan. 84 versions of the same folktale have been registered in Portugal,⁶ and it appears in the Spanish catalogue, with a single version.⁷ We recently came across a Nepalese version.⁸ In Portugal we would single out this well-loved tale and looked for its presence in other countries. We came up with nearly a hundred versions spread through four ethnic groups, now certainly worth appearing as an ATU type. And of course one of the important uses of regional catalogues is to wave the banners of our “neglected” new types or ecotypes across one’s borders, to try and catch the echo of those same types in other countries, sometimes unexpectedly far away.

⁵ U. Marzolph, *Typologie des persischen Volksmärchen*, Beirut, Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984.

⁶ I. Cardigos, *Index of Portuguese Folktales*, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2006, *122F (Marzholph) *Flight inside Pumpkin*.

⁷ J. Camarena / M. Chevalier, *Catálogo tipológico del cuento folklórico español – Cuentos de animales*, Madrid, Editorial Gredos, 1997, 168B.

⁸ *Folktales of Asia*, Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO (xerox).

To the heading of each typological cell (consisting of a number and a title) the modifications that took place in relation of the 1961 revision are added in between brackets: the old title and / or the convergence of types. This is followed by a very clear résumé of the type, accompanied by its main motifs. A “miscellaneous” type will have several alternative résumés. There may follow an indication of the main types normally associated with it. Below this résumé, different headings list “combinations” of the type, “remarks” (usually old written or literary versions), “literature” and “variants”: the main studies concerned with the type and the collections and catalogues where versions are found, ethno-linguistically as well as chronologically organized.

All the AT types that cease to have an autonomous existence and merge into a sole type are indicated in their original place and remitted to the new type, without any mention of versions associated with them.

The résumés are remarkable for their clarity. This undeniable advantage is a simplification that raises problems when the narrative is more complex —as with many tales of magic or with novella— and has developed a web of different variants that won’t be apparent in a single (or a couple of) monolithic description(s). Maybe the regional catalogues will have a specific role in refining the description of their own versions, under a synopsis signalled with alternative options that will allow for a more precise inter-textual study of the tale in the diversity of its versions — a luxury that an all-embracing catalogue cannot possibly afford.

The option for a small set of résumés under one single type arises from the preoccupation of merging of AT types. The regional catalogue will tend to revert to singling out each type when both types co-exist in the same region, as these are then clearly perceived as different types. For instance, from our perception of Portuguese folktales, type AT 437, *The Supplanted Bride (The Needle Prince)*, now appearing as résumé no. 2 of ATU 894, *The Ghoulish Schoolmaster and the Stone of Pity*, is clearly perceived as a different tale type; whereas ATU 894 is perceived as a version of ATU 710, *Our Lady’s Child*. Incidentally, we regret the loss of a remarkable Angolan version⁹ (noted in the Aarne-Thompson under type 437) now absent from the new catalogue, a version that caused this folktale to become so well defined in our minds. On the other hand, we have a very well outlined Hispanic ecotype (*La Comeniños* in the Ca-Ch catalogue)¹⁰ that bears a very close relation to both ATU 710 and ATU 894, but none to AT 437.

Once again, it is perhaps the vocation of regional cataloguers to unfold and keep the diversity of folktales we are familiar with, whereas the international catalogue will need to be synthetic and sufficiently versatile to

⁹ H. Chatelain, *Folk-Tales of Angola*, Boston and New York, American Folklore Society, 1894, tale n° 1.

¹⁰ J. Camarena / M. Chevalier, *Catálogo tipológico del cuento folklórico español – Cuentos maravillosos*, Madrid, Editorial Gredos, 1995, type 710 A.

allow its types to be split and (mis?)handled under the analytic zoom into the folktales of a given region — on the understanding that these will never be a miniature of the “international” all-embracing look.

The brief descriptions of the Aarne-Thompson catalogue, often reduced to just a title (in the Jokes section, for instance), are now expanded and based on a reliable corpus (the E.M. archive) every time they are considered worth keeping. The verbal unfolding of what laconically appeared as just “obscene” in many AT types was perhaps one of the healthiest improvements in ATU, thus providing a firm ground to the comparative study and classification of the so-called licentious folktales.

As a classificatory tool, the ATU inevitably presents both advantages and disadvantages: if, on the one hand, it allows the regional cataloguer more confidence in the classification through a direct confrontation between one’s version and the résumé in the catalogue, on the other hand there is a un-differentiation factor caused by the merging of several types. The easy alternative for the regional catalogue will be to revert to the AT (1961) type number whenever this is deemed necessary. This said and accepted, it will be extremely useful when all the previous followers of the AT catalogue update their Indexes according to the new ATU (safeguarding the differences that they regard as valuable): this will enable all the catalogue users to find a valid equivalence in a wide fan of narratives to which they could not have had direct access.

In the awareness that a catalogue of this nature is always provisional and permanently subject to revisions, we shall say that the unifying endeavour of this catalogue, well expressed in its title (“International Folktales”) was, once more, well centred in narratives of the European tradition (“from the Atlantic to India”, in the expression of Stith Thompson). This in spite of the real effort to encompass all the continents. It is an excellent catalogue as a tool in the dissemination of this tradition in space and time, but it doesn’t allow the confrontation of the different traditions belonging to wide cultural-linguistic (or civilizational) areas such as sub-Saharan Africa or American Indian — a crucial confluence for the deep understanding of Brazilian oral literature, for instance. While we toast congratulating the appearance of this *International Types of the Folktale*, let us make a wish for the creation and publication of more “ethnic” regional catalogues, so that, one day, there may appear a truly global type catalogue as a tool for the study of the immense diversity and interpenetration of human narratives.