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Folktales

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My area of research is the folktale, marvelous tales in particular. Over the past six years I have been working on a classified index of Portuguese folktales soon to be finished. I envisage oral tradition/oral literature as the outcome of active transmission of a given narrative through many links and over a certain span of time. I would therefore prefer to consider an oral narrative as [using Saussurean terms] a virtual *langue* that can only be studied and understood in the light of many instances of *paroles*, a spectrum of variants.

In Portugal we still have the opportunity to collect stories from narrators who are links in the chain of oral transmission. I therefore strongly encourage paying attention to the narrator in his/her own right and within his/her context. This focus will enable the student to assess conscious processes of variation in folktales. But because narrators (as well as folktales in chapbooks, schoolbooks, and so forth) are also links in the chain of transmission, I am particularly interested in bringing to light less conscious processes of meaning set upon a folktale “language” in progress—an unconscious moving ground of slower variance. I like to extend the comparative analysis of versions by stepping across the types and even genres.

I am intrigued about modern modes of urban/mass/global transmission, and I hope that connections can be made with more “traditional” forms of oral tradition. I find it particularly interesting to witness the recent fashion of urban storytellers and would love to know what kind of future there may be for the storytelling tradition.

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References¹

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¹ Guiding references for my work include Alan Dundes, Bengt Holbek, Marie-Louise Ténèze, and Vladimir Propp.