

ОБЗОРЫ

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RESEARCH IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN PORTUGAL: AN OVERVIEW OF JOURNALS AND PROJECTS

This paper provides an overview of the current state of research and critical reception of children's literature in Portugal. It aims at listing and briefly describing academic journals, research centres, projects and other initiatives dedicated to children's literature research that have emerged in Portugal since the beginning of the 21st century.

Keywords: children's literature, Portuguese children's literature research, Portuguese journals, Galician journals, Portuguese research centres, Portuguese academic dissemination

As in other countries, in Portugal, the emergence of research on children's literature occurred in the context of studies focused on its educational and didactic potential, especially from the 1970s onwards. It would be necessary to wait until the end of the century to find studies carried out from a literary perspective. It was also around this time that the first master's and doctoral theses on children's and young adult literature in Portugal arose, as well as a specialised journal entitled *Malasartes* [Cadernos de Literatura para a infância e a juventude], with 21 issues, published in two distinct series (with a gap of a few years between them), between 1999 and 2011. It is no coincidence that *Malasartes* was directed by José António Gomes, one of the most prominent Portuguese researchers in children's literature.

As mentioned in previous studies on the state of research and critical reception of children's literature in Portugal, such as Gomes (2011),

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Ramos and Silva (2011), Silva (2011) and Ramos (2019), the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century were rich in initiatives aimed at increasing the visibility of children's literature in society, with an emphasis on conferences, competitions and awards, as well as some reference publications. However, in recent years there has been a decrease in national activities aimed at scientific research and its dissemination. This decrease coincides with the end of relevant initiatives and associations, including: i) the Portuguese section of IBBY, in 2012, after decades of intense activity, with the annual organisation of two major conferences (“No Branco do Sul, as Cores dos Livros”, in Beja, and “Encontros Luso-Galaico-Franceses do Livro Infantil e Juvenil”, in Porto); ii) projects such as Casa da Leitura (active between 2006 and 2010), by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which became a reference for researchers, librarians and other mediators for its literary reviews, critical essays, and practical guides to reading sessions; iii) and the CRILIJ — Centro de Recursos e Investigação sobre Literatura para a Infância e Juventude [Centre for Resources and Research on Children's Literature], responsible for biannually publishing a journal (*Solta Palavra*) for over a decade. It is also relevant to mention the role of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in promoting children's literature, by creating special awards to authors, illustrators and books and by organising, during several years, an annual conference. As a result of the various conferences previously mentioned a significant amount of books were published, by different publishing houses, including Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Editorial Caminho, Deriva Editores and Campo das Letras, just to mention a few.

In addition, in the first decade of the 21st century, Editorial Caminho, a pioneer in publishing research studies on children's literature, interrupted the collection “Estudos de Literatura Portuguesa” [“Studies on Portuguese Literature”] that gathered many relevant reference books. Another important collection of essays on children's literature — “Percurso de Literatura Infantojuvenil” — by a small and independent specialised publisher, Tropelias & Companhia, was also discontinued after 20 volumes, published between 2010 and 2020.

Regarding the publication of scientific journals specialised in children's literature, the history is brief and very limited. It is worth underlining, first of all, the publication of *Revista Malasartes* [CADERNOS de Literatura para a infância e a juventude], already mentioned, whose first series had more of a dissemination perspective rather than a scientific dimension. At first, it was primarily aimed at teachers and educators. In spite of the collaboration of a range of specialists in children's literature, the articles published in those first editions were aimed

at training mediators, seeking to provide up-to-date information on noteworthy authors and books. After this first series, published by Campo das Letras, with 14 issues launched between 1999 and 2004, a new series was published by Porto Editora (a major Portuguese publishing house) between 2007 and 2011, with seven issues in total. In this second series, in collaboration with ELOS — Associação Galaico-Portuguesa de Investigação em Literatura Infantil e Juvenil [Galician-Portuguese Association for Research in Children's and Young Adult Literature] and LIJMI Network (Red Temática “Las Literaturas Infantiles y Juveniles del Marco Ibérico e Iberoamericano” [“Children's and Young Adult Literatures of the Iberian and Ibero-American Framework”]), the journal started including texts in Galician and achieved a more scientific dimension, with the publication of research articles. Nevertheless, both series stood out for the aesthetic and visual investment of each volume, printed on heavyweight paper and in colour, allowing the inclusion of many illustrations. The LIJMI Network is also responsible, since 2004 up to now, for annually publishing monographs, collecting research about a theme or a genre from researchers from Portugal, Spain (including the autonomous communities and their languages, Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Basque), and several Latin American countries. The ELOS Association, which includes Portuguese and Galician researchers, allows the Portuguese members to be part of the Spanish Association of Researchers in Children's Literature (ANILIJ — Asociación Nacional de Investigación de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil), responsible for the organisation of conferences, publications and also a journal (*AIIJ — Anuario de Investigación en Literatura Infantil y Juvenil*), in which, once again, Portuguese researchers are welcome to publish their essays.

Between 2007 and 2013, the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto also promoted the publication of an online scientific journal dedicated to children's literature research, *E-fabulations/E-fabulações. E-journal of Children's Literature*. Ten issues were published, however this journal didn't attract the interest of the most well-known researchers in the field, probably due to its main focus on English-language literatures.

Nowadays, there is no scientific journal specialised in children's literature published in Portugal, which has not discouraged Portuguese researchers from publishing their research in relevant international journals, in different languages, especially English. As it welcomes texts in Portuguese, the journal *ELOS — Revista de Literatura Infantil e Juvenil*, hosted by the University of Santiago de Compostela, has published, since 2014, a set of relevant investigations on Portuguese production, includ-

ing those by several young researchers in training. Brazilian academic journals as well as journals from other Latin American countries are also open to the publication of essays regarding Portuguese children's literature and remain, therefore, an interesting opportunity for Portuguese researchers to disseminate their findings to a larger international audience. With more informative purposes, and not specifically dedicated to children's literature, it should be noted that *Blimunda*, the free access monthly online magazine published by the José Saramago Foundation, has given attention and space to children's literature since its inaugural issue, with the publication of book reviews and commentaries.

Also worth mentioning is a journal recently founded: *Child Studies*, published by the CIEC — Centro de Investigação em Estudos da Criança [Research Centre in Child Studies], from the University of Minho. Having published two issues so far, the journal announces children's literature as a main topic of interest in its Call for papers. This research centre also integrates researchers and projects especially dedicated to children's literature, being responsible for the organisation of regular conferences, publications and the supervision of PhD theses. In the University of Aveiro, there is also an active research group on children's literature, affiliated to the research centre CLLC — Centro de Línguas, Literaturas e Culturas. In recent years, several Master's and PhD theses have been completed by members of this small yet active group, which also often receives international visiting scholars, mainly from Brazil and Spain. Despite the chronic lack of funding for projects in children's literature (and literary studies in general), it is worth noting that some of these PhD investigations were funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, which indicates a slight improvement on the recognition of this area in the whole domain of literary studies. Besides organising the Child and the Book Conference in 2015, this research group also organised, in 2018 and 2019, two international conferences for young researchers in children's literature. It was also in Aveiro that occurred, in 2016, the first meeting of a group of scholars dedicated to the study of book-objects. From then onwards, an annual seminar has been organised in various Portuguese, Spanish and Brazilian Universities, followed by a volume that gathers the presented communications. Other universities (e. g. University of Coimbra) and research centres (e. g. IELT — Instituto de Estudos de Literatura e Tradição) have also provided additional contributions to the field, even if more sporadic, including an European funded project partially dedicated to folktales, PhD theses in Literature and Materiality, conferences and seminars, as well as an online journal, *Dobra*, created in 2017 and published by

IELT, that has welcomed over the years a few articles on children's literature.

In sum, regardless of the current inexistence of Portuguese journals dedicated to children's literature research and the little space dedicated to this specific area in general literary journals, as well as the lack of funding for R&D projects, it is noticeable an increase in the number of researchers focusing on children's literature, especially in the domain of Literary Studies — for reference, Ramos (2019) counted 28 PhD theses on children's literature concluded between 2001 and 2018, two thirds of which after 2012. With doctoral and post-doctoral projects in various topics and domains (e. g. genre studies, author studies, comparative literature, translation, history, gender studies, age studies, digital literature, materiality, illustration and book design, among others), Portuguese researchers have been actively participating in relevant international conferences, publishing in international journals for wider audiences, and integrating networks, such as LIJMI, the European Children's Literature Research Network or the International Research Society for Children's Literature, in an effort to counteract the discouraging national realm and to keep developing and expanding the research on children's literature.

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**ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ДЕТСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ В ПОРТУГАЛИИ:
ОБЗОР ЖУРНАЛОВ И ПРОЕКТОВ**

В данной статье представлен обзор современного состояния исследований и критического восприятия детской литературы в Португалии. Его цель — перечислить и кратко описать академические журналы, исследовательские центры, проекты и другие инициативы, посвященные исследованиям детской литературы, возникшие в Португалии с начала XXI в.

Ключевые слова: детская литература, исследования португальской детской литературы, португальские исследовательские центры, Галисия, Португалия