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## (Un)certain editing

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**RESUMO:** A existência de uma colecção de mais de 200 textos de teatro manuscritos, conservada na Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, constitui um testemunho riquíssimo para a História do Teatro Português. Os textos datados estendem-se por um período de dezassete anos, de 1780 a 1797. Muitos deles estão assinados no final, confirmando que António José de Oliveira foi o escriba profissional responsável pela quase totalidade das cópias. Trata-se de um corpus extenso e eclético, em que estão representados nomes ilustres das letras nacionais (António Ferreira, Alexandre António de Lima, Domingos dos Reis Quita, etc.) e estrangeiras (Goldoni, Metastasio, Gessner, Calderón de la Barca, etc.). Este corpus integra textos de condição ecdótica diversa, que colocam questões pertinentes do ponto de vista editorial. A este respeito, interessa-nos, sobretudo, determinar algumas das implicações da edição digital na sua abordagem.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** História do Teatro em Portugal; manuscritos; século XVIII; variantes textuais; edição digital.

**ABSTRACT:** The existence of a collection of more than two hundred eighteenth-century manuscripts at the National Library of Portugal is quite a treat for the History of Portuguese Theatre. The texts were written from 1780 to 1797, and a large number is signed at the end, confirming that António José de Oliveira was the professional scribe responsible for most copies. This is a significant and eclectic corpus, as it comprehends well known names from national (António Ferreira, Alexandre António de Lima, Domingos dos Reis Quita, etc.) and foreign literature (Goldoni, Metastasio, Gessner, Calderón de la Barca, etc.). Texts also vary in their ecdotic status, posing specific editorial challenges. This article considers how digital editing changes our approach to this collection of manuscripts.

**KEYWORDS:** Theatre History in Portugal; manuscripts; eighteenth century; textual variants; digital edition.

Thirty four “in oitavo” volumes of plays are kept at the National Library of Portugal. They were copied between 1780 and 1797 by António José de Oliveira, someone who usually signs his copies, and about whom very little is known, apart from the fact that he was somehow related to the printing process of those works, as some official documents from the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória] attest. Each volume contains five or six texts. The majority are in Portuguese (some are bilingual, i.e., also in Italian), and among the authors there are names like Goldoni, Arnaud, Guarini, Martinelli, Gessner and Cañizares, an evidence of a very eclectic selection. Each of the manuscript volumes seems arbitrary, mixing genres (comedy, tragedy, drama, farce, etc.) without showing any visible set of criteria.

This corpus of works has never been studied as a whole. Including a total of 207 texts, ranging from Portuguese originals (some of them single textual witnesses) to translations/adaptations (at the time the concept involved a larger extent of changes than what is commonly expected today) from Italian, French, Spanish, and German. In some cases, as in *O Mágico de Salerno*, a play in five “parts”, the play gains an extra part: in the collection this play has six parts, but the Spanish original has only five, which means that something will have to be edited. But the issue at stake is: what and how?

To provide an answer, the editor could be tempted to consider date as a major criterion, but there are a significant number of plays with no date. Another possibility would be genre, which, in turn, would lead to editing texts whose ecdotic status is very distinct, some of which are single witnesses while others follow closely some print source, for instance. To go forward into complexity, there are other copies by António José de Oliveira disseminated in several collections, such as the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória] and Library Manuscripts at Torre do Tombo National Archive. Although, for the sake of unity, this corpus relies on theatrical texts, at the same time, it raises a number of problems due to its extension and variety, a most eloquent sample of the intense stage activity during the second half of the eighteenth century in Portugal.

With this paper I want to make a point about crucial editing decisions, especially noticeable when dealing with a large body of texts. Whether in paper or in digital format, the editor must attend to several criteria, such as text status, genres, sources, languages involved, the boundaries between translation and adaptation, etc., in order to know what is worth editing and how, and develop an adequate critical apparatus to reach the reader. In the paragraphs above I briefly characterized a challenge posed by more than two hundred diverse manuscripts of plays that must be approached by looking for convergence. In what follows I shall be discussing strategies to find a fruitful common ground in this ‘fictional forest’ within our hands.

The second half of the eighteenth century is marked by intense theatrical activity, with several venues – Teatro da Rua dos Condes, Teatro do Bairro Alto, Teatro do Salitre, Teatro de Salvaterra, Teatro de Queluz, Teatro de S. Carlos – producing a repertory that included Spanish and, gradually, more and more Italian plays, with the rise of new genres combining music and drama, such as «opera» and «burleta» [farce]. Authors like Goldoni, Metastasio, Apolo Zeno, Guarini were very much appreciated. The number of translations/adaptations increased but performances in Italian were also common. All theatrical activity was regulated and controlled by the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória], since every company, theatre manager or printer had to ask for a license to perform a text on stage or to publish it in print. In spite of these licensing restrictions, theatre production intensified and was increasingly prosperous.

By this time, António José de Oliveira was registered as a member of a society in which people earned money by copying several types of texts for different purposes. An excerpt from the introduction of *Teatro cómico português*, published in 1744, sheds some light on this practice:

Por satisfazer ao desejo de uns e outros, tomei a empresa de as ajuntar e faze-las imprimir com o título de Teatro cómico português, para que com facilidade e sem o dispêndio que as cópias manuscritas fazem pudessem todos gozar de umas Obras tão apetecidas por singulares.

[To satisfy everyone, I took the initiative of collecting them under the title of *Teatro cómico português*, so that everyone could easily enjoy such desirable works without the expense manuscript copies bring about.]

The reference to the amount of money involved in obtaining a manuscript copy cannot be separated from the consistent labour our scribe carried out for several years during the later part of the eighteenth century. By looking at payments made by Teatro do Bairro Alto, around the 1770s (National Library of Portugal, COD. 7178), we can see that manuscript copies of the comedies were a regular expense, which cost between 1200 and 2400 réis, when copy of roles was also contemplated. Examining other theatres' bookkeeping of the time, I have found in documents related to the Queluz theatre further references to money paid to scribes in October of 1773 (Torre do Tombo National Archive, Casa Real, nº 3005):

Para pagar ao copista João Bernardo a cópia de música para a capela, carregada na conta geral deste ano: oito mil e duzentos réis.

[To pay the scribe João Bernardo the copy of the music for the chapel, included in the general expense of this year: eight thousand and two hundred réis.]

What is most striking about this example is the explicit reference to the name of the scribe, as it must be noted that most of payments related to copies made no reference to the name of the copyist. At Torre do Tombo National Archive, there is even more documentation related to the subject (Casa Real, nº 3003). Consulting an index of artist's names hired by the court, under the name of António Bernardo, one can read:

Tomado para copista da ópera em o primeiro de Abril de 1767, com o ordenado de duzentos e trinta mil e quatrocentos réis por ano, pagos de seis em seis meses, que fazem 19.200 réis por mês. Por falecer o dito António Bernardo foi sua majestade servida fazer mercê a seu filho José Maria de Almeida de ficar continuando no mesmo exercício de copista que servia o dito seu pai; e com o mesmo ordenado que este tinha de 19.200 réis por mês, com obrigação de copiar todas as músicas que lhe forem ordenadas para o real serviço...

[Hired as opera copyist in the first of April of 1767, with the salary of two hundred and thirty thousand and four hundred réis per year, paid every six months, which amounts to 19.200 réis monthly. Because the aforementioned António Bernardo died, our royal majesty has decided to grant a favour to his son José Maria de Almeida of keeping his father's place; and with the same salary of 19.200 réis per month, with the obligation of copying all the music that shall be given for royal service...]

This is a copy of a contract for a scribe who will be hired at the service of the court for a certain amount of time. Because the titular of the contract died, his son took on the responsibilities inherent to the function. This document assembles copies of contracts for various performers (dancers, musicians, etc). Therefore, one must consider the professionalization of scribe activity a fact. Analyzing Oliveira's copies, there are some clear signs of this, as he follows a convention in the layout of the title, characters and date of the copy in the manuscripts front pages, adds some repetitive adornment to it and signs in the end. These characteristics also make his hand very easily recognizable.

Moreover, about António José de Oliveira, we also know, as we search the *History of Portuguese Theatre* online project (<http://www.fl.ul.pt/CETHTP>), developed by the Centre for Theatre Research, that he presented requests to the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória] in order to obtain a license to print *Telégono na Trácia ou O exemplo do amor e da amizade* (1772) e *Laura Reconhecida* (1781). It has also been possible to collect a number of other titles from Oliveira's manuscripts, which had been submitted to the same institution asking for a license but on someone else's behalf: *O Fidalgo Calouro* (1772); *O Pródigo* (1782); *O Amo Irresoluto e o Criado Fiel* (1783); *A Donzela Virtuosa* (1786); and *O Heróico Lusitano* (1788, 1791), all at Torre do Tombo. Comparing texts kept at the National Library with the ones at Torre do Tombo National

Archive, I came to the conclusion that there is not a single duplication. Going back to the five titles just mentioned above, I must point out a curious circumstance relating to two of them. In the front page of *O Heróico Lusitano* manuscript there is an erased sentence “Copiada aos 18 de Fevereiro de 1788” (“Copied February 18, 1788”) as the request to print the comedy is from August 1791; the incomplete manuscript of *Donzela Virtuosa* also has the indication “Copiada aos 8 de Abril de 1786” (“Copied April 8, 1786”) but there is a register concerning the entry of a licensing request dated again from August 1791. The name submitting the two titles is the same: José Joaquim de Azevedo. He submitted at least seven titles to the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória], all of them during 1791. Only two of them are not listed in Oliveira’s works. It can be added that José Joaquim de Azevedo wasn’t a printer, but on the other hand he could have been a bookseller or a theatre manager.

The historical information compiled until now can be summarized as follows: a) the second half of the eighteenth century is characterized by an immense theatrical activity in Portugal, with several major theatres staging new plays, new genres like opera flourishing, intense printing activity, and the professional establishment of copyists; b) Oliveira presented requests to the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória], in spite of being a mere copyist, for there is no evidence that he might have been an author, translator, bookseller, printer or otherwise involved in theatre production; c) Oliveira’s copies were submitted to the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória], on someone else’s behalf; and in one particular case, with the circumstance of the erasure of the manuscript’s original date.

As said before, the corpus is constituted by 34 volumes of plays, ranging from 1780 to 1797, a considerable number of which are not dated. We are dealing mainly with translations/ adaptations, from Italian, Spanish, French, English, and German originals. The authors in question include Goldoni, Metastasio, Apostolo Zeno, Molière, Voltaire, Arnaud, Gessner, Canizares, Salvo y Vela, Calderón de la Barca, Perez de Montalbán, Guarini, Young, and others. There are also a number of Portuguese originals, introducing authors such as Jerónima Luísa da Silveira, from whom I haven’t been able to trace any other textual witness. About this collection Costa Miranda (1976, pp. 6-7) has conveniently summed up:

Das colecções de manuscritos que se conservam nos Reservados da Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa e hão-de interessar ao inventário a que aludo, ganhará um especial relevo a colecção de peças originais e traduções em português, constituída por 34 volumes, onde os textos dramáticos (possivelmente, diversas versões originais mas, também, várias cópias de versões originais) se agrupam sem qualquer critério: de géneros ou de temas; cronológico ou alfabético. Alguns dos textos que a colecção nos oferece ajudam a traçar, por exemplo, de um modo mais claro, as coordenadas rela-



tivas à presença, em Portugal, no século XVIII, do teatro de Goldoni ou do teatro de outro libretista, Apostolo Zeno, enquanto nos podem encaminhar para estudos mais amplos sobre a repercussão, entre nós, e por esse tempo, do teatro de Metastasio, com informações a não desprezar acerca da audiência concedida a algumas páginas então lidas ou ouvidas.

[From the manuscripts collections that are kept at the National Library and will be of interest to the inventory I am referring, a collection of original plays and Portuguese translations, in a total of 34 volumes, will deserve special attention; the texts (possibly, several original versions but also several copies of original versions are arbitrarily joined, with no criteria as genre, theme, chronology or alphabetic order. Some of the texts help to restore the presence in Portugal, during the XVIII century, of plays by Goldoni or Apostolo Zeno, and at the same time they can take us to more general studies, concerning, for instance, the impact of Metastasio works in Portugal, providing information about the reception of passages read or seen in performance.]

The nature of the manuscripts by António José de Oliveira, the most resilient theatre copyist I have found so far, suggests a number of possible editorial approaches. More than two hundred years have gone by and Portuguese texts like *Nova e Verdadeira História do Triunfo da Rainha do Volso* (Jerónima Luísa da Silveira) and *Comédia Nova Intitulada O Vassalo Mais Fiel no Cerco de Guimarães* may have never been published in print. Apparently, Oliveira's copies are the only known witnesses. For these instances, editorial decisions seem easy: digitalization of manuscript copies and an accessible edition, with normalized orthography and punctuation seem in order. Considering the absence of conflicting witnesses, a joint book and online edition would be the best way of bringing those titles into the History of Portuguese Theatre. While the printed book would make unpublished texts available for general readers, the electronic version would make them useful for textual research and theatre studies.

I have started my reflexion on editing this corpus at the straightforward end, because cases like those are easy to weigh and decide upon. We also have printed texts and their manuscript copies: *A melhor dita de Amor*, printed in 1745, copied in 1796; *O cinto mágico*, printed in 1768, copied in 1793; and *Auto sacramental da degolação de S. João Baptista intitulado Há mortes que dão mais vida*, printed in 1752, and copied in 1784. In this last title, comparing pamphlet and manuscript, we find something to note in the list of characters: there is a character Soul [Alma] in the first but not in the second. Nevertheless there are no major differences to show when comparing pamphlets and manuscripts, only some transcription variants like «dai» in the printed material and «dar» in the manuscript of *S. João Baptista*.

There is an exception though in these pairs of printed and manuscript copies: the comedy *O Criado Astucioso*. We have listed the existence of an *entremez* with the same title, published in 1776, but the resemblance ends there, because Oliveira's manuscript copy from 1781 is completely different, starting with the characters. This may lead to the conclusion that even if we don't consider genre distinction very rigorous at the time, we should pay special attention to the *entremez/comédia* contrast, since there is only one *entremez* in Oliveira's collection, and national comedy had been a topic of debate since, at least, the sixteenth century (see, for instance, the prologue in Sá de Miranda's *Os Estrangeiros*). To further comment on this *entremez/comédia* contrast, it is worthwhile referring that the texts copied by Oliveira are of some extension (more than thirty pages), so they don't fit in one of the main features attributed to the «Teatro de Cordel» ["Chapbook Theatre"], and in particular to the *entremez* genre. This remark can be of some importance when thinking about different audiences in the eighteenth century. We must also clarify that the time distance between the pamphlet and a certain copy by António José de Oliveira is not indicative of reprinting – so far, I have not found a correlation between this later date and new printed material.

At this end of the spectrum of editorial decisions, editing manuscript copies would be the same as editing the pamphlets. In this context, the digitalization of manuscripts and pamphlets is required to make them accessible for various purposes of study more than for reading with a narrative continuity. The majority of the pamphlets are in good state. Normalizing their spelling and punctuation does not seem so urgent in my point of view. Of course, one could think of a project involving the edition in book form of this group of pamphlets, possibly an edition organized around a thematic principle.

In between those two textual situations (i.e., single manuscripts without print versions, on the one hand, and manuscripts that closely follow print versions, on the other), we find the more complex cases: titles which have more than one manuscript witness, such as *Mafoma*, by Voltaire, *O Mágico de Salerno*, from Juan Salvo y Vela, *Lauso*, by Henrique José de Castro, *O Barbeiro de Sevilha*, from Beaumarchais, and *A Vingança e Busiris*, by Edward Young.

There are four manuscripts of *Mafoma*, which is a translation of *Le Fanatisme ou Mahomet, le Prophète*, by Voltaire: two copies from Oliveira at The National Library of Portugal, one at Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, and a fourth belonging to the Royal Censorship Council [Real Mesa Censória] at Torre do Tombo National Archive, which gave way to the 1785 edition by the Royal Academy of Sciences. Although they are all different in their syntax and lexical choices, here I will only address the two manuscript copies by Oliveira.

*Mafoma, o Profeta ou o Fanatismo* was copied in 1786 (<http://purl.pt/16458>), and almost ten years later, in 1795, Oliveira finishes the copy of *Mafoma ou Fanatismo* (<http://purl.pt/16461>). This second text, seems to be a copy of an earlier publication dated from 1775, as the manuscript puts the two years side by side: “l. 1775 C. 1795”.

I selected the beginning and the end of the plays to show their variants:

### 1786

[Acto 1º.; cena 1ª.]

Zopiro e Fanor

Zopiro: A seus falsos prodígios eu render-me?!  
Adorar os embustes de um fanático?!

Adorar os embustes de um fanático?!

Depois de o ter da Meca desterrado

Venerá-lo hoje nela? Não, dos deuses

Caia a justiça sobre mim, se vires

Que esta mão até agora livre e pura

A um rebelde embusteiro afaga e serve.

[Acto 5º.; cena 4ª.]

Mafoma: [...] (Para Omar) E tu deste desastre vergonhoso

A memória sepulta, esconde ao menos

Minha fraqueza, e a minha glória salva

Como um deus reger devo o cego mundo

Se o homem se conhece tudo perco.

### 1795

Acto 1º.

Zopiro e Fanor

Zopiro: E eu hei-de adorar prodígios falsos

E incensar os altares da impostura?!

Um fanático, um monstro, e dentro em Meca!

Eu adorá-lo depois de o haver banido?!

Ah, não, a justa cólera dos deuses

Sinta Zopiro, se tu vires um dia

Esta mão até agora livre e pura

Fomentar sedições.

## [Acto 5º.]

Maforma: [...] Que vergonha, que horror... Amigo encobre  
 Esta fraqueza, e salva a minha glória  
 Adore em mim um deus o cego mundo  
 De outra sorte, arruinou-se o meu império.

The variants show that we are dealing with two translations from the same text, with different lexical and syntactic choices and, consequently, with a different number of lines.

About *O mágico de Salerno* (third part), the copy of Oliveira dates from 1784 (<http://purl.pt/15361>), the one (incomplete) in Rio de Janeiro is from 1793 ([http://bndigital.bn.br/scripts/odwp032k.dll?t=xs&pr=fbn\\_dig\\_pr&db=fbn\\_dig&use=kw\\_livre&disp=list&sort=off&ss=new&arg=comedia&x=10&y=6](http://bndigital.bn.br/scripts/odwp032k.dll?t=xs&pr=fbn_dig_pr&db=fbn_dig&use=kw_livre&disp=list&sort=off&ss=new&arg=comedia&x=10&y=6)), almost a decade later and, in general, they exhibit similar translation choices, but, nevertheless, there are variants to consider, as in the first speech of “Demónio” (cf. “milagrosa” [miraculous] and “maligna” [malign]):

**1784**

Demónio: [...]
   
Depois que essa milagrosa
   
sacra efigie soberana
   
com Pedro obrou o milagre...

**1793**

Demónio: [...]
   
Depois que essa maligna
   
sacra efigie soberana
   
com Pedro obrou o milagre...

Then there are speeches attributed to different characters, a lot of «apartes» [asides] in Oliveira’s copy and not so many in the other, and structurally the division into acts and scenes doesn’t coincide. A curious fact about Oliveira’s copy caught my attention: there are fragments in a different hand, right in the middle of the text; so you have a certain speech by Oliveira and another one by an unknown hand, followed by Oliveira’s handwriting again, which gives us technical clues about how he made his copies. Besides, even when we have a different handwriting, the name of the character who speaks is in Oliveira’s hand.

In relation to *Lauso*, a tragedy by Henrique José de Castro, we must consider three manuscripts: one in the Lisbon Academy of Sciences (Blue Manuscript 336), with no date; another in the Torre do Tombo National Archive (Library Manuscripts, nº 2111), with license to be printed in 1790, and a third one in the National Library (COD. 1374//3), by Oliveira, copied in 1792, all identical, without variants worth mentioning.

From *O Barbeiro de Sevilha* there is also a manuscript at Torre do Tombo (Library Manuscripts, nº 156), a bilingual text, with Italian and Portuguese versions side by side, presenting characters and the names of their respective actors, identifying the author of the music and conductor, stage settings, dance master, stage setting painter, costume maker, and operator of stage machinery, just like the pamphlet by Simão Tadeu Ferreira (Lisboa, 1791). Moreover, at the end of the text there is the license to print conceded on August 8, 1791. The first major difference between this and Oliveira's 1793 copy (<http://purl.pt/15242>) is that this last one is not bilingual, including only the Portuguese version. Instead of introducing all the artists involved in the show, only the list of characters and actors remains, but not in the same order as in the other manuscript and its respective pamphlet. Other textual variants are rare and minor as in a speech by Figaro: (Ms. Torre do Tombo, licensed in 1791), «... com esta ária farei, por certo, portentos»; (Ms. Oliveira, 1793), «... com esta ária farei portentos». In the manuscript from Torre do Tombo, as in the printed text, stage directions appear in footnotes. In Oliveira's 1793 copy, these have been inserted in the text itself.

The only English author in the corpus is Edward Young, with two texts: *Busiris*, first published in 1719, and *The Revenge*, first published in 1721, both originally staged at The Drury Lane, as the Portuguese manuscripts also indicate. The first edition of his dramatic works was printed in 1783, and a year later copies were made by António José de Oliveira (*Busiris* <http://purl.pt/16468>; *The Revenge* <http://purl.pt/16467>). The texts were also printed in one volume, including a letter to Lord Landsdowne, in 1788, by Francisco Borges de Sousa in Lisbon. From the information gathered, in spite of the many editions during the 18th century (*Busiris*: 1719, 1722, 1735, 1761, 1762, 1777, 1781, 1796; *The Revenge*: 1721, 1735, 1755, 1764, 1777, 1780, 1789, 1792, 1800, just to mention some of them), the two tragedies were never collected in the same volume except in their Lisbon publication. The translator was Vicente Carlos de Oliveira. There is another manuscript at Torre do Tombo National Archive, with licence to be printed dated from 28th of April 1785, which uses a different translation, and which starts with the list of characters. In fact, Oliveira's manuscript is the same text printed in 1788.

Only *Lauso* presents three identical copies. The other titles under examination vary from copy to copy in different aspects, as we have seen. Digital editing seems the most effective way of

presenting the texts side by side for comparison, «while viewing data as a living resource for the future rather than a relic of the past» (Kraus, 2011).

Displaying variants in a network of documents is a quality the online edition can naturally accommodate. In fact, the possibility of a digital edition can free us from the imposition of choosing a privileged witness, while leaving others behind. Now the user can be an editor at that level, because that choice can be made by him/her. To display sources in a manageable format is still our task, to elect a single witness as the object of study is no longer our job. What we must strive for is to develop computer tools and a web interface that can make comparison between texts a straightforward operation.

Online publication of his collection will also result in a more precise view about plays in circulation in Portugal and their uses during the 18th century:

...playwright functioned within a broadly collaborative milieu, often drawing upon a common stock of available materials. The written playtext was released into a theatrical realm where it was subject to alteration by a variety of different agents, for a variety of different purposes. (Murphy, 2000, p. 200)

As Andrew Murphy has argued about the Renaissance playwright, the circulation of plays among authors, translators, booksellers, printers, copyists, and theatre managers –, a corpus of texts in which translations from Spanish, French, and, mostly, Italian occupied a special place – provide an image of the collaborative milieu of Portuguese theatre in the eighteenth century. The copies made by António José de Oliveira are part of that milieu and, for now, we tend to organize them in terms of their ecdotic condition, i.e., the way they relate to other texts and further documentation. The access to this repertory must be made in such a way as to give the user the possibility of retrieving the metonymic relation between texts and the context of their production and reception, gaining, as a result, a point of view about the historical remains of theatrical activity.

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