




## ALEXINA DE MAGALHÃES PINTO: THE EFFERVESCENCE OF NATIONAL CULTURE (2023)

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The book *Cantigas das crianças e do povo e danças populares* was written by Alexina Magalhães Pinto: a teacher, folklorist, and pioneer in the development of teaching methods for children based on popular culture. She was born on July 4, 1869, in São João del Rei-RJ, and passed away on February 17, 1921, in the district of Corrêas, in the city of Petrópolis-RJ, according to research<sup>1</sup> by investigator Rita de Cássia Silva Dionísio Santos (2022). The first version of the book was completed in 1911 and published by Francisco Alves bookstore in 1916. In 2023, it was republished by the library of the Federal Senate, which has a collection of books called *Escritoras do Brasil*, aimed at promoting the work of Brazilian female writers who have little or no presence in literary canons. This initiative brings the work and the author to the public eye to gain the recognition they deserve, considering the book's significant importance to the national cultural context.

This review focuses on the 2023 edition published by the Federal Senate. The book, which is a compilation of popular songs, is divided into the following sections: “Cantigas; Cantigas dos pretos; Cantigas e danças; Coretos; Coretos de mesa; Coretos de bando de rua; Cantigas jocosas; Cantigas históricas regionais e patrióticas; Notas de apêndices.”

The starting point in the book is the editors' note where they explain the changes made in the new edition compared to the original version. Following this, Flávia Guia Carnevali presents an introduction about the author Alexina de Magalhães Pinto. Next, there is a note from the author Alexina addressed to children, highlighting the dedication and care that the folklorist had for them. Right after, the author provides instructions on how to read the book and how it should be approached to make the content accessible to parents, children, and educators, revealing Alexina's meticulousness with her work. Further on, there is an explanatory note directed to scholars and educators, in which the author expresses her interest in anonymous literature. Additionally, she recounts her journey through the states of: Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo.

The author traveled to these states to collect stories, songs, superstitions, maxims, and recipes from various residents of different ages. Therefore, in order to remain faithful to what she observed and heard during her travels, the author revised her notes to ensure the integrity of the stories.

Throughout the book, the author skilfully provides footnotes indicating the origin of the collected material, highlighting its characteristic points to celebrate Brazilian nationality. In this way, she offers a genuinely national material to art and science enthusiasts, as well as policymakers. Alexina states that

*In observing the indifference of those who can do everything for the spiritual nourishment that childhood craves so much; in observing the isolation in which both the seniors and juniors live, it seemed to me that it*

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<sup>1</sup> In recent investigations, the researcher accessed copies of the author's baptismal and death certificates. Based on these documents, she adjusted the date of the author's birth, which had previously been indicated by researchers of Brazilian Children's Literature as 1870.



*would be welcome and ideal, in the current moment of reconstruction and remodelling, to have a vehicle that, by binding them both, would bring these **two** living factors closer to national progress (Pinto, 2023, p. 20).*

The connection of her work with the process of nationalization would occur through “simple common pleasures; through the reciprocity of interests, taking advantage of the materials provided by the races that constituted the foundation of the national homeland” (Pinto, 2023, p. 20). However, the author questions the possibility of reconciling the demands of scholars, who advocated for “absolute truth” and pedagogical mission, with the interests of belief and folklore, revealing, through her research, the reasons for divergences in relating the pedagogical mission with folklore, such as: *bad, harmful, condemnable subjects in children’s mouths*.

Therefore, Alexina sought a solution to the problem of pedagogical interaction with folklore. When compiling the songs, the author took on responsibilities to ensure a smooth relationship, including “Language errors and archaisms,” explained with notes about their origins; the “Faulty metric,” which she respected, given that the variety of metrics is one of the charms of modern poetry; the verses’ “Rhythms,” some of which she altered since they did not match those of the songs; the “Titles of compositions,” which she used freely; the “Names of authors,” which, according to the author, should always be remembered.

As mentioned earlier, the book is divided into parts, with the first dedicated to various songs, presenting her variations in some verses. Some of these songs are still sung today, demonstrating the importance of the work done by the folklorist. Among these songs are “João corta pau,” “A baratinha,” “Terezinha de Jesus,” and “Pai José,” the latter belonging to the “*Cantigas dos pretos*,” illustrating the cultural diversity of the time.

In the second part of the book, the author presents “*Cantigas e danças*,” some of which have notes with moral lessons, aligning with Alexina’s pedagogical interest. In this part of the book, there are also notes aimed at teaching the music and dance of the songs, emphasizing Alexina’s focus on education and care for the playful aspect.

The book’s edition published by the Federal Senate preserves some linguistic features of the original version, such as: proper names in other languages that were common for the time. However, for better comprehension by contemporary readers, the book has been edited according to current grammatical rules. In addition to the author’s notes, there are editors’ notes in the footnotes to separate them from the ones written by Alexina. As such, the editors’ notes were marked as N.E. Another distinctive feature introduced by the current edition is the use of QR codes, allowing readers to listen to the instrumental sound of the songs in the book, enhancing the experience with a more playful and attractive element.

In this new version, the editors have provided lists of references consulted and used in the composition of the work, aiming to deliver a more comprehensive version. They incorporated the work of scholars who have researched the author, many of whom are contemporary researchers that have contributed their studies over the years to provide a more integrated content. This inclusion serves to place the author and her work within the academic sphere.

In these terms, it is important to emphasize that with the republication of Alexina’s book, the author’s name is brought to the forefront in contemporary times. For a long time, the writer was forgotten and marginalized by history and literary canon, a process referred to as “*Memoricídio*” by Constância Lima Duarte in her book *Memorial do Memoricídio* (2022). This term involves the assassination of memory and culture, and it can also denote the denial and oppression of women and their contributions throughout history. Thus, by republishing the book, it became possible to revive the memory, work, and legacy of a woman who played a significant role in the history of national culture, Brazilian folklore, and pedagogy.



In summary, the book *Cantigas das crianças e do povo e danças populares* (2023) contains erudite language, although it is more accessible due to the editing changes made by the Federal Senate. This edition aims to provide readers with a complete immersion by: using sheet music to accompany the songs; implementing QR codes that contain the instrumental parts of the songs; and using illustrations. Therefore, the work becomes more playful and appealing to children, parents, and educators, enabling a multimodal reading experience.

In this way, *Cantigas das crianças e do povo e danças populares* (2023) is a comprehensive and valuable book for children's literature and education, given that right from its first publication in 1916, the author used methods to allow readers more immersive and fantastic ways to read the work. The current version is even more extensive, due to the Federal Senate having facilitated full reader engagement and learning of the songs by using current technological resources.

Despite the period in which she lived, Alexina de Magalhães Pinto was a forward-thinking woman, as she always sought better teaching methods for children, having put into practice what she believed in, and having provided her students with experiences that boosted their socio-educational development while not neglecting the playful aspect of "being a child." In this perspective, Alexina embraced national culture, although she did not completely break free from the regenerative and civilizing discourse. Still, the author aimed to incorporate and spread the idea that national popular culture, folklore, and pedagogy could relate and generate positive outcomes. This can be seen in the reedition of the book *Cantigas das crianças e do povo e danças populares* (2023).

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Cover of the 1916 version of the book *Cantigas das crianças e do povo e danças populares*, by Alexina de Magalhães.

#### DECLARAÇÃO ÉTICA

CONFLITO DE INTERESSE: Nada a declarar. FINANCIAMENTO: Nada a declarar.



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