



## Children's Literature according to Fernando de Azevedo<sup>1</sup>

A Literatura Infantil, segundo Fernando de Azevedo

Literatura Infantil, por Fernando de Azevedo

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### Abstract

Although different aspects of Fernando de Azevedo's work and career (1894-1974) have been the object of studies that show his decisive contributions to sociology, education and culture in Brazil, his reflections on children's literature remain unexplored. In order to contribute to the understanding of this aspect of this eminent Brazilian intellectual's work, this paper analyzes the textual configuration of the essay "A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica" [Children's literature from a sociological perspective], published in 1952 in the *Sociologia* journal, of the São Paulo School of Sociology and Politics, and republished in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1953, of the book *A educação e seus problemas* [Education and its problems] (Melhoramentos). This analysis is based on the hypothesis that there is a relationship between this essay and the (political) project of educational renewal in Brazil and the history of Brazilian sociology, education and production on children's literature, in which the essay is considered a classic.

**Key words:** Fernando de Azevedo; Children's literature; History of education.

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## Resumo

Embora diferentes aspectos da obra e da atuação de Fernando de Azevedo (1894-1974) venham sendo objeto de estudos que evidenciam suas decisivas contribuições para a sociologia, a educação e a cultura no Brasil, ainda estão inexploradas suas reflexões sobre literatura infantil. Com o objetivo de contribuir para a compreensão desse aspecto da obra do eminente intelectual brasileiro, analisa-se, neste artigo, a configuração textual do ensaio “A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica”, publicado em 1952, na revista *Sociologia*, da Escola de Sociologia e Política da São Paulo, e republicado, na terceira edição, de 1953, do livro *A educação e seus problemas* (Melhoramentos). A análise se baseia na hipótese de sua relação com o projeto (político) de renovação educacional no Brasil e com a história da sociologia, da educação e da produção brasileira sobre literatura infantil, em que o ensaio figura como um clássico.

**Palavras-chave:** Fernando de Azevedo; Literatura infantil; História da educação

## Resumen

Aunque diferentes aspectos del trabajo y la actuación de Fernando de Azevedo (1894-1974) han sido objeto de estudios que muestran sus contribuciones decisivas a la sociología, la educación y la cultura en Brasil, sus reflexiones sobre la literatura infantil aún no han sido exploradas. Para contribuir a la comprensión de este aspecto de la obra del eminente intelectual brasileño, este artículo analiza la configuración textual del ensayo "A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica", publicado en 1952, en la revista *Sociología*, de la Escuela de Sociología y Política de São Paulo, y republicado, en la tercera edición, 1953, del libro *A educação e seus problemas* (Melhoramentos). El análisis se basa en la hipótesis de su relación con el proyecto (político) de renovación educativa en Brasil y con la historia de la sociología, la educación y la producción brasileña de literatura infantil, en la que el ensayo aparece como un clásico.

**Palabras clave:** Fernando de Azevedo; Literatura infantil; Historia de la educación.

Recebido em: abril 2019

Aprovado para publicação em: agosto 2019

## Introduction

The essay “A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica” [Children’s literature from a sociological perspective] by Fernando de Azevedo (1894-1974) was published in March 1952, in vol. XIV, No. 1, *Sociologia* journal, of the São Paulo School of Sociology and Politics (ESPSP). It was republished in 1953<sup>2</sup> with the title “A formação e a conquista do público infantil (A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica)” [The development and conquest of the child audience (Children’s literature from a sociological perspective)], in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the book *A educação e seus problemas* [Education and its Problems] (Melhoramentos).

In 1952, Azevedo was already a Brazilian intellectual of great prestige and undeniable authority, which accrued from the effects and recognition of his work as an educator, sociologist, administrator, editor and writer. Since the 1980s, this recognition has been repeated and deepened by academic studies, especially in the fields of (the history of) education and sociology, focused on different aspects of his work and professional career. However, his reflections on children’s literature are still demanding specific studies<sup>3</sup>. Even though it may seem a merely circumstantial and minor aspect, this “special problem” (AZEVEDO, 1952) is organically related to the set of problems in the fields of Brazilian education and culture addressed by Azevedo, as well as being related to the Brazilian production on children’s literature that preceded and succeeded the essay under study.

What may have been the reasons and purpose of this renewed Brazilian intellectual when he addressed children’s literature in an essay published in a sociology journal and later republished it in a book on education? What place can be assigned to this theme in the whole of this work and in the history of the Brazilian production on children’s literature? Why this essay may be considered a pioneering work on this topic and a classic among studies addressing children’s literature in Brazil?

These are the main guiding questions for the reflections presented in this paper, the objective of which is to understand potential meanings of this essay by analyzing its textual configuration<sup>4</sup>, based on the hypothesis that it is related to the (political) project of educational renewal in Brazil, of which Fernando de Azevedo was a protagonist and one of the main proponents, and related to the history of education, sociology and the Brazilian production on children’s literature, a context in which the essay may be considered a classic.

## Fernando de Azevedo: aspects of his life and work

Over the course of his long and intense professional career, over four decades, this classically educated intellectual, who “[...] was gradually catching up with the social thinking of his time and with the need of scientific foundation” (PENNA, 2010, p. 15), stood out as: a Latin language and literature high school teacher and as a college sociology professor; a specialist in physical education; newspaper writer and literary critic; director and

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<sup>2</sup>1953 is the year of publication that appears in the copies of the book’s 3<sup>rd</sup> edition and there is no indication of reprinting. In the list of the author’s complete work (reported in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition), 1952 appears as the year of publication for the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. 1953 is probably the correct year and the discrepancy in dates due to a possible mismatch between the book’s editorial schedule and its release. For the analysis, we consider the essay to have been published originally in the journal and republished (with the same content) in the book. This hypothesis is also based on a comparison between different titles assigned to the essay. In the book, the title of the essay is followed by title in the journal, which appears in italics and between parentheses. This may be interpreted as the subheading or a citation to indicate it was a reproduction.

<sup>3</sup> Studies conducted by Penna, Piletti, Monarcha and Vidal only scarcely mention this aspect.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of textual configuration designates a set of aspects that confers uniqueness to a text and that are responsible for its meaning. The method of analysis is based on this concept in which one considers not only the text content, but also its author, intended readers, motives, purposes, social place and historical time period when it was produced. For more information, see mainly Magnani (1993) and Mortatti (2000).

administrator of education and teaching institutions and agencies; president of a scientific society; editor and writer. He received important honors, titles, and awards for this varied work and professional career, especially the “Machado de Assis Award”, from the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (ABL) [Brazilian Academy of Letters], in 1945, for his work, in particular for his book *A cultura brasileira* [Brazilian Culture].

In the words of Paschoal Lemme ([1976]/2004, p. 169), Azevedo “[...] was, undoubtedly, one of the highest expressions of intelligence and culture of modern Brazil”. Among the most “[...] meaningful moments of this extraordinary fruitful life”, Lemme highlights:

[...] 1<sup>st</sup>) The great reform of education in the old Federal District (1927-1930), of which Fernando de Azevedo was the leader, as the director of Public Instruction, [...] 2<sup>nd</sup>) *O Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* [Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education] (1932), written by Fernando de Azevedo, the only document addressing the history of Brazilian education, which outlined the guidelines for education in Brazil, to be adopted by the 1930 Revolution. [...] 3<sup>rd</sup>) The monumental work *A cultura brasileira* [Brazilian Culture], initially written to introduce the 1940 census, became mandatory reading for those interested in learning about Brazilian culture in all its aspects. (p. 170)

From an administrative point of view, the reform of the public instruction in the Federal District in 1927, named after him, was one of his first and most important deeds. The invitation to direct the Federal District Public Instruction certainly came from the efficient work he had performed in the previous year, at the request of the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, and resulted in the “Inquérito sobre a Instrução Pública em São Paulo” [Public Instruction Survey in São Paulo] (AZEVEDO, 1926/1960)<sup>5</sup>, which “[...] launched Fernando de Azevedo as the great expert in education. At this time, he embarked as a self-taught individual on the paths of sociology and of the problems of education because he felt these were of the most urgent for Brazil.” (PENNA, 2010, p. 15). In the “Survey”, the objective of which was to collect information on public instruction in the state of São Paulo, Azevedo

[...] did not simply dwell on the technical-pedagogical aspects [of education]; his concern was to forge a political and educational project in the terms expressed by the “group of the Estado”, meeting the elites’ expectations in regard to education.[...] In it, Fernando de Azevedo stated that the main problem of public instruction in São Paulo and in Brazil was a lack of a clear and complete educational policy that would play the role of training the elites [intellectual individuals]. (TOTTI, 2009 p. 54)

In his inaugural speech as Director-General of Public Instruction for the Federal District, he proposed to redo a school census as one of his initial lines of work. The objective was to get into touch with the educational structure in Rio de Janeiro, collect data and, later, outline a program of ideas and analysis capable to solve the problems of education in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Rio de Janeiro press strongly opposed the census. The newspapers at the time — *O Globo*, *A Manhã* and *Correio da Manhã* — frontally attacked the idea. The main opposing arguments were based on the uselessness of the measure and a waste of resources considering a

<sup>5</sup> This survey was published in 1937, with the title *A educação em São Paulo: problemas e discussões* [Education in São Paulo: problems and discussions] (AZEVEDO, 1937), and was incorporated into Azevedo’s complete works, by Melhoramentos, with the title *A educação na encruzilhada: problemas e discussões* [Education at a crossroad: problems and discussions]. Survey for the *O Estado de S. Paulo* in 1926.

census had been already performed by the Statistics Directorate in 1920, and data had not changed substantially. The criticism increased when, to direct the census, Azevedo formalized the invitation to an educator, journalist and writer from São Paulo, Sud Menucci. The invitation was criticized by *Jornal do Brasil* (RJ), both because Azevedo did not find a technician from Rio de Janeiro for the task and due to the fact that Sud Menucci had little or no knowledge of the Federal District (PILETTI, 1982, p. 34). The results of the census, published in April 1927, in addition to showing great disparities from the 1920 census, enabled Azevedo to become familiar with the precarious situation of Rio de Janeiro's public instruction and promote what was called a "revolution in education" (AZEVEDO, 1971).

After returning to the city of São Paulo in 1931, other large-scale activities took place along Azevedo's trajectory.

He was the editor and first signer of the document *A reconstrução educacional no Brasil: Ao povo e ao governo: manifesto dos pioneiros da educação nova* [Educational reconstruction in Brazil: to the people and to the government: a manifesto of the pioneers of new education] published in March 19<sup>th</sup> 1932<sup>6</sup>, upon which the bases and guidelines of a new educational policy were laid. As is well known, this doctrinal and educational policy document (SAVIANI, 2008, p. 251) caused a great impact, through which a new school movement was initiated, led by three "education cardinals"<sup>7</sup> — Fernando de Azevedo, Anísio Teixeira and Lourenço Filho. Its signatories articulated concerns with education, the political debate around the nation's modernizing project, and the objective conditions for the action, created with the implementation of the "Nova República"/"Era Vargas" [New Republic/Vargas Era] and notably after the creation of the Ministry of Education and Health in 1930. These intellectuals occupied a prominent "[...] social and political place [...] in the public debate about education", and contributed to "thickening the New School formula" (VIDAL, 2013, p. 582, 587), based on the principle of public, secular, free and compulsory public education, which synthesized one of the pillars of the

[...] dispute over controlling the state apparatus and to establish the direction of the Brazilian education, [which] tended to narrow the relations between a broad pedagogical ideal, the defense of a conception of an educator State and the re-composition of the educators' front in the dynamic of defections and new alliances. The New School ended up being a movement and established the frontiers of a battle, opposing from pioneers to Catholics. (VIDAL, 2013, p. 582-583)

In December 1932, Azevedo was appointed the Director-General of Public Instruction of the state of São Paulo, a position in which he remained up to July 1933. In 1947, he held the position of Secretary of Education and Public Health. In this position, he implemented the teaching of Sociology in all Normal Schools of the state and developed the *Código de Educação do Estado de São Paulo* [São Paulo State Education Code].

<sup>6</sup> Hereafter, we will use only "*Manifesto*" or "*Manifesto* from 1932" to refer to this document. *Manifesto* included 26 signatories, who composed a group of influential figures of Brazilian culture": 1. Fernando de Azevedo (writer); 2. Afrânio Peixoto; 3. Antônio Sampaio Dória; 4. Anísio Spinola Teixeira; 5. Manoel Bergström Lourenço Filho; 6. Edgard Roquete-Pinto; 7. José Getúlio da Frota Pessoa; 8. Júlio de Mesquita Filho; 9. Raul Briquet; 10. Mário Casassanta; 11. Carlos Delgado de Carvalho; 12. Antônio Ferreira de Almeida Júnior; 13. J. P. Fontenelle; 14. Roldão Lopes de Barros; 15. Noemy M. da Silveira; 16. Hermes Lima; 17. Atílio Vivacqua; 18. Francisco Venâncio Filho; 19. Paulo Maranhão; 20. Cecília Meireles; 21. Edgar Süsskind de Mendonça; 22. Armada Álvaro Alberto; 23. Garcia de Rezende; 24. Nóbrega da Cunha; 25. Paschoal Lemme; 26. Raul Gomes." (LEMME, [1976]/2004, p. 100).

<sup>7</sup> This epithet was developed by Afrânio Peixoto in reference to "[...] four exponents of the Brazilian national education [...]: Carneiro Leão, Fernando de Azevedo, Anísio Teixeira and Lourenço Filho [...]." (LEMME, [1976]/2004, p. 99).

At least two other of Azevedo's contributions should be highlighted: his participation in the process of founding and consolidating the University of São Paulo (USP) in 1934 and his work as writer and editor.

In 1933, he was the founder and first dean of the Institute of Education of São Paulo (in the following year it was incorporated into USP) and worked as a professor of Educational Sociology of this institute's School of Teachers. In 1934, he was the "foundation stone" (Candido apud PENNA, 2010, p. 18) in the creation of USP and idealization of the Institute of Education and School of Philosophy, of which he was the dean, and taught Educational Sociology, standing out "[...] as a tireless fighter for the implementation of the true *university spirit*, fully identified with the School of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters as the University's *anima mater*." (PILETTI, 1994, p.183, emphasis in the original).

No less important was his work as a writer and editor. Between 1920 and 1971, Azevedo published more than two dozen books on language and literature, sociology and education, in addition to essays, papers, prefaces, and collaborative/co-authored texts. His "monumental work" (PENNA, 2010), *A cultura brasileira* [Brazilian Culture] was finished in 1943, after he published a theoretical systematization that he used as a reference to select the main problems and organize concepts such as "science", "culture", "civilization" and "education" (XAVIER, 1998), establishing an interpretation of Brazil and Brazilian social thinking. He notes his attraction to the craft of writing in his speech to ABL, in 1945.

From the time of my youth, I felt attracted to the craft of writing, as you can see from the 25 volumes of my *Obras Completas* [Complete Works]. If I was told that classes had been suspended, I did not suffer because I couldn't teach them, though I've always taught my regular or extraordinary courses with pleasure. But my sadness was not small when the hours I used to write were taken from me. That is why, I believe, that even though I am a sociologist and an Education politician, who has been deeply involved in so many reforms, before anything, you turned your attention to my life and work as a writer when you decided to elect me to join you. (AZEVEDO, ([1945]/1968)

In 1931, he started working as the editor of Companhia Editora Nacional (SP), where he founded and organized the Biblioteca Pedagógica Brasileira [Brazilian Pedagogical Library] Collection, serving as its director until 1946. The Biblioteca Pedagógica Brasileira was composed of five series: Children's Literature; Textbooks; Pedagogical Current Affairs; Scientific Initiation; and Brasiliana Collection. In 1961, he ended his participation in public life and retired from his position as a full professor of Sociology at FFCL-USP, after 41 years of teaching. His contributions and work can be assessed from different perspectives. For Penna (2010):

[a] Fernando de Azevedo's original contribution is not only in the affirmation of the principles of the New School, but also in the new purpose attributed to the educational system, and therefore, in the very philosophy from which it came. The problems of education only adjectively are technical problems (administration of educational organization, teaching techniques, etc.), because substantively – Fernando de Azevedo repeated it *ad nauseam* – they are problems of a political, social, economic and philosophical nature. (p. 57)

According to Piletti (1994), Azevedo was "*a man of action*",

[...] above all, a *righteous man*, a *humanist* in the true sense of the word. That is why he was a permanently tormented man [...] who fought for the development of humanism [...] For this reason, Florestan Fernandes, Antônio Cândido and Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, his assistants at USP, can talk about his support to those who worked with him, his active support to his colleagues, leading him to spontaneously appear, though already retired, to closely follow the testimonies of teachers who were summoned to testify in a military police inquiry in 1964. (p. 184, emphasis in the original)

To understand this Brazilian intellectual, one needs to accept the fact that “he is all contradictory”. (Candido apud PENNA, 2010, p. 77). The ambiguity of his thinking is evidenced by “authoritarian reasoning”, based on the idea that “it is up to the elites to guide and direct the masses”, while he “[...] proposes radical, anti-elite reforms and believes in the importance of the historical role of the masses”. (PENNA, 2010, p. 78- 79)

In spite of these contradictions, Azevedo’s importance is undeniable, both in terms of educational reforms and in terms of the intellectual development of a certain interpretation of Brazil, based on his conviction regarding the need to renew and modernize the country through education and culture.

### The essay in the journal

The *Sociologia* journal “[...] was the first Brazilian periodical specializing in Sociology and very soon became recognized inside and outside of Brazil as an important disseminator of the Social Sciences” (NEUHOLD, 2014, p. 183). It was created in 1939 by the personal initiative of Roberto Barreto and Emilio Willems. The journal was published annually until 1966. The following periods or phases are identified in its life cycle:

[the] first phase, prior to 1947, when the journal was officially detached from the Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política (ELSP) [Free School of Sociology and Politics]; and the second, from 1947 onwards, when it becomes the institution’s official body. Fernando Limongi takes the journal’s changes in the school’s direction as a parameter to identify the periodical’s different phases. Hence, there would be three phases: Emílio Willems and Romano Barreto (1939-1948); Oracy Nogueira and Donald Pierson (1949-1957); and Alfonso Trujillo Ferrari (1958-1966). (JACKSON, 2004, p. 263)

The journal was initially named *Sociologia: revista didática e científica* [Sociology: didactic and scientific journal] and in its first phase it was directed to teaching methods and techniques used to teach Sociology, a discipline still incipient in the Brazilian academic context. The idea was to raise contributions from sociology teachers in Normal Schools and regular high schools.

Azevedo’s essay was published in the journal’s “second phase” under the direction of Nogueira and Pierson. At that time, with the journal “[...] being confirmed as the ELSP’s official organ, [...] the presence of USP on its pages decreased considerably”, and “[...] the primary focus of *Sociologia* was the ‘studies of communities’, coordinated by Pierson [...]. The periodical assumes the dissemination of research conducted by ELSP”. (JACKSON, 2004, p. 264)

In this second phase, the journal assumes a more scientific character and the empirical studies it published were important to consolidating the sociological science in Brazil. Another relevant factor is the distinction between studies implemented by the two chairs of Sociology at

USP. Roger Bastide led Sociology I and the tradition of empirical studies was prominent, while Fernando de Azevedo, teaching Sociology II, implemented a “new humanism”, of a more essay-like nature, with theoretical concerns, something that “[...] Sociology I attempted to overcome. Though the professor of Sociology II played an admittedly important historical role in encouraging empirical research in Social Sciences” (PULICI, 2008, p. 82).

The following texts were published in the March 1952 issue: “A ‘história-de-vida’ como técnica de pesquisa” [History of life as research technique] by O. Nogueira; “A cidade de São Paulo no período de 1870-1890 (1)” [The city of São Paulo from 1870-1890] by R. Morse; “A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica” [Children’s literature from a sociological perspective] by F. Azevedo; “Relações raciais em Cruz das Almas” [Racial relationships in Cruz das Almas] by D. Pierson; and “Terminologia de parentesco de Kaingang” [Kaingang’s kinship terminology] by H. Baldus.

Thus, Azevedo was accompanied by other eminent intellectuals from the fields of sociology and anthropology, ethnology and historiography, who were devoted to studying “nobler” and central topics for sociology at the time, with considerable research work required.

### The essay in the book

The book *A educação e seus problemas* [Education and its problems] had four editions: by Companhia Editora Nacional, 1<sup>st</sup> edition in 1937, and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1946; and by Edições Melhoramentos, the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in 1953, and 4<sup>th</sup> edition in 1958, reviewed and enlarged in two tomes, integrating the “Obras completas – volume VIII” [Complete Works – 8<sup>th</sup> volume] by Fernando de Azevedo.

Even though content was unaltered, the (re)publication of the essay, from the book’s third edition, represents a triple displacement: from a direct dialogue with readers from the field of sociology to the field of education; from the journal to the book; and from one publisher to another, namely, from Nacional to Melhoramentos. From the point of view of scientific dissemination, this indicates the scope of intended readers increased, as did the interest in the subject, now getting attention from the field of education. From an editorial point of view, this shows the old relationship established by Azevedo with another eminent intellectual of his generation, Manoel Bergström Lourenço Filho, had been solidified. From the point of view of Azevedo’s formation process and career, these developments reveal not a change in scientific or educational interests, but rather show his desire “[...] to bring together two worlds [of letters and education], which seemed to be almost apart” (AZEVEDO, 1953e<sup>8</sup>, p. 237).

Six out of the eight titles by Azevedo, published for the first time between 1920 and 1930, were edited by Weisflog/Melhoramentos, one by the Companhia Editora Nacional, one by Irmãos Marrano, and one by Nova Era.

In addition to *Manifesto* from 1932, Nacional also published nine books between 1931 and 1943, a time when Azevedo directed the Biblioteca Pedagógica Brasileira Collection, eight of these books in the collection series: five in *Atualidades Pedagógicas* [Pedagogical Current Affairs]; two in *Iniciação Científica* [Scientific Initiation]; and one in *Brasiliana*.

The first two editions of *A educação e seus problemas* [Education and its problems] are part of the series *Atualidades Pedagógicas* [Pedagogical Current Affairs], which became “[...] a space to disseminate the educational conceptions” of Azevedo’s group and “[...] a national reference to the new school, given the strategies of production and dissemination used”, with the objective to “[...] construct a new pedagogical culture, marked by faith in the advancements of the sciences and, specifically, human sciences.” (TOLEDO, [2007]), p. 4-5). For this series, Azevedo

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<sup>8</sup> ABL’s site presents a different version of this speech (AZEVEDO [1945]/1968), which we also consulted.



[p]rogrammed authors and texts originating from the reform promoted by Anísio Teixeira, in the Federal District, between 1931 and 1935; and the reform he promoted himself in São Paulo, in 1933, which designed the institutionalization of the Institute of Education in São Paulo, as well as the authors of the ABE in Rio de Janeiro. He sought to publish texts that dealt with the “basic sciences of education” and the fruits of research developed from new perspectives. For that, he proposed texts and authors of the international movement of the new school to be translated, programming the texts so that Brazilian and international authors would form a cohesive teaching culture designed as a renewal. (TOLEDO, [2007], p. 5)

While directing the Series, in addition to four of his books, books written by Brazilian authors like A. Teixeira, A. Peixoto, D. Carvalho, A. Ramos, Almeida Junior, A. Espinheira, Carneiro Leão, Venâncio Filho and international authors like J. Dewey, E. Claparède, H. Piéron, H. Wallon, A. M. Aguayo, and P. Monroe. R. Nihard were intercalated in the sequence of volumes.

This Azevedo political-educational project and his editorial prestige was “shaken” by the end of the 1930s because of an intervention on part of the Vargas regime and the demobilizing propaganda of Catholic educators, so that “[...] the network of authors he composed was dissolved with a political defeat of part of the project synthesized in Teixeira’s reform in the Federal District, in USP’s Institute of Education and in the design of the School of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters also at USP.” (TOLEDO, [2007], p. 8). With Azevedo’s departure, the Series was then directed by J. B. Damasco Penna, who reformulated the editorial project.<sup>9</sup>

Atualidades Pedagógicas [Pedagogical Current Affairs] was contemporary with other Brazilian and international editorial initiatives, with similar objectives. The Biblioteca de Educação [Education Library] collection published by Melhoramentos stood out in Brazil due to its “pioneering” spirit, where Lourenço Filho<sup>10</sup> — “the publisher’s second ego”, in the words of Hernani Donato — worked intensively as editor, reviewer of children’s books, translator, adapter, preface writer, organizer, advisor of the collections: Biblioteca da Educação (1927) Biblioteca Infantil [Children’s library] (1925) and *Viagem Através do Brasil* [Travel through Brazil] (1934).

A pioneering in the publication of texts to disseminate scientific basis and rational processes of education, according to the French psychologist Henry Piéron, and in agreement with the movement of educational renewal, the Biblioteca da Educação collection was directed by Lourenço Filho, even after his retirement in 1957, up to the time of his death. In this collection, up to 1940, the year of his third book in the collection<sup>11</sup>, books from Brazilian and international authors who stood out in the fields of psychology, sociology and philosophy were published, which were important references to propose and disseminate ideas concerning the movement of educational renewal. Brazilian authors include A. Sampaio Dória, A. Espinheira, M. Teixeira de Freitas. Among international authors, especially from Europe and the United States of America, the authors H. Piéron, E. Claparède, É. Durkheim, A. Binet and T. Simon, J. Dewey, W. Kilpatrick all stand out.

<sup>9</sup> Up to 1978 (year in which the publisher was bought by IBEP), 134 volumes were published in this Series.

<sup>10</sup> About this educator, see other texts gathered at *Por Lourenço Filho: uma biobibliografia* [a bibliography] (2001).

<sup>11</sup> *Tendências da educação brasileira* [Trends of Brazilian education] (v. 29). In 1938, Lourenço Filho assumed the Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos [National Institute of Pedagogical Studies], and this collection inaugurated a new phase, with little expansion of titles and authors.

Even though, perhaps due to circumstantial reasons, *A educação e seus problemas* [Education and its problems] did not integrate the series Atualidades Pedagógicas [Pedagogical Current Affairs] nor the Biblioteca de Educação [Education Library] collection, the reflections addressing children's literature presented and discussed by Azevedo in this book are directly related to the educational and cultural issues at the time, especially in relation to education and sociology.

If, at the time of the publication of the book's first edition, Azevedo was recognized for his work as administrator, professor and writer, especially because of his publications on education and sociology (with eight titles published by Melhoramentos), in the 1940s and 1950s, when the following editions of the book were published, his prestige was already solidified and was even expanded due to recognition in Brazil after he received the ABL award, followed by important publications in the field of sociology and by his work in other important administrative and scientific positions.

The editorial displacement of the third and fourth editions of the book probably foreshadowed the project of Melhoramentos to publish Azevedo's complete works in 25 volumes, the first two of which were published in 1960. This project represented the union, with the same publisher, of Azevedo and Lourenço Filho and their respective editorial projects. Since the 1920s and 1930s, these projects were directly linked to the new school's ideals of renovation and educational and cultural modernization in Brazil. The scientific and educational publications of each of these authors were privileged means, through which teachers, students from Normal Schools and students were reached. Thus were important to the implementation and dissemination of these ideals.

With the publication of the third edition of *A educação e seus problemas* [Education and its problems] by Melhoramentos in the 1950s, the relationship of these two distinguished Brazilian educators was well-established. Together with Anísio Teixeira, they formed a generation of intellectuals, whose professional careers and written production considerably contributed to the Brazilian education at the time, leaving an organizational and scientific legacy still valid to the present day.

In its first edition from 1937, the book was structured into "Introduction" with two texts: "First part – General Problems" with seven texts; and "Second part – Special Problems" with seven texts. The second edition from 1946 included the following changes: the speech from 1945 ("Educadores e homens de letras (Pela aproximação de dois mundos que pareciam viver quase separados)" [Educators and men of letters (For the approximation of two worlds that seemed to be apart)] was included in the second part, while two texts ("O idealismo na educação nova" [New education idealism] and "Pela cultura e liberdade de espírito" [For culture and freedom of the mind]) of this part were moved to the "Conclusion", which was added in this edition. In the third edition, from 1953, only the essay "A formação e a conquista do público infantil (A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica<sup>12</sup>)" [The formation and conquering of children's audience (Children's literature from a sociological perspective)] was added, which became the fourth in the order of texts, while "A mulher e a escolha da profissão" [Women and choice of profession] was moved to the fifth place.<sup>13</sup>

The book's third edition contains 18 texts: "Introduction" contains an excerpt of *Manifesto dos pioneiros da educação nova* [Manifesto of the pioneers of new education] and one speech; "General problems" contains seven conferences; "Special problems" contains

<sup>12</sup> In this and in the previously mentioned titles, the excerpts appear in italics and between parentheses in the original, which enabled us to infer, as mentioned earlier, that this was an editorial resource used to indicate the citation of titles assigned to texts orally presented or previous publications.

<sup>13</sup> Considering the difficulties locating copies of the book, we opted to present the detailed information that is in this topic and the following.

four speeches, two essays and one prayer; and “Conclusion” contains two speeches. Fifteen of these are accompanied by a footnote indicating the type, purpose and date it was written, from 1932 to 1936; one was from 1945. The date of two essays, “A formação e a conquista...” [The formation and conquering...] and “O ensino das línguas clássicas” [Teaching of classic languages] (this one has no footnote) is not reported. The speech from 1945 is the one Azevedo presented in ABL when he received the “Machado de Assis award”

The excerpt from *Manifesto...* and the closing speech of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Conference of Education marked the “definition of principles and position”, the author’s point of view: the problems of education considered in light of the (new) education and sociology principles. “General problems” presents the conferences in which subjects concerned rural education, the mission of universities, relationships among politics, national unit, and education, are addressed. These speeches were presented to an association of primary school teachers and at USP (Instituto de Educação e Faculdade de Direito [Institute of Education and Law School]) and at the University of Paraná.

In addition to children’s literature, the speeches, prayer and essays of “General problems”, address the relationship between educational renewal and books (also textbooks), libraries and laboratories, methodological problems of the teaching of classical languages, women and the choice of a profession, and the relationship between “educators and men of letters”.

Both speeches presented in “Conclusion” reiterate the principles: “O idealismo na educação nova” [Idealism in the new school] and “Pela cultura e liberdade de espírito” [For culture and freedom of the mind]. These speeches were presented in opening or closing sessions of events related to books and the library, at USP, in a primary school and at ABL.

### The essay’s content

As previously reported, the essay “A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica” [Children’s literature from a sociological perspective] (p. 43-63) is the third in the order of presentation in the journal and, with the title “A formação e a conquista do público infantil (A literatura infantil numa perspectiva sociológica)” [The formation and conquering of the child audience (Children’s literature from a sociological perspective)] (p. 205-220) being the fourth in the order of presentation in the book’s second part, which addresses education’s “special problems”.

Both publications contain the footnote transcribed below, in which Azevedo warns about the essay’s characteristics and objectives. In this footnote, two aspects deserve mention: this is another indication that confirms the precedence of the publication of the essay in the journal: it was preferably and originally meant for sociologists and, because of its accessibility, *also* to “educators, writers and historians and literary critics”; and a warning that it was not an “empirical study”, perhaps an early justification, considering the journal’s second phase was more scientifically oriented, as previously mentioned.

In this small essay, we only intend to point out the sociological aspects of some problems that arise from the study of children’s literature. It is not an *empirical study* that would demand considerable research; rather, it is a *theoretical analysis* of the education and development of the child audience, its social (transformations of folk societies), ideological and cultural causes, as well as its nature and internal composition, and the relationships between children’s literature, life and social classes. It is rather an “indication” of the sociological problems involving the modern phenomenon of the expansion of children books, more so than an approach and treatment of the subject with a rigorous method and scientific terminology. Hence, we consider this work to be of interest to sociologists, and will

be even more accessible to educators, writers, historians and literary critics. (AZEVEDO, 1937, p. 205, emphasis added)

The text remains unaltered in its re-publication in the book. Only formal differences concerning editorial standards are identified, such as the use of italics or quotation marks in the titles of the books cited. The essay is structured into seven topics, untitled and separated by asterisks. In a mixture of didactic concern and demonstration of erudition, the expository method used makes the argumentation to be developed through retakes, reiterations, and enlargement of the aspects addressed in each topic. Due to the essay-like style, there are many paraphrases or citations of texts and authors without the corresponding bibliographical references.

In the first topic, by way of introduction, the sociological principles are presented and Azevedo's erudition and familiarity with classic literature and culture, as well as the contemporary literature and culture of his time, becomes evident. To define the principles, he cited the French professor and sociologist Célestin Bouglé: "[...] after showing that economic, legal and moral, religious or aesthetic phenomena vary due to the forms of a society, he recalls that 'sociological factors' appear increasingly clear as the most determinant in the 'evolution of [literary] genres', characterizing "close relationships and interdependency" between social forms and aesthetic categories (p. 205)<sup>14</sup>.

The second topic addresses the origins of children's literature in folklore, orally transmitted since the Greco-Roman antiquity "under the most diverse forms, from generation to generation" (p. 207); the development of this kind of literature as a result of changes in the social and economic structure, this "new type of literature" or "new literary genre", children's literature, or "literature composed of 'children books'" (p. 206), and the "formation and broadening of a 'child audience'" (p. 207).

In the third topic, such as facts/causes that contributed to the appearance and expansion of written children's literature, based on the studies by the French historian Henri-Irénée Marrou, Azevedo highlights the changes in the condition of adults who transmitted the oral literature, accruing from changes that took place in the economic and social structure, from the ancient societies up to contemporary society. He also notes that, instead of coming from below, "[...] in today's societies that gave origin to children's books [...], all this stream of children's literature flows from above, if not from intellectual elites, from a more or less cultured part of these elites and is channeled to children directly through books. Mothers, grandmothers, and maids almost no longer have the time or patience to tell them stories..." (p. 209)

Another fact highlighted by Azevedo (citing the French historian, philosopher, and educator René Hubert) for his contribution to the emergence and multiplication of children's books in various countries, was the "growing scientific interest in children" (p. 210), derived from an impetus given to pedagogical studies from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, and the forerunner teaching doctrines of the educators J. A. Comenius, F. Fröebel and J. H. Pestalozzi, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, of the "progress of human sciences, such as [...] philosophy, sociology and psychology" (p. 210), when:

[...] children became a constant object of reflection for philosophers and educators and for observation and scientific research by experts who work in the field of the new and related sciences: sociology and psychology. [...] If we add to this movement of teaching ideas so clearly linked to changes in economic and social structure, the extraordinary progress of the understanding of the psychology of children and of

<sup>14</sup> From this citation on, we will only indicate the number of the page concerning the essay's excerpts, except for the quotations highlighted in the text.

sociology, with their extremely important contributions to the study of facts of education, it is already easy to understand the growing scientific interest in children, who, with their problems, started attracting the attention of all and to constitute, in large cultural centers, the object of analysis and scientific investigations.

[...] It is from this interest [...] that writers started participating, giving us, already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, precious books that became classics – though some such as the one by Perrault and the Grimm brothers were not originally meant for children — and later, in the last 25 years, a production as large as uneven.

[...] a continuous stream that bubbles everywhere and an enormous amount of books, of temporary success or, mediocre from all perspectives, is mixed with some literary jewels and little masterpieces. (AZEVEDO, 1953a, p. 210-211)

In the fourth topic, Azevedo addresses the relationship between the conceptions of children and the constitution of a new public (for writers), increasingly renewed and diversified, emphasizing the relationships between its expansion, changes in the economic and social structure, and “factors of a cultural and ideological nature”. Among these factors, he highlights the “[...] pedagogical and scientific interest in children, [...] given the multiplicity and importance of studies and research, the object of which are children, normal or abnormal, of one sex or another, of various ages, and from different social classes [...]” (p. 212), driven by the “[...] extraordinary development of popular education, as a consequence of democracy and under the most powerful pressure of democratic and socialist ideas, [the] ‘universality’ and ‘mandatory’ nature of elementary school [...]” (p. 212)

[E]verywhere, the network of elementary education is extended, slowly but steadily, to catch all school-aged children, contributing to the increasing extension and renovation of the children’s “public”. Elementary school, merging as an organic whole into one mass, the public of children, of one or the other sex, of all classes, in every country, tends to extend beyond borders, becoming an apparently homogeneous, floating, and more or less closed group composed not only of boys but also of girls, who receive to some degree a general or common education to all. (p. 212)

From the biopsychological and social diversity and complexity of this “new public or social group” also derive “[...] various types and levels of children’s books intended for different types into which the public is divided, childhood and early adolescence”, seeking to meet the different needs of this “[...] floating public, which renews itself at short intervals, or of ephemeral duration [duration of growth of each category of age from 8 to 14 years old]”, when compared to the other type of literature (that of adults – 18-60 years old)”. (p. 212-213)

To these issues, Azevedo adds those related to the role of adults and children in choosing books of this new literary genre, as well as the traits of the historical and social moment in the subjects chosen by writers and in the way with which they treat them:

[...] children do not “choose” or buy their books. Their parents, relatives or friends, the schools or the State buy books for them. [...] They certainly “consecrate” or disapprove of books [...], but this “sifting” that children do only includes books previously chosen

according to the judgment of adults, according to their “reasons”, that is, their conceptions of life, ideas and feelings. (p. 213)

Considering that children’s literature (as any literature) mirrors “[...] not only the spirit of a time, but also the thoughts, attitudes and tendencies of a social class” and, “the writer’s agreement with certain social classes” (p. 214), Azevedo ponders that, in the study of children’s literature, the

[...] analysis of the “social role” of writers, of the influence of the social situation on this type of literature and also a certain “expectation of audience” would be as useful as surveying this public through surveys and investigations about the books children *actually prefer*, or in other words, about the attitudes and reactions of this public, variable to a certain extent, according to the sex of the child, to the means, rural or urban area, and social classes, on which a set of traits, common to all individuals of the same age, introduce sensitive gradations or important differences that fragment it, and not a small variety of “audiences”. (p. 213, emphasis in the original)

In the fifth topic, he deals with the relationship between growth and diversification (by age, mental levels, social classes, and urban and rural areas) of the children’s audience, “[...] increased needs of consumption, production and dispute among producers (writers and editors to conquer the market)”, qualitative inequalities in the “intense and plentiful” production (p. 215), and a search for balance between “[...] instruction and leisure, which are the goals of all types of children’s and juvenile literature”. (p. 216)

Comparing the children’s books from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with those from 1950-1951, he notes the “[...] extraordinary development [of] editorial production, increasingly facilitated by the industry’s and book’s new techniques”<sup>15</sup> (p. 214), the “[...] remarkable increase of consumers, the competition to conquer this audience, from childhood to initial adolescence, and the unequal quality of production. Alongside of “[...] original and precious collections”, there is “[...] banal, vulgar and unbearable literature, either because of a lack of real writers devoted to this genre, to the assumption that it is easy to write for children.” (p. 214)

He points out that “savorless and superficial literature”, “lacking imagination, style and ideas”, “refuge of the mediocre”, “[...] would hurt children if they did not have ‘distractions’, which work as a “defense reaction instinct” as they “[...] want sensitivity and fantasy, grace that comes from simplicity, soft and living language, imaginative and picturesque [...]”. (p. 215)

Thus, he advocates for the necessary balance that ought to exist between leisure and instruction in children’s and juvenile literature<sup>16</sup>, considering that:

<sup>15</sup> In a footnote, Azevedo (1953a) presents the following information: “The ‘Children’s catalog’, No. 20, by Melhoramentos, includes an enormous amount of tales, short stories, collections and albums and other special publications. Only the Biblioteca Infantil [Children’s Library] [...] currently has, as informed: ‘91 re-edited and continuously revised volumes’. In addition to being an easy-to-read and attractive review, the most complete and best published among us, the Children’s Catalog [...] is an important sample of the editorial production in this sector of literature. This and the catalogs of other houses working in this field, for example, Companhia Editora Nacional, Livraria Editora Brasiliense and Livraria do Globo, add to strong Brazilian production in terms of original and translated works, of books for children and adolescents.” (p. 214)

<sup>16</sup> This is the first time that Azevedo uses the adjective “juvenile” to complement “children’s” in an essay to characterize the intended public for this new literary genre. This deserves to be problematized because of the related emergent concept at the time, that of “adolescence”, as a phase of human development to which Azevedo

[...] excessive intervention on the part of writers in this mysterious world, due to the density of knowledge, due to ostensibly moralizing and ideological intentions, in any case, the part of “teaching” that a book should or could contain overcomes aesthetic or recreational purposes that eventually suffocates children, making the book tedious for them. Books that are meant for children but that perhaps satisfy the parents better. Instruction or leisure, the objectives of all kinds of children’s or juvenile literature, mixed up in unequal proportions according to artistic creations, should combine in such a way that children would let themselves be carried away by charming narratives, by an interest in the characters, to obtain the maximum benefit of the teachings that are implied or discreetly disseminated therein, through adventures.

If what one has to convey, cultural content, has increased considerably in volume in modern societies, though learning capacity did not increase at all, and if the cultural distance that separates an adult from a child is increasingly greater, how can one prematurely inculcate in a child this knowledge, these notions and ideas s/he cannot assimilate? (AZEVEDO, 1953a, p. 216)

As “books of first order”, “examples of this sovereign art” (p. 216), he notes: in prose, *As aventuras de Pinocchio* [The adventures of Pinocchio] by Collodi, *As aventuras de um melro* [The adventures of the blackbird] by Rigiulfo, *Reinações de narizinho* and *Viagem ao Céu* [The adventures of Narizinho and Voyage to the Sky] by Monteiro Lobato, “the greatest of all among us and one of the great names in the universal literature”; *Atíria, a borboleta* [Atíria, the butterfly] by Lucia M. de Almeida; and poetry, *Cantos do meu casal* [My couple’s chants] by Mário Pederneiras, and *O menino poeta* [The poet boy] by Henriqueta Lisboa.

In the sixth topic, Azevedo addresses the relationship between reasoning and emotion in children’s literature, presenting problems and challenges to authors concerning the characteristics necessary to this literary genre, in order to meet the needs of the children of his time.

He criticizes children’s books that “[...] slip into simplistic sentimentality or engage in excessive rationality”, replacing the “irrational” with the “rational” (p. 216), as in novels “[...] manifestly inspired by the ‘left’, which reflect Marxist theory<sup>17</sup>, extremely rational, not recognizing the “irrational” aspect present in the natural world, in history or, particularly in human nature.” (p. 217) In contrast to this “excessively cerebral literature for children” (p. 217), he defends the need to include “emotion, life’s basic law” and “surprise ([which] in the just words of Bruna Becherucci) ‘is one of the most beautiful expressions of human emotion’.” (p. 217)

With a nostalgic view, he compares “the world prior to ours” with “today’s life,” in which “more than ever, children are mixed with their parents’ lives”, in this “[...] new artificial and mechanical world, without orchards or backyards, parks or gardens”, “[...] which has been transformed for adults [and] completely changed for children, whose families exiled from their original ground ‘carried to their cement exile the nostalgia for vegetables and animals’.” (p. 217). And “[...] as observed by Jeannine Roy, our impure and impudent world should penetrate our children’s gardens [...] Expensive life, fascism, communism, calamities and crimes of all

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sometimes refers in this essay. Nonetheless, due to the limitations of space in this paper, these issues will be addressed at some other time.

<sup>17</sup> Probably at this point, Azevedo was referring to “socialist realism”. For a more accurate critique of this aesthetic movement in the former URSS, see Lukács (2009).

kinds [...] shock, circumvent children's thinking [...] without actually flogging up its freshness and without clouding the purity of their spontaneous and uncontaminated feelings. They keep dreaming about Santa Claus, toys and adventures". (p. 218)

According to these characteristics of society, of what is contemporaneous, and at the same time, criticizing the "puerility" of this new genre, he warns of "considerable difficulties" for those "who want to seek new paths in the domain of children's literature":

[...] childhood remained naïve but is no longer foolish. How do we respect this naiveté without giving the impression of fraud or mystification?

This is the problem that arises with particular acuity for early adolescence and that only the knowledge or intuition of an infantile soul associated with a great aesthetic sensibility can solve, by the general reintegration of creation in its state of innocence and grace, perfectly compatible with the finest literary qualities. (AZEVEDO, 1953a, p. 218)

In the seventh topic, by way of conclusion, considering the formation of personality of children and youth, he emphasizes psychological characteristics and the "capital importance children's books assume [and] the responsibility of writers addressing this audience." (p. 219)

In its first phase, of enthusiasm and wonder, in which children and adolescents live their natural lives, with curiosity in their spirits and poetry in their souls, education is a novel in the course of whose incidents fantasy and truth, research and discovery, the friction with reality and the escape to the ideal, wave at every moment, the subtle weave of human personality. (AZEVEDO, 1953a, p. 219)

Citing writers<sup>18</sup> like Dostoiéwsky, Guimaraes Filho, Rivarol, J. Cocteau, and A. Vignet, he emphasizes the poetic state in which children live and the need for writers to restore "children's fresh view", of being "sublime children" and having a sparkle in "children's charming" eyes, citing Miéville. It is this "poetic state" which, according to Azevedo, classic children's books have achieved, which exerted "powerful attraction" in the childhood and adolescence of great writers such as Goethe, G. Sand, A. France, and C. Spitteler.

### **Children's literature among the problems of sociology, education and letters**

Azevedo considered children's literature a new literary genre in his time, not defined by the internal characteristics of books, but related to aspects of social and cultural organization, corresponding to expressions of society in different historical and social periods. In order to highlight these relationships, he recovers the historical transformations and the role literature played for children, composed of oral transmissions through what he calls "popular lore" in Greco-Roman antiquity, the Middle Ages, and with the ascension of the bourgeoisie. He also notes that children's literature and children's books are products of modern society, of civilization and a new society. As a product of a break with the past, with a society on the verge of disappearing, written children's literature only "appeared" and was developed due to the "[...] decay of the aristocratic and patriarchal family" (p. 208).

<sup>18</sup> Showing erudition, over the course of Azevedo's essay, he cites more than 50 titles/writers, most of whom are Portuguese, European/French or American (those were translated to Portuguese) from predominantly literary texts or texts from Children's literature. In addition to those we have already mentioned, there are Homer, Petronio, Camões, Stendhal, Balzac, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Defoe, Swift, Esopo, La Fontaine, Valéry, Goethe, Perrault, Grimm, Andersen, Verne, Condessa de Ségur, Dickens, Charles and M. Lamb, G. MacDonald, W. Irving, S. Lagelöf and L. Carroll; and from the tradition of philosophy, Plato, Apuleio, Cícero and Bergson.



From the sociological perspective proposed by Azevedo, children's literature transforms its status, translates its intrinsic connection with society and social change.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it mirrors the events and trends of the time and a hegemonic social class. Evidently, Azevedo is not naïve and stresses that the traits of the dominant social class are also manifested in the intellectual production regarding children, though "[...] the revolutionary class in democratic countries, also imprints the seal of its spirit and aspirations in more than just a few books integrating books' production". (AZEVEDO, 1953b, p. 203) Even though he was convinced of the importance of the bourgeois revolution and the civilizing process, he notes that this process is not rectilinear and evolutionary, but contradictory and constructive, something only democratic regimes would enable.

In this sense, Azevedo holds the view that the issue of children's sensibility cannot be addressed with "naïve sentimentalism", let alone with "excessive rationalization". But he also criticizes what he calls "bourgeois rationalism", the fruit of an adult conception of the children's world and a sphere based on science and technique. Azevedo proposes a new understanding of childhood, one that enables observing them and their world through their own lenses, shifting from the adult world and the socialization process based on an adult's intermediation – who act coercively on the world of children – to recognize that the children are not naïve or incapable. He seeks to understand children from within their world, without mystification. By commenting on the problems that plagued the world in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he notes that children, even in a discouraging time, still dreamed, which however, should not be seen as something "uncontaminated" or "excessively naïve", rather it was about understanding children's "spontaneous thinking".

Precisely because he identified and understood this process, Azevedo emphasizes that the best way to reach a child audience would be to enter their world, observe their strengths because "[...] currently, children live in a world of thoughts and habits completely different from what is suggested". (1953a, p. 218). In this sense, children's literature

[...] constitutes or may constitute, with other arts, a kind of social plot, the ancient life, in which religion that transfigured everything with its symbolism and rites, the nature, with its charms and mysteries, and a whole theory of fables and popular legends was enough to create, in the desert of their mediocre distractions, an oasis of poetry and dreaming; and in which, therefore, intelligence had not been deprived. (AZEVEDO, 1953a, p. 218-219)

The reflections presented in the essay under analysis are related and complemented by other texts addressing similar subjects published in *A educação e seus problemas* [Education and its problems] and with general problems from sociology and education.

Mainly in the texts in the book's second part, Azevedo defends aspects of school education distinct from the "traditional school". For him, aspects such as a change in teaching methods and textbooks should be the guiding axis of a substantial change in the child audience, a change in access to and interest in reading. Based on new school precepts, he notes that the big problem of reading among children in schools was the imposition of "textbooks", which enslave children, curtailing their freedom of choice, habituating them to predetermined logical schemes, seeking to synthesize their interests.

In his view,

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<sup>19</sup> This sociological conception already contained in *Manifesto...* and in the educational reform of the Federal District in 1927, with the defense of a new school that enabled the integral formation of children, incorporating physical education, arts, educational cinema, with facilities that provided a comfortable environment for the education of the children.

[...] according to the new ideals of education, the center of gravity of the problem shifts from the teacher, on which the traditional school was fixed, to the child and respect for his/her freedom and spontaneity. Books, far from disappearing, gain attention due to the new opportunities that are made possible by consulting and handling them. (AZEVEDO, 1953c, p. 191)

These new ideals of education would lead to a change in the conception of the teaching-learning process, shifting the center from the figure of the teacher and giving children greater freedom of choice. For that, Azevedo proposes recognizing the children's cultural horizon as an element of intellectual development. Contrary to what was proposed in the period when children "had no voice" (MORTATTI, 2008), Azevedo seeks to give children a voice, emphasizing their right to choose. Hence, "textbooks" prescribed by schools and faithfully adopted by teachers should be replaced by other activities, such as visiting libraries, transforming books in a work tool. The goal was to transform books into more than a cultural element to promote reflection and clarification of doubts, promoting the reach of children for what they were interested to read and research, because "one's taste for books can [only] be awakened and developed when the books in reach of children give them pleasure to read and they devour them as soon as they put their hands on them". (AZEVEDO, 1953c, p.192)

Additionally, he proposed a more profound change, including expanding interest in children's literature, in cooperation with the organization of children's libraries, based on the assumption that books, reading, and libraries are inseparable, as the first step toward the expansion and dissemination of a new literary genre.

It is for this reason that the interest in and admiration for writers and poets has grown, as they know how to exploit this inexhaustible treasure, which is the soul of children, by vibrating their whole being like a harp, and taking from it all its inner music. Selma Lagerlöf, an original Scandinavian writer, writes for children. Her books of enchanted stories roam the world and will eventually snatch her the 'Nobel Prize' of literature. And just recently (see the importance other countries give to children's literature and to these magicians who conquer the souls of children), a monument was erected in London to Lewis Carroll, the author of 'Alice in Wonderland' and 'Alice Through the Looking Glass', which Monteiro Lobato translated and adapted to Portuguese. (AZEVEDO, 1953c, p. 193)

Thus, children's literature is highlighted in the Azevedo's ideas and those of the new school, especially considering an existing dispute between those who defended the New School and the Catholics that occupied the center of the educational debate since the 1930s in Brazil, as well as the conjunction of children's books and attention given to children, with a view to respect their autonomy, which probably were contrary to the dictates of Catholics and traditional teaching methods. Azevedo defines the precepts that he proposes for this conjunction: "[...] new education endeavors to educate children in an environment similar to the one in which they will live tomorrow, as citizens, in their lives, at school without the rigidity of discipline, which inspires democratic ideals". (AZEVEDO, 1953c, p. 193).

Considering this immediate context and its relationship with contradictions in the process of social changes, Azevedo probably considers that the dissemination of children's literature and the conquest of this public should be part of a larger set of transformations, such as the implementation of school libraries, which together with new teaching methods, would gain a vigorous boost and "[...] not only in numbers, with schools at all level and categories

multiplying everywhere, but vertically, renewing and improving to become increasingly accessible, attractive and useful with the inflow of new ideas concerning education.” (AZEVEDO, 1953d, p. 195).

Azevedo emphasizes a perspective of a relationship with society and a democratic society when he points out the need to improve access to libraries. For him, “[...] books, seen as works of thinking and sensibility, of feelings and culture, appropriate to each age, far from accentuating the divorce between school and life, will only contribute to bringing them closer together”. (AZEVEDO, 1953d, p. 196)

From this perspective, the issue of sensibility related to the new conception of childhood, decisive for understanding the characteristics and roles of children’s literature, are aspects of essential importance in Azevedo’s thinking. And these aspects are related to the socialization process, especially school socialization, one of the author’s main concerns addressed in the essay under analysis and in other writings. This concern arises from authors and lines with which he dialogues, especially French sociologists like Bouglé and É. Durkheim. Even though the latter was not directly cited in the essay, his ideas are present in Azevedo’s arguments, through the theoretical principles postulated by Bouglé, which are cited at the beginning of the essay, as we previously mentioned.

Azevedo re-contextualizes Durkheim’s thinking, incorporating new precepts and theoretical aspects that concern socialization, which for the French positivist sociologist, has a moral and collective content and is a way to integrate an individual into society. Thus, it is a methodical process intermediated by adult generations among younger generations, with the intent to curb selfish feelings and allow social elements to prevail. In this process, education and the teacher play a unique role over children, who are in a “[...] state of passivity that is perfectible comparable to that in which a hypnotist artificially places an individual”. Teachers exert moral ascendancy “[...] which a master naturally possesses over a disciple given his/her superior experience and culture.” (DURKHEIM, 1978, p. 53).

In this sense, Durkheim attributes a pejorative connotation to the concept of childhood, as he conceives a child as an inert being, a blank slate that can be shaped to the pleasure of social dictates, the fruit of a moral anomie originated from a modern society and, as Fernandes (1994) states, a “[...] slave to the most antinomomic whims that follow one another in the most divergent directions, so that, apparently omnipotent, s/he is in fact, powerless.” (p. 87) Hence, given a lack of discipline, an appetite with all kinds of desires, a child embodies an adult without morality. For this reason, Durkheim argued that moral education should impose rules and regularity to enable children to assimilate the customs and values required by society. Both adults and teachers would function as the representatives of society, and this socialization process in modern society would take place in schools only, a context in which teachers were supposed to instill in children values that would empower them to control their passions. The socialization process, from the perspective of the French sociologist, is not an exchange or assimilation of the children’s world, rather an inculcation of moral values claimed by society.

Azevedo’s interpretation and appropriation of Durkheim’s work is more than polysemic, it is re-contextualized with an interpretation of notions concerning individuality, freedom and socialization. In various of his texts, Azevedo does not recognize the relationship between adult-teacher and child-pupil as being an asymmetrical one, rather it would be conflictive, as an inner dialectic that imposes “pressure” on adults, but not “[...] without a ‘response’ on the part of the youths, [as] it is a social, essentially alive and dynamic process.” (AZEVEDO, 1951, p. 76) In another of his texts in which he addresses Durkheim’s work, Azevedo is more precise and confirms his view of socialization as “[...] a dialectic movement that consists of continually overcoming tension between the slowly organizing ‘social self’

and the ‘individual self’ or organic individuality that reacts to relevant action exerted by adults.” (AZEVEDO, 1967, p. 72)<sup>20</sup>

In spite of certain traits of the sociological thought of the time, some undue generalizations<sup>21</sup> of his work and many unnecessary reiterations arise, possibly due to Azevedo’s essay-like style. However, it is precisely because of the way he understands and presents the complexity of children’s (school) socialization process that his reflections about the concept of children’s literature acquire a precursor character in Brazil, as well as his “recommendations” to teachers, writers and editors, aiming to form and conquer a child audience, as a “special” problem in the fields of sociology, education, and letters (predominantly literature in the context of Azevedo’s works).

### **The essay in Azevedo’s work and in the history of Brazilian production on children’s literature**

Based on the previous discussion, attempts to “answer” the questions posed at the beginning of this article are possible.

Some evidence of the motives and reasons for Azevedo having addressed children’s literature from a sociological perspective and having published his essay in a sociological journal, and later re-publish it in a book on education, may be found both in his professional trajectory, in the topics, problems and approaches presented in the set of his intellectual production, and in the autobiographical aspects directly or indirectly presented in his work.

Partial synthesis of this evidence may be identified in the title/subheading attributed by Azevedo to the speech he presented in 1945: “Educators and men of letters (considering bringing together two worlds that seemed to be almost apart)”. Nonetheless, considering his entire work and professional career, it is pertinent to include at least three “worlds” that more than approximate each other, but complement each other and jointly merge in the figure of this distinguished Brazilian educator, sociologist, administrator, editor and writer. Both in his action/work and in the theoretical thinking he elaborated and through proposition and analysis of subjects he chose, letters, education, sociology (in this order) are inter-related and interdependent “worlds” or territories—though at times one or the other stands out. They are in consonance with the specificity of topics and problems on which he focuses or that he privileges, at different moments of his professional career.

In relation to children’s literature, it is the interpenetration (more than “approximation”) of these three worlds, and the object of study he produces in the essay that makes the analysis performed by Azevedo an innovation at the time. Sociological, educational and literary issues are interdependent in the definition of the following theoretical concepts and analytical categories: *children’s literature (and juvenile)*, as a new *literary* genre

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<sup>20</sup> Several “interpretations” of the concept of socialization are currently disseminated, opening up new fields for investigation, matching a markedly European trend, but that enables establishing comparisons with certain of Azevedo’s precursor conceptions. Sarmiento (2008) notes that the concept of socialization has gone through numerous reviews, discussions and versions, reifying itself in the condition of not considering children as full beings, but as a becoming, rather than acquiring an “ontological full social status” and, “[...] more than ignored, children have been marginalized and ‘diminished’ by the sociological discourse.” (p. 20) A growing tendency of sociology, by observing these notes, is to seek an analytical status with understanding and particularly delimited objects of study: “[...] children, as social actors, in their worlds of life, and childhood, as a generational social category”. (SARMENTO, 2008, p. 22)

<sup>21</sup> Even though these traits of the time from a sociological perspective used by Azevedo may be currently criticized, they do not lose their precursor character, especially in the relationship between sociology and education. In regard to undue generalizations, they are mainly found in excerpts in which Azevedo “applies”/transfers concepts and analytical categories related to European societies and aristocratic or bourgeois familial structure to the analysis of social formation in Brazil concepts and analytical categories, without considering the significant chronological, social and cultural differences between those and the Brazilian context.

composed of books written/printed for children and adolescents, in which a balance between instruction and leisure should prevail, directly linked to the new concept of childhood and the new purposes of democratic (school) education; and “(child) *audience*”, as a sociological category and concept necessary both to understand the origin and development of this literary genre and its relationship with historical changes of social and family structures, and more contemporaneous to him, the formulation of “quality” criteria for children’s books, involving aspects such as the qualification of writers for this kind of genre, and the development of an increasingly sophisticated editorial market, with a view to form and conquer a (consumer) child audience.

In his essay, Azevedo establishes an epistemological statute for children’s literature by placing it at the heart of historical and social transformations and emphasizing and placing it together with other forms in which culture is acquired, an attention the sociology, education or literary studies seldom or almost never devoted to this literary genre. For Azevedo, not only children’s literature but also children acquire new status, which he attempts to understand beyond their condition of “miniature adults” – as children were (mis)understood by markedly adult-centered societies. Seen in the children’s world and from their perspective, a child is not shaped, but observed and recognized as a being in “her/himself”.

If, in Azevedo’s work as a whole, this essay does not seem to have a prominent place (in either scientific, discursive or historical terms), compared to other themes through which he gained recognition and prestige, the issues he presents and raises about children’s literature and the way it should be addressed, integrate his thinking. This “special problem” is organically related to the corpus of his work and professional career and to the (political) project of educational renovation in Brazil, of which he was one of the protagonists. For this reason, it is equally important to understand his multifaceted nature and legacy.

In addition to the relationships between theme and approach, conditions of production and place in the Azevedo’s work and in the Brazilian culture, to understand his reflections on children’s literature, it is necessary to place them in the dialogue with the reflections that preceded them and with other distinguished educators and writers of his time<sup>22</sup>. Among them, Lourenço Filho and Cecília Meireles stand out, who were signatories of *Manifesto...* from 1932. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they also first addressed children’s literature. In the paper “Como aperfeiçoar a literatura infantil” [How to improve children’s literature] (1943), Lourenço Filho emphasizes the psychological and editorial aspects of the production of this type of literary genre, using it to meet educational and psychological needs according to the phase of child development. In the book *Problemas da literatura infantil* [Problems of children’s literature] (1951), Cecília Meireles notes the complexities of this literary genre accruing from a difficulty establishing criteria to assess the quality of what was given to children, whose “taste”, from the poet’s opinion, should be the main reference used to chose what to offer them to read.

Considering the relationship among the aspects of the essay’s textual configurations, we can say that Azevedo founded a tradition in the history of Brazilian children’s literature. The essay became a classic and mandatory reference for later works produced in the 1960s and 1980s – such as those by Leonardo Arroyo, Marisa Lajolo, Regina Zilberman and Edmir Perrotti. Azevedo’s pioneering reflections and propositions regarding children’s literature from a sociological perspective have been incorporated (often “silently”) even currently, in a profusion of manuscripts (especially academic studies), concretizations (in children’s books), and standards (public policies) established for this subject.

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<sup>22</sup> In regard to the Brazilian production of children’s literature over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see: Mortatti (2008; 2015) and Bertolotti and Mortatti (2018). A book is also being elaborated, in which classic texts of this production are addressed, such as Azevedo’s essay analyzed here.

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