



"Speak little and well, they will have you for someone": schooling, moralization and production of meaning from the memories of José Lins do Rego and Graciliano Ramos (Brazil, 1930-1945)¹

"Fala pouco e bem, ter-te-ão por alguém": escolarização, moralização e produção de sentido a partir das memórias de José Lins do Rego e Graciliano Ramos (Brasil, 1930-1945)

"Habla poco y bien, te tendrán por alguien": escolarización, moralización y producción de sentido a partir de la memoria de José Lins do Rego y Graciliano Ramos (Brasil, 1930-1945)

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Abstract

The article on screen focuses on the process of elementary schooling in Brazil in the first half of the 20th century, adopting as an observation angle the production of meaning and the moralizing discourses contained in the practices of schooling in childhood. To this end, it privileges the examination of autobiographical memories about the school experiences of two famous writers of national literature, José Lins do Rego and Graciliano Ramos, present, respectively, in the titles *Doidinho* and *Childhood*. Typical examples of training novels, the author-character itineraries invite us to cross the memories of those teaching practices with the drawing they present of family relationships, school institutions, images of the teaching profession and the hierarchies and social transformations that characterize Brazilian society of the period.

Keywords: Elementary schooling. Training novel. Autobiographical memories.

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Resumo

O artigo em tela se debruça sobre o processo de escolarização elementar no Brasil na primeira metade do século XX, adotando como ângulo de observação a produção de sentido e os discursos de moralização contidos nas práticas de escolarização da infância. Para tal, privilegia o exame das memórias autobiográficas acerca das experiências escolares de dois escritores célebres da literatura nacional, José Lins do Rego e Graciliano Ramos, presentes, respectivamente, nos títulos *Doidinho* e *Infância*. Exemplos típicos dos romances de formação, os itinerários dos autores-personagens nos convidam a cruzar as memórias daquelas práticas de ensino com o desenho que apresentam das relações familiares, instituições escolares, imagens da profissão docente e das hierarquias e transformações sociais que caracterizam a sociedade brasileira do período.

Palavras-chave: Escolarização elementar. Romance de formação. Memórias autobiográficas.

Resumen

El artículo en pantalla se centra en el proceso de escolarización primaria en Brasil en la primera mitad del siglo XX, adoptando como ángulo de observación la producción de sentido y los discursos moralizantes contenidos en las prácticas de escolarización en la infancia. Para ello, privilegia el examen de las memorias autobiográficas sobre las vivencias escolares de dos célebres escritores de la literatura nacional, José Lins do Rego y Graciliano Ramos, presentes, respectivamente, en los títulos *Doidinho* e *Infancia*. Ejemplos típicos de novelas de formación, los itinerarios autor-personaje nos invitan a cruzar la memoria de esas prácticas docentes con el dibujo que presentan de las relaciones familiares, las instituciones escolares, las imágenes de la profesión docente y las jerarquías y transformaciones sociales que caracterizan a la sociedad brasileña del país. período.

Palabras clave: Escolaridad primaria. Novela de formación. Recuerdos autobiográficos.

Introduction

A few years ago, in a conference given at a congress on university teaching in Argentina, Miguel Zabalza (2014) said that teachers, when teaching their classes, do so believing that they are helping students lay the bricks that will help them build the pillars of knowledge, but, in practice, what happens is that the students receive these bricks as if they had been thrown at their heads and then, each one, in their own way, decides how to deal with it. When thinking about the relationship between education, literature and learning, this story was remembered, referring to teachers' intentions and students' experiences. Especially in the first years of university life, some terms used frequently in class and with such familiarity by teachers in many cases do not make any sense to students. The questions could solve the doubts, but, and this is another important point, it is not always possible to ask them, for a variety of reasons: out of shyness, out of shame to ask something that could seem so obvious, because it seems that one is not authorized to make them or simply because they have not yet learned how to formulate them. It is believed that the reading of training novels can contribute to learning by expressing their formative experiences through autobiographical reports, showing the articulation between episodes experienced by the characters and the production of meaning. The formative novel is one whose narrative is dedicated to following a period of transition in the character's life, not only in relation to biological maturation but also in relation to her psychological and critical transformation that mark the phases of her existence. The term is translated from the German, *Bildungsroman*, and would have been used for the first time in the beginning of the 19th century, by Karl Morgenstern, professor of classical philology, who associated it with Goethe's novel *The Years of Apprenticeship by Wilhelm Meister* (MARTINI, 1972).

"There is no learning without history"

The teaching work makes those who exercise it deal with issues related to learning on a daily basis and, in doing so, the teacher also thinks about their own learning, their history and their training process, which is what he suggests Maurice Tardif (2000) about the constitution of teachers' professional knowledge. Philippe Meirieu (1998), a specialist on the subject, states that "there is no learning without history", that is, learning implies the production of meaning, in the way each subject, based on their own experiences and their own history, understands the world around you. The author's argument is built from the constructivist theory, elaborated by Jean Piaget, and takes into account, in addition to the concept that there are different learning rhythms, that understanding goes far beyond repetition and memorization, as has already been thought. One day, the founding idea even of many primers and many textbooks. Phrases such as "Grandma saw the grape", for example, frequent in the aforementioned printed material used in literacy classes, copied and repeated by students, could not always be as thought-provoking as, perhaps, single words, presented phonetically and then syllabic, accompanied by objects and sensory stimuli.

The school in regionalist novels: the production of meaning

In the autobiographical book *Childhood*, published in 1945, Graciliano Ramos recovers his memories of his childhood and youth, his life in the sertão, family relationships and also his relationship with learning, as well as his schooling experiences. The author's relationship as a child with adults, especially with his parents, is marked by oppression and tyranny, expressed in physical and psychological punishment, which makes reading quite distressing at many times. Learning to read and write appear, in the life of the boy

Graciliano, as a possibility of liberation from that oppressive environment in which he lived and so, right at the beginning of the book, he tells about the first contact he had with a school. On a trip from Alagoas to the Pernambuco hinterland, her family had to sleep on the way and was sheltered in a school. The boy, who was between two and three years old, saw that "an old man with a long beard dominated a black table, and several boys, on benches without backs, were holding sheets of paper and screeching: - a b with a - b, a: ba, a b with an e - b, e: be. So on until u. (...) Everything is very clear (...). Standing next to the bearded one, a large girl, who for the future acquired the features of my natural sister, had a leaflet in her hands and moaned: - A, B, C, D, E." (p. 10) At this moment, it is as if the boy left a certain state of latency (or was asleep) and began to understand the world that surrounded him, articulated to words and learning. The mentioned sister would be among those who, in the future, would introduce him to literacy practices.

“Speak little and well: they will have you for someone”

His relationship with reading begins with his father, whom he helps in his work in the family's grocery store, and who intends to teach him how to read and write. Says the boy:

I lingered over some notebooks whose cover was decorated with three vertical bands, smudges, stains covered with scratches similar to those in newspapers and books. I had the unfortunate idea of opening one of these pamphlets, I flipped through the yellow pages of plain paper. My father tried to arouse my curiosity by valuing with energy the poorly printed, faulty, obnoxious lines. He claimed that people familiar with them had terrible weapons. This struck me as absurd: the insignificant features didn't have the dangerous aspect of weapons. Hear the praises, incredulous. Then my father asked me if I didn't want to learn about those marvels, to become a guy known as Father João Inácio and the lawyer Bento Américo. I said no. Father João Inácio scared me, and the lawyer Bento Américo, notable in the opinion of the jury, lived far from the village and didn't interest me. My father insisted on considering these two men as standards and linked them to the booklets on the shelf. He dropped the perfidious interrogation for the second time. Didn't I feel inclined to guess the black signs on the yellow paper? (RAMOS, 1976, p.102-103)

The boy's father tried to arouse his curiosity about reading and writing, who viewed with some suspicion the supposed freedom that would be granted by his father, who was always so authoritative. And continues Graciliano about the episode:

my father had no vocation for teaching, but he wanted to put the alphabet in my head. I resisted, he persisted – and the result was a disaster. He soon revealed impatience and scared me. He threw half a dozen letters quickly, he was going to play solo. In the afternoon he took a cubit, took me to the living room – and the lesson was stormy. If I didn't see the cubit, I could still say something. Seeing him, I was silent. A piece of wood, black, heavy, four fingers' width apart. (RAMOS, 1976, p.104)

Recalling these moments, in addition to the fear of punishment from the father, whom he considered “impossible to satisfy”, if he did not correspond to what was expected in carrying out the tasks, the act of memorizing and repeating meaningless words and phrases seemed to him foolish. The cubit mentioned above was the paddle, a wooden object used to physically punish children, hitting the palms of their hands with it in case of disobedience.

When the father gave up teaching the boy, his sister was given the task, continuing to use the booklet to teach him how to read and write, which, in addition to exploring the repetition and memorization of the elements that would lead to learning, was still fed up with sentences aimed at moralizing of children, such as: “Laziness is the key to poverty”, “Those who do not listen to advice rarely get it right”, “Speak little and well: they will have you for someone”. The boy repeated but did not understand the meaning of the sentences and said:

This Tertao for me was a man, and I couldn't find out what he was doing on the final page of the letter. The other sheets came off, I was left with the bold lines, a summary of the science announced by my father.

– Young lady, who is Terteão?

Young woman was surprised by the question. I had not thought that Tertao was a man. Maybe it was. ‘Speak little and well: they will have you for someone’.

– Young lady, what does that mean?

Mocinha honestly confessed that she didn't know Terteão. And I was sad, mulling over my father's promise, waiting for further disappointments. (RAMOS, 1976, p. 107)

The book was read almost twenty years ago and this passage has never been forgotten by readers who, as teachers, always come back to it in their classes where they work on issues related to learning with their students.

“Teacher: he is a person who never tires of copying (María José García, 8 years old)”

This book is taken up again and mentioned in classes because we believe that its reading, associated with the texts we read and the classes we had about teaching and learning throughout our education helped us to establish relationships and understand issues with which until then we hadn't dealt with. As pointed out by Zabalza in his aforementioned conference, this was a book that helped us to deal with the contents worked on in classes and with our production of meaning around them.

Constructivist theory has a concept called decentering, which concerns the conflict of representations we deal with when we are in a learning process. Since we are born, we build representations about the world around us, without such representations our existence would be unbearable or incomprehensible to ourselves. It is thanks to our representations that we elaborate our way of explanation and answer the questions that we are asked since we were very young, even if we have not studied the subject and even before we have been literate: we do it from our imagination, our history and our experience. I like to think, in a very illustrative way, of a climbing wall: representations would be the supports that support us and allow us to move. And we explain why: if we learn from the conflict of representations and, according to Meirieu, each representation is an advance and an obstacle, our support is transitory, it will soon be replaced by another, or by another representation that was elaborated again. This process occurs throughout our entire life, that's why when we hear something that we don't know, we usually respond with an expression of astonishment: “It's not possible!”, “Are you

kidding!”, “Is it true?”. These reactions occur because we do not recognize what was said as possible or existing, that is, as something that is part of our representations.

Thus, when we teach, we constantly deal with the situation in which we need to make familiar what is strange, make understandable what is not always, or at that moment may not be, we need to establish relationships so that, from them, those who are learning can find elements that help them to make sense. If at university we know that students arrive with representations made up of concepts and theories addressed in class, at school it is no different: children also arrive at school with consolidated representations about the functioning of the world around them. Javier Naranjo (2013), Colombian teacher, attentive to the explanations formulated by the children, wrote a dictionary with their representations that are worth knowing, called “House of the stars: the universe told by children”. The title is due to a child's explanation of what the universe is, for the twelve-year-old boy, it is the “house of the stars”. Asked what a teacher is, the eight-year-old girl answers: “he's a person who doesn't get tired of copying”. About what poetry is, a ten-year-old girl answers: “there are times when someone has nothing to do and starts to write poetry”, while another twelve-year-old girl says that it is the: “expression of the oppressed”. These are some definitions that show us children's representations of the world, but also make us think about the elements they cling to to explain it. Literature can be one of them, an important element that we can cling to both to understand the world around us and ourselves, as well as the knowledge that integrates both school and university curricula, producing meaning and making familiar what is strange.

Autobiographical memoirs and history of schooling in Doidinho, by José Lins do Rego

José Aderaldo Castello, in *Memory and fiction: from Raul Pompeia² to José Lins do Rego³* (1995), by taking the two distinguished literary men as an example and guide, alludes to the artifices undertaken by the plot narrators, through which the characters in the plot are erected (reconstructed?) according to a projection of autobiographical paints, in which the variations of time/memory relationships are modulated in such a way as, with the evocation of the latter, to establish a time in which author and character can act simultaneously. It is not another judgment that is extracted from the opening of *O Ateneu*, when the recommendations of Sérgio's father – Sérgio, the protagonist of the story – to the latter at the moment he leaves him in the boarding school of director Aristarco: “– You will find the world', my father told me, at the door of the Athenaeum, '– courage for the fight!’” To which Sérgio later adds: “I was only eleven”. (Pompeia, 1996, p. 3)

For Castello (1995), the interdependencies that are produced in the narrative between author and character indicate that the “he”, that is, the character, around which the author's universe is reorganized, ends up by experientially imprisoning the “I”, that is, the author himself. In this thread, when trying to explain to the “he” (character) what the “I” did not fully understand from childhood to adolescence, the author finds himself in the “he”, “to the point of symbolically destroying what happened to be both of them” (Castello, 1995, p. 36), namely, the universe that reorganizes the narrative. The triggering of this process of interdependence between author and character would lead to the creation of a double central character, or rather one could rightly say the “double character”: on the one hand the “he”, the child who takes the steps towards to puberty, already resulting from the reorganized universe, in the borders delimited by the boarding school, which is “defined by the novelist

² Fluminense writer, born Raul d'Ávila Pompeia, in Angra dos Reis, on April 12, 1863, and died on December 25, 1895, in Rio de Janeiro.

³ José Lins do Rego Cavalcanti was born on the plantation called Corredor, in the municipality of Pilar (PB), on June 3, 1901, and died in Rio de Janeiro, on December 12, 1957.

as a miniature of the world that was outside” (Castelo, 1995, p. 36); and on the other hand, that of the world itself situated beyond the confines of the boarding school, in which an image of an adult is outlined, synthesized in the figure of the narrator, obstinate in reliving, explaining and debating the effects of boarding school on the child/adolescent.

Memory, in the mechanism described above, works not as a recovery of events or even a mere idealized reconstruction of the past, through which a lived universe is objectified, but in a different sense it is taken as "duration", a procedural instance of subjective cut that operates a reorganization of the meanings of the lived, sometimes perpetuating, altering or suppressing the mental pictures arising from the mixture between experience and imagination.

In *Doidinho*, José Lins do Rego makes us see such a movement of interdependence between author and character, in which memory is activated to reorganize the universe of what is lived. The boarding school, “world in miniature” (and the term is coined by Raul Pompeia in “*O Ateneu*”), is the main setting in which this memory is accessed, and, especially for the interests of the reflections that unfold below, it represents the elevation of the status that schooling, on the one hand, and the school itself, on the other, played in the set of educational training available to those children and young people in the last decades of the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

There are, however, some differences to be highlighted between Pompeia and Lins do Rego and between *O Ateneu* and the first two volumes of the “sugar cane cycle”⁴. In addition to the internal aspects of each of the works, the distinct literary references, the different itineraries and the peculiar way in which they transpired in the respective writings, a wild and rude tone, characteristic of the social relations that are established between the actors that make up the “society of the mill”. Here, the representations of childhood that characterize the characters Sérgio and Carlos de Melo acquire primary relevance. The character Sérgio refers to the model of the bourgeois child of the 19th century, the culmination of a process of defining the childhood of the most prosperous strata of society, which, according to Ariès (2006), starting still in the passage from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, produces a new feeling towards individuals of an early age, in which aspects such as care, alienation from the world (of public and common spaces) and the indispensability of an education consistent with their stage of development are processed in a way to demarcate the boundaries of such age groups and those recognized as adults.

Carlinhos' childhood, from four to twelve years old⁵ on the Santa Rosa plantation, owned by his maternal grandfather, José Paulino, is full of events that initiate him into the world of things and men, a characteristic that acts as a backdrop, such as constant contrast against that “miniature world” represented by the school of “*Seu Maciel*”. The first impressions of the institution, shared with the reader in the first lines of the novel, go beyond the contrast mentioned earlier: they set the tone of rupture with the cornucopia of affections of which Santa Rosa was an example.

“– You can leave the boy without care. Here they straighten up, come out like people,” said a tall, thin old man to my uncle Juca, who had taken me to school in Itabaiana. We were in the living room. Me, huddled in a chair, all tucked into a corner, my uncle Juca and the

⁴ *Doidinho* (1933) succeeds *Menino de engenho* (1932) in the agreed “Cycle of Sugarcane”, a series of 5 compositions in which Lins do Rego allows the reader to glimpse the daily dramas in the social microcosm of sugar-producing regions in the Northeast of Brazil. Brazil, in a reading articulated to the more general transformations of this region. In addition to these two titles, the cycle is integrated by Banguê (1934), *Usina* (1936) and “*Fogo Morto*” (1943). Barbosa Filho (2005), indicates that within the cycle there is a trilogy - embodied by “*Menino de Engenho*”, “*Doidinho*” and “*Banguê*” - which covers three of the “ages of life” of the character Carlos de Melo - protagonist in all three titles: childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

⁵ This period in Carlinhos' life is revealed in *Menino de engenho* (1932).

master. This one wanted to know my age, my advance. My uncle reported everything: twelve years old, according to Felisberto de Carvalho's book, multiplication table.

(...) And my uncle called me for a hug. It felt like he was leaving me for good, because it was with a broken heart that I approached him.

"- Study. In June I'll come pick you up." I left crying. It was the first time I was separated from my people, and one thing told me that my life was going in another direction. (Lins do Rego, 2011, p. 1-2)

The memorialistic tone of the works that make up Carlos de Melo's "saga" is inferred from the characterization of the landscapes and characters of *Menino de engenho*, *Doidinho* and *Banguê*. Orphaned in the year of his birth, José Lins do Rego is entrusted to the care of his aunt Maria and his grandfather, a figure who immortalizes in the persona of Colonel José Paulino, a striking character in the action of the three aforementioned novels, exactly the first three of his writing career. Having lost her aunt at an early age too – "substitute mother" – she goes to study at the Nossa Senhora do Carmo Boarding School, in the city of Itabaiana, Paraíba, where she starts her school life, the same where *Doidinho*'s plot unfolds.

In his second novel, the "memories" of the omniscient narrator are covered with tenderness and intense humanity. In it, the words do not seem to exude rancor, but rather resound the nostalgia of the mill's atmosphere, an environment that exuded the climate of decay of the "sugar civilization", so well captured by the pen of José Lins do Rego in the work of social typification that he carries out through of the recovery of concrete life and of a certain psychology of the created characters. And even the boarding school, with all the limitations it imposed on the boy who was entering adolescence, limitations different from those that rewrite life on the plantation, produced a different effect in *Carlinhos* than in *Sérgio*, since in the end the boarding school itself with peculiar lights and shades, it does not clash with the broad framework of that patriarchal society topped by the mill, producer of sociabilities that ordered the world experience of both the inhabitants of sugar-producing establishments and the extensive social network that was largely dependent on them.

It is, therefore, in "*Doidinho*", as it is the intermediary book between "*Menino de Engenho*" and "*Banguê*", thus representing the end of childhood and the experience of adolescence, that Lins do Rego establishes the unity of the restored world of his memories the native corner and the model subjects that populated it. In a way, this is where the roots of the "origins" images reside, which are passed on, reconstructed and classified by the adult's memory. The boarding school, central landscape of the novel, as a microcosm, presents itself to "it" as a school, beyond what it actually was, that is, as an educational establishment, but additionally as a "school of life", already from another jaez of that school – this one, yes, metaphorical – represented by the ingenuity. In the "miniature world" the "he" character faced, witnessed and experienced loyalty, friendship, betrayal, intrigue, sex, fear, injustice, protection, all these feelings and circumstances involved in the complex plot of alliances, competitions and favors executed by the actors linked to the boarding school, led by the severe and iniquitous despotism of Mr. Maciel, director of the institution.

Transposed to the field of schooling in Brazil, José Lins do Rego's plot in "*Doidinho*" focuses on the formation of the future planter, according to a clearly idealized vision: that of the local representative who holds power both as a result of his condition of birth and the intellectual veneer acquired at school, even though both spheres are interconnected, as the intention of the novelist to circumscribe the character who embodies this archetype - his maternal grandfather - with the grandfather of the character Carlos de Melo, the old José

Paulino, subject venerating for a wisdom that comes from practical things in the world of ingenuity, but also from the universe of literate culture. The awareness, however, of the collapse of that “sugar civilization” permeates the novels of this phase by Lins do Rego. With this, the type of command and power relations that emanate from the pyramidal configuration of society from which it originated - the same as its fictional characters - was going through a period of transformation, falling into decline due to competition in new ways, ideally less personalistic, economic exploitation of the earth's resources. This is the plant, a technological complex that, similarly to what the arrival of the railroad played for the Old West in the United States, brilliantly focused on *The man who shot Liberty Valance*⁶, inaugurates a new time, felt bitterly by Carlinhos in the epilogue of *Menino de Engenho* (1932) when the world of his childhood is swallowed up by the inexorable overcoming of that establishment. The school in Carlinhos, in a different situation from that experienced by the mill, does not appear, in the inks with which it is described by Lins do Rego, signs of imminent change. Pedagogical practices, disciplining instruments, space organization, teacher-student relationships and the rigidity of teaching methods are inserted in a temporal framework of almost immutability. The description of the city and the surroundings of the boarding school that is given to see in the walks carried out by Carlinhos confirm, in general, this perception. If in practice they fulfill the function of releasing, at least fleetingly and partially, the central character of the novel from the cloistered environment of the school and from the constraints to it, the activities carried out and experiences obtained in the outer space mark events colored by static, a kind of frame by the which the repeated teaching formulas, disciplining and introjection of the senses of the literate culture acquired more vibrant tones. The mismatch between the education offered and the student's expectations, circumscribed here to the plane of concrete experience within the institution - not to what it provided as a sign of social distinction - ratified a framework of paralysis in the way in which the social function of the school by the local population: that of “straightening out” the maladjusted and incapable, something that Carlinhos even disappointedly diagnosed as a frustrated intention towards himself, as can be seen from the passage:

“- You can't imagine what kind of work it took. Students of these do not pay the work (mentioning another boarding student). Not this one (referring to Carlinhos). There's only this thing with the exercises. You've come a long way here. Evaluate the lady who made the second book and is already in high school.”
But these compliments were not content with me. The hard truth was on display for the whole world. Only I was hopeless. (REGO, 2011, p. 134)

Compared, therefore, with the institutions bequeathed by the 19th century, the school attended by Carlinhos, in a story that takes place at an undetermined moment of the First Republic, a period in which the plots of *Menino do engenho* and *Doidinho* take place, is, in a certain way, given to be seen. sense, in discrepancy with the temporal flux that marks the sugar society, distinguished to a large extent by the dynamics of a world that was

⁶ Film directed by John Ford, produced by Willis Goldbeck and released by Paramount Studios in 1962. It starred John Wayne, James Stewart, Vera Miles and Lee Marvin. In Brazil he received the title *The man who killed the criminal*. Schematically, it tells the story of the successes experienced by a newly graduated lawyer, Ransie Stoddard (character played by James Stewart), from the east coast, who established himself in a locality in the American far-west of the second half of the 19th century. The plot highlights the introjection of the bourgeois archetypes that characterized the East in the territories of the West, typified in the foreground by the primacy of the law over force and the valorization of instruction and literate culture. Rather than exclusively representing a civilizational mark, the introduction of such archetypes is presented in a pessimistic tone, as a sentimental farewell in relation to a subject and a historical-social formation that disappeared from that moment on.

extinguished to the emergence of another. If the world reorganized by the memory of José Lins do Rego tries to evoke the affective memories of a time and a sociability in a frank process of overtaking, the school, rather than a device in which the components of social, economic and cultural change are represented, fulfills more the function of frame for the reunion with a stylized and idealized affective dimension.

Final considerations

Childhood and Doidinho are two novels that tell a lot to the history of Brazilian education. On the one hand, both bear traces, in the field of literature, of the transformations that the human and social sciences underwent in Brazil after the 1930s. Until the first two decades of the 20th century, works that focus on phenomena related to Brazilian social and historical formation, even realizing, in some cases, an *avant la lettre* sociology, the two regionalist novels on screen bear the mark of a deep interest in “interpret” the country, combining contributions from modernist essays and academic-based social thinking that gained strength in Brazil at the time, and also reverberating, in its own way, traces of the broad movement seen in different national modernisms in the first decades of the 20th century (especially in the fields of literature, music and plastic arts), which is to seek an understanding of the cultural manifestations of what was meant by “people”, the characters and characters that made up the different national profiles, but that remained shadowed by the omnipresence of foreign cultural models.

It was in this atmosphere that the two on-screen novels erupted. In a schematic way, they already suggest the contradictions of Brazilian society in the 1930s and 1940s, in which an urban, industrialized, modern country was devised, in the face of archaic structures, marked by manorial relationships, with a predominance of patriarchy and remnants of slavery practices, mainly related to rural areas and to impoverished and decaying areas of the territory. Such themes are seen fused to the psychic universe of the characters in both books, not according to a deterministic mechanism, in which those were nothing more than a result of the environment, but the “world readings” carried out by the authors-characters reveal to the reader the processes of impregnation in this double subject of the weight of political, economic, social and cultural structures in the scenarios in which it operates. In this sense, the prominent presence of the school in *Doidinho* and *Childhood*, while focusing on what was socially expected of instruction in its formative and disciplinary components, opens up devices of the student's subjective dimension - mediated, of course, by the author's memory - , challenging the historian of education to re-imagine what it was like to be a student at an elementary school in the first decades of the 20th century in Brazil. In the sphere of representations, both authors draw a suggestive picture of the perception of the teaching professional status, the processes of configuring the student category, the moralizing dimension of teaching, the textbooks and materials used, the teaching methods used, the composition, organization and hierarchization of school knowledge, the arrangement of spaces and times, the liturgy, in the sense given by Boto (2014), which highlights the modern school.

Additionally, the fictional reconstruction of student and initiation itineraries in the literate world of author-characters undertaken by the two training novels not only enriches the flow of sources that the historian of education has, as well as giving rise to methodological investments, in which approaches grounded in the exploration of literary works of a memoir and autobiographical nature come to further fertilize studies on our educational past.

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