

## PRECEPTORS IN 19TH CENTURY EDUCATION: Ina von Binzer's journey to Brazil (1881-1883)

As preceptoras na educação oitocentista: a passagem de Ina von Binzer pelo Brasil (1881-1883)

Las preceptoras en educación del siglo XIX: el pasaje de Ina von Binzer por Brasil (1881-1883)

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**Abstract:** The article aims to investigate Brazilian education in the 19th century, based on the thirty-seven letters written by the education preceptor Ina von Binzer during her stay in Brazil between 1881 and 1883. Taking the methodology of cultural history, we highlight from Chartier (1994) that the historian's task is to offer adequate and controlled knowledge about personage, mentalities and prices, always vigilant of his object, since this can enable answers to future inquisitions. Ina von Binzer's letters allow us to conclude that, in the period under discussion, there was little investment in the construction and expansion of public schools for Brazilians. Instead, there was the spread of specific private education for boys and another for girls, in addition to a lack of recognition of the right to education for non-white people. So, the educational duality that marks the history of Brazilian education emerges.

**Keywords:** education; schools; history of education; 19th century.

**Resumo:** O artigo objetiva compreender a educação brasileira oitocentista nas trinta e sete cartas escritas pela preceptora da educação Ina von Binzer durante sua estada no Brasil, entre os anos 1881 e 1883. Atentos à metodologia da história cultural, destacamos, com base em Chartier (1994), que o historiador tem por tarefa oferecer um conhecimento apropriado, controlado sobre personagens, mentalidades e preços, sempre vigilante com seu objeto, uma vez que sua pesquisa poderá possibilitar respostas às inquisições futuras. As cartas de Ina von Binzer nos permitem concluir que, no período em questão, houve pouco investimento na construção e expansão de escolas públicas aos brasileiros. Em vez disso, houve a propagação de uma instrução particular específica para meninos e outra para meninas, além de um não reconhecimento do direito à educação para pessoas não brancas. Assim, emerge a dualidade educacional que marca a história da educação brasileira.

**Palavras-chave:** educação; escolas; história da educação; século XIX.

**Resumen:** El artículo tiene como objetivo investigar la educación brasileña del siglo XIX a partir de las treinta y siete cartas escritas por la preceptora de educación Ina von Binzer durante su estancia en Brasil entre 1881 y 1883. Atentos a la metodología de la historia cultural, destacamos, con base en Chartier (1994), que la tarea del historiador es ofrecer conocimientos adecuados y controlados sobre personajes, mentalidades y precios, siempre vigilante de su objeto, ya que sus investigaciones pueden posibilitar respuestas a futuras inquisiciones. Las cartas de Ina von Binzer permiten concluir que, durante el período en cuestión, hubo poca inversión en la construcción y ampliación de escuelas públicas para brasileños. Así, las cartas de Ina von Binzer permiten concluir que, durante el período en cuestión, hubo poca inversión en la construcción y ampliación de escuelas públicas para brasileños. Sin embargo, se extendió una instrucción privada específica para niños y otra para niñas, también un no reconocimiento del derecho a la educación para las personas no blancas. Surge así la dualidad educativa que marca la historia de la educación brasileña.

**Palabras clave:** educación; escuelas; historia de la educación; siglo XIX.

## INTRODUCTION

Letter writing was long considered a common practice of communication between literate individuals, until it gave way to the telegraph and telephone; even so, correspondence maintained its particularities, above all, of writings, posts and, at times, long waits. Letters fed many feelings like those that Mariana Alcoforado (1640-1723) wrote from the convent of Beja. “All literature is a long letter to an invisible interlocutor, present, possible or future passion that we liquidate, feed or seek” (*Cartas de Amor...*, 1962, p. 1). *Portuguese letters*, like other epistolary novels, expressed desires, affections, sadness, anguish and laments through what they tried to liquidate, feed or then, search for.

Nonetheless, the educator Paulo Freire often used letters to communicate with his interlocutors, and here we highlight some of his works resulting from correspondence: *Letters to Cristina* (1994), *Letters to those who dare to teach* (1993) and *Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (1977). The practice of writing made it possible to compose many letters that today make up the wealth of historical sources also handled by the History of Education. In 1956, after sixty-nine years, the book *Os meus romanos: alegrias e tristezas de uma educadora Alemã no Brasil* was translated and published in Portuguese for the first time, with a preface by Paulo Duarte. It deals with the publication of thirty-seven letters written under the pseudonym Ulla von Eck, belonging to the German education preceptor Ina von Binzer, who passed through Brazil between 1881 and 1883. In 1980, the publisher *Paz e Terra* released the book with an introduction by the novelist Antônio Callado, and in 2017, a new edition was prefaced by professor Keila Grinberg.

The educator, through her letters, expressed her experiences as a newly hired teacher, working in different places, such as the São Francisco farm, in the interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro; then a brief interval at a school for girls in Petrópolis and a more intense period in São Paulo, first in the capital and finally at the São Sebastião farm. Ina was a representative of the young female tutors who traveled to Brazil in greater numbers in the 1880s. The imperial government was interested in offering European education to the children of the Brazilian oligarchy, also thinking about the political succession of the country, which was still trying to achieve independence. Therefore, in her first impressions, Ina wrote, “[...] the Brazil I found is completely different from the one I imagined when I left Germany” (Binzer, 2017, p. 10).

Writing letters, from Alcoforado to Freire, was a fundamental exercise in communication and, when carried out by women, it occurred more frequently in private writing spaces, also in the form of diaries, often resulting in self-writing (Gomes, 2004). The correspondence in question, written in the first person, describes the perceptions of an educator who crossed the Atlantic to teach French to the children of the Brazilian elite. Her findings are quite interesting and, according to

Lapo (2001), are still part of the daily lives of teachers, as she highlights: “[...] parents are absolutely not bothered by the behavior of their children” (Binzer, 1994, p. 108 apud Lapo, 2001, p. 15); “[...] I cannot get used to this superficial teaching; but when I start to delve deeper it is even worse: I become completely discouraged” (Binzer, 1994, p. 87 apud Lapo, 2001, p. 15). The letters revolve around her work as a governess in the imperial families, who hired her as an educator, at the same time as they talk about themselves, about their new experiences found in a new world.

Early on, Ina von Binzer notes that, in Brazilian aristocratic families, girls receive different education than boys. Boys are taught science, mathematics, and oral skills, so that they can later enter high school. Girls are taught to become good wives or future tutors. According to Vasconcelos (2018, p. 289), “[...] one of the few accepted and appreciated professions for women was teaching.” In Brazil, if a literate woman had not yet found a family to support, her only option was to become a tutor.

Ina was born in the city of Lauenburg on December 3, 1856. Because of her father's profession, an administrator, she and her family moved from city to city, spending her childhood in different places, such as “[...] Friedrichruh, Mölln, Kiel and Schleswig” (Callado, 2017, p. 11). After completing her schooling, she took a test to become a teacher in the city of Soest, where she obtained her certificate. However, she did not immediately find a job in which she could practice this profession, which made her venture to more distant lands. While still in school, the educator lost her mother, which influenced her choice of education, because, in her words, it was a way to continue doing good for her family.

Since her first letters, the German educator has made observations about education in the 19th century, in a tropical country. Thus, the research is inserted in a historical-cultural context that aims to “[...] understand how the practices and experiences, especially of common men, translated into social values, opinions and concepts about the world” (Oliveira & Alves, 2014, p. 43); in addition to composing a “[...] fascinating and detailed panel of Brazilian patriarchal life in the last years of slavery in the country” (Grinberg, 2017, p. 8).

In 1884, Ina returned to Germany, where she “[...] ended up marrying the district judge Adolf von Bentivegni and dedicated her life to writing” (Grinberg, 2017, p. 8). It was upon her return to Germany that she decided to compile her letters, resulting in her first publication, *Leid and freud' einer erzieherin in Brasilien*, in 1887. Most scholars in Brazil, who are dedicated to understanding Ina's time in the country, claim that it is not known for sure what her trajectory was after she left, nor if there is an exact confirmation of the date of her death.

Based on the letters written by Ina von Binzer between 1881 and 1883, we aim to understand her observations and perceptions about Brazilian education during her time in Brazil. For Vasconcelos (2018), her teachings and legacy are yet another of the 'curiosities' that lay dormant in the nineteenth century. Thus, the article is divided

into four sections. The first addresses research into the history of education using the letters as a documentary source; the second deals with the presence of governesses in Brazil; the third deals with Ina von Binzer's perceptions about Brazilian education; and the fourth reveals a picture of the place of children in the socio-historical context of the nineteenth century.

## LETTERS AS RESEARCH SOURCES

When studying Capistrano de Abreu's correspondence, Amed (2006) highlighted that letters, still little valued by Brazilian researchers, play a prominent role in terms of the subtlety of the political, social and cultural intricacies of a given society. Mário de Andrade, in turn, convinced of the historical preciousness of this genre, was extremely careful in preserving the correspondence exchanged with Anita Malfatti, Carlos Drummond, Di Cavalcanti and other exponents of the 20th century. In an article entitled 'Making history', published in *Folha da Manhã*, on August 24, 1944, she wrote about her belief in the documentary value of letters, “[...] everything will be brought to light one day, by someone who is willing to make history” (Andrade, 1944).

A thorough reading of Ina von Binzer's letters, concerning nineteenth-century education, requires comparing the data found with other studies already carried out. The book is part of the *roll* of women travelers in the 19th century, “[...] written in the form of correspondence to family or friends, diaries or even as short narratives” (Leite, 2000, p. 133), is one of those that does not go unnoticed when we deal with the views of European women who ventured out and demonstrated the capacity for observation, overcoming the different singular circumstances, personal and political. Attracted by the brightness of the colors in Annie Brassey's Brazil, Ina von Binzer finds a country where she soon becomes interested in the enslavement of people, which “[...] leads the girl to meditate on the slave, as a human being, an unhappy person who 'even after death was driven away from the company of other mortals'” (Leite, 2000, p. 142, emphasis added). Furthermore, she makes allusions to the Republic and the ineffectiveness of its pedagogical methods learned to educate quarrelsome Brazilian boys.

From a more intimate perspective, correspondence has singularities that we do not find in other genres, as it carries so much of the subject who writes it that not even the person herself can see why what she says stands out between the lines. “Letters produce memories, which unfold into criticisms, which trigger letters, which engender memories [...] It is the great circuit of discourses, in which one can observe the inscription of the trajectories of reader and author, of sender and recipient” (Cardoso, 2000, p. 333).

When analyzing the correspondence published in the book, we understand that it is necessary to situate our research object as a cultural product of a specific historical period.

A book is a well-known cultural object in our type of society. For its production, certain cultural practices and representations are put into motion, not to mention that the book itself, once produced, will disseminate new representations and contribute to the production of new practices (Barros, 2005, pp. 133-134).

Regarding the research from the perspective of cultural history, we emphasize that “[...] the human past is not an aggregate of separate stories, but a unitary sum of human behavior, where each aspect is related to one another [...]” (Nawroski, 2015, p. 67). Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the letters that resulted in the publication of the book that is the object of this research, but also to the historical and cultural context in which the letters were written, and this involves a dialogue with other researchers of the period in question.

Paying attention to historical production is a way of monitoring our object and our research theme; a practice that has been structured over the years, since historians have not always used this perspective when researching works written in different periods. According to Barros (2005), in the past, historians, when analyzing descriptions of a historical context from another period, inserted an 'elitist' vision, imposing their own ideal on the objects studied, without analyzing the social environment and culture of that society. That said, from the 19th century onwards, cultural history began to be discussed by its scholars, despite the principle of monitoring the objects of study by their historical and cultural context. Chartier (2010), who dedicated himself to the history of culture and books, highlights reading and writing as results of the expressions of social practices that, when reverberated, can also heal historical wounds.

According to Chartier (1994), stories can always be reproduced through narratives, using abstract means to represent a given social environment, to which historians need to be attentive, especially to the actors in this historical context. Thus, when reading from a cultural-historical perspective, it is necessary to seek to understand the real story through the author's writings, who may use different forms to represent social and cultural conflicts.

The historian's task is to offer appropriate, controlled knowledge about the “population of the dead – characters, mentalities, prices” that are his object. To abandon this intention of truth, perhaps excessive but certainly founding, would be to leave the field free to all falsifications, to all falsehoods that, by betraying knowledge,

harm memory. In the exercise of their profession, it is up to historians to be vigilant (Chartier, 1994, p. 12, emphasis added).

The emphasis on researcher vigilance is recurrent in Chartier's writings (2010, 1994); it is a warning to researchers who venture into the human and social sciences and engage in epistemological vigilance, also endorsed by Bourdieu et al. (2015) in the field of sociology, in which data, analyses and choices of theories are monitored to ensure coherence in research. By being attentive and vigilant throughout the writings of a historical context, we can review the past, which is relevant not only to historians who already conduct research through documents and are in search of new evidence, but also to all research subjects who seek to recover their historical knowledge. Thus, "[...] historical knowledge can help to dispel the illusions or lack of knowledge that, over time, disorient collective memories" (Chartier, 2009, p. 24). Therefore, it is through the past that we can project the social and cultural future, attentive to changes.

In epistolary writing, it is possible to find evidence for the various questions raised throughout history, but which have not yet been answered. Letters written at a given time can help answer future inquiries, as the social and cultural representations presented in a described context express alternatives to the social environment.

Ina von Binzer's fictional letters are important primary sources for studies in the field of education, and for other areas such as History and Literary Theory. In some cases, they are the object of study. In any case, their existence only reinforces the importance of Ina von Binzer's work (Marcusso, 2012, p. 361).

Given the social context she encountered when she arrived in Brazil, Ina reserved her native language for writing letters to her friend Grete in Germany, always greeting her affectionately: "My sweet Grete", "Friend Gretele", "My only Grete", "Dear Grete", "Grete of my heart". During her new job, she always tried her hand at Portuguese with the help of French, a language she learned at school and was supposed to practice and teach to the Brazilian oligarchy; in the mind of the black woman who served her, Paris was everything outside of Brazil.

When writing the letters, Ina makes present the figure of the interlocutor Grete, her friend who stayed in Germany, to establish a dialogue in which the sender conveys part of her individuality, seeking understanding and trust in Grete, which is implied in the greetings. About the friendship and trust with the interlocutor, on May 31, 1923, Manuel Bandeira wrote to Mário de Andrade:

Your letter moved me greatly because of the friendship and trust with which you expressed yourself in it. I also believe in the affinities that connect us and I believe that they are above all of a moral nature. This world of literature and the arts is very interesting, but dangerous: there are young men with fine sensibilities in it, but woe to them and woe to us! Without the exceptional will that is needed to control that gift so full of risks. My experience, although cautious and aloof, was bitter! (Letter to Mário de Andrade, May 31, 1923 apud Moares, 2000, p. 94).

It is important to highlight that, unlike the study produced by Ferreira (2004), on the letters addressed to Honestalda de Moraes Martins, at the Olaria Farm in Rio de Janeiro, between 1878 and 1946, who was always the recipient and not the sender, Ina von Binzer was the main and only sender of the letters published in her book. Although they were addressed to Grete, we have no record of the recipient; she is only mentioned in the greetings and farewells recorded in the correspondence. However, when saying goodbye, Ina demands a letter from the recipient 'immediately': "Now, here at the door is the old and fat Ana calling me: 'Tea, madam!' I'll make a full stop. Write to your elegant Amazon right away" (Binzer, 2017, p. 15, author's emphasis). Even so, it is worth highlighting that, in the epistolary universe, it is in the other subject that the letter reveals itself, denouncing a thinking and rethinking of what is told. It can be said that the letters are constructed by the confessional explosions that surround the social and the individual, contextualizing the historical and cultural moment of a 22-year-old girl in a distant country.

Epistolary writing, as a privileged channel of private communication, in addition to awakening a taste for communication, also reverberates in a friendly conversation between two friends. In the correspondence, the educator reveals her strange feelings, her joys, sadness, didactic-pedagogical frustrations and her coexistence with her bosses and students. For Gomes (2004, p. 20, emphasis added), "[...] the act of writing for oneself and for others alleviates the anguish of loneliness, playing the role of a companion, to whom the writer exposes himself, giving a 'proof of sincerity'". Thus, we see, in Ina's letters, at times a moment of relief, as a way of soothing the loneliness in a distant country, having to deal with such a different culture, while Brazilians see her only as a foreigner who ventured into education and, therefore, deserved a black woman to serve her. According to Conceição (2013), the epistolary practice is a written and audible procedure, with the meaning of a courtly conversation, which oscillates between the act of expressing oneself and holding oneself back. However, we do not intend to deal with the textual or discursive analysis found in the letters, but this could be a question for future research.

Ina's letters contain more than just descriptions of her time in a new country; through her writings, we can recover aspects of a society with social conflicts that were emerging, namely, slavery, the glimpse of the Republic, patriarchy, the massive

presence of governesses in the education of the aristocracy and the lack of a schooling project for the Brazilian people. In her letters, Ina reports the difficulty of understanding a society that does not prioritize education or the organization of schools. The educator raises some observations such as those highlighted by Grinberg (2017), as to why no one is concerned with seeking a better education for those so-called 'freed' who will one day be responsible for the country and need to be well educated.

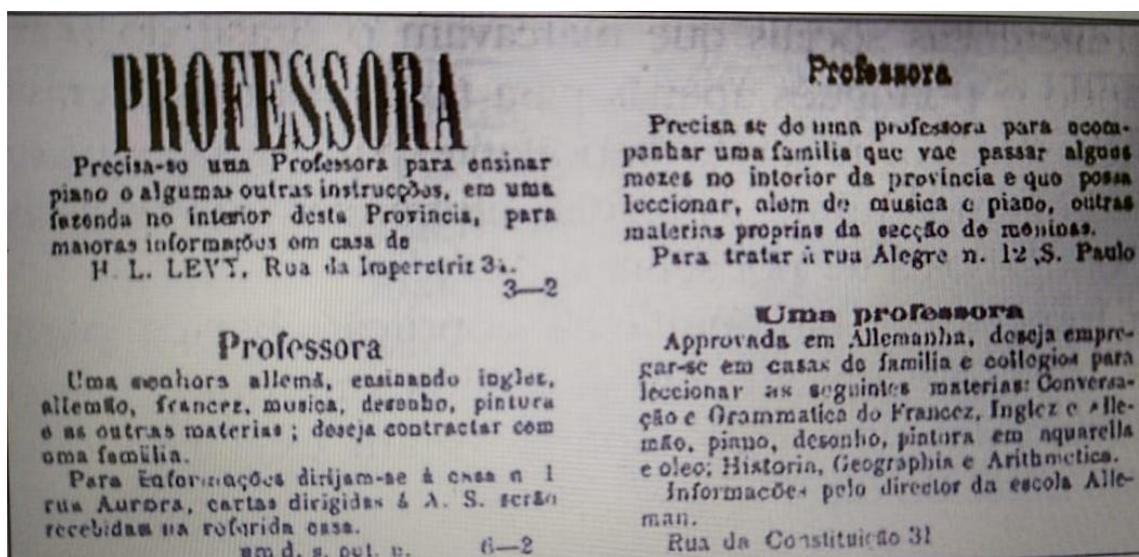
As we read the letters in more depth, we realized that the educator was trying to understand the relationships that occurred between whites and blacks in the places she visited. Leite (1997) emphasizes that travel writing produced by women has some advantages, as it appears in a literary panorama of travel, from a female perspective, marked by spontaneity and less formality and analysis, as it places itself on the margins of knowledge traditionally monopolized by men. However, regarding the topics addressed in the letters, the presence of black people enslaved in oligarchic families occurred with some frequency; and that, even on the eve of abolition, there was still no schooling project for the non-white population in Brazil. School knowledge was restricted to the private space of the home, where, until school age, white and non-white children fed on the same milk and played the same games, but their worlds took different directions after school age. Furthermore, Ina describes in detail the bed she slept in, which looked more like a rustic wooden bench, without a headboard, but with armrests on the sides, covered with a mattress stuffed with wild herbs and twigs; and the pillow, stuffed with flowers, looked more like a doll's. It is precisely because of the freedom to record her opinions that today we have the intricacies that make up the cultural richness of history, since the feminine perspective of the tutor Ina presents specificities of the society of the time that escaped the writings of men.

## THE TUTORS IN BRAZIL

During the nineteenth-century education system, Brazil received, in addition to German tutors, several other foreign women in similar situations, who came to the country in search of opportunities to teach in the homes of Brazilian elite families. According to Ritzkat (2000), around 1830, several European tutors sought work in other territories because they could no longer find jobs in their own countries due to the oversupply. The situation of European tutors highlighted the presence of white women advertising their qualifications in exchange for a home and, if possible, a salary for their work. According to Ritzkat, “[...] salaries in Brazil were quite attractive when compared to other countries” (Ritzkat, 2000, p. 278), which contributed even more to the interest of foreign women in the country.

In the newspapers of the time, it was common to find advertisements for teachers looking for and offering their work, as we can see below, in Figure 1<sup>1</sup>:

Image 1 - Newspaper Advertisements – Teachers - 19th Century



Source: Ritzkat (1999).

When looking at the advertisements, it is clear that the most sought-after qualifications for governesses were in-depth knowledge of French, English and German grammar, as well as piano, painting and drawing. In Brazil, as highlighted by the salary offer, European governesses were the most sought after, since old-world education was a reference for Brazilian society, especially when it came to the behavior of girls, which should be acquired under the bias of a governess trained in European educational references, also as acquiescence to a future intercontinental marriage.

Thus, the “[...] universe of tutoring was related to the classic law of supply and demand, represented, in this case, by the interest of European tutors in providing services to Brazilian families” (Albuquerque, 2013, p. 56). Due to a great demand for teachers for homeschooling, foreigners were interested in seeking opportunities to teach at a time when there was a demand for European education in Brazil.

<sup>1</sup> Translation of the contents of Figure 1: “Teacher: A teacher is needed to teach piano and some other instructions, on a farm in the interior of this Province [...]; Teacher: A German lady, who teaches English, German, French, music, drawing, painting and other subjects, wants to contact a family. [...]; Teacher: A teacher is needed to accompany a family that will spend a few months in the interior of the province and who can teach, in addition to music and piano, other subjects specific to the girls’ section. [...]; Teacher: Having been accepted in Germany, she wishes to work in families and schools to teach the following subjects: conversation and grammar in French, English, German, piano, drawing, watercolor and oil painting; history, geography and arithmetic. [...]”.

It is important to highlight that the preceptorship was not only an opportunity for European girls with such training but also a shelter for others, which is why they were also called governesses, as announced by *Jornal do Commercio* in 1882.

#### TEACHER

A single lady of good conduct and with some teaching experience needs to find a family home with children to teach primary education. She does not care about salary but wants to be treated as a member of the family. Anyone who is interested should write to the registry office on this page with the initials DMA (*Jornal do Commercio*, 1882 apud Ritzkat, 2000, p. 279).

The status of governesses led young women to seek jobs that also provided them with housing, even without having to pay a salary and, therefore, becoming what was considered as a member of the family. During the 19th century, women began to predominate in governesses, as they saw the profession as a way to advance professionally, without necessarily having to resort to marriage. Ritzkat (2000) highlights that many young women, when they did not achieve a good marriage, ended up choosing the path of teaching, as they had no other option, and were often undervalued and exploited by the conditions of governesses in the homes of their families, where they also lived.

When we look at the context of preceptorship, we see, through Ina's trajectory, a snapshot of the conditions of female tutors during the 19th century. Furthermore, socio-historical conditions are largely interconnected with the personal and professional careers of teachers. However, of so many female educators, “[...] few tutors left a record of their passage, hence the importance of Ina von Binzer's testimony to recover aspects of education [...]” (Ritzkat, 2000, p. 271).

## THE EDUCATION OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHILDREN

**Image 2** - Ina von Binzer (1882)



Source: Ritzkat (1999).

Ao chegar no Brasil, Ina von Binzer (Figura 2) foi trabalhar no interior do Rio de Janeiro, na fazenda São Francisco, que tinha como chefe o Dr. Rameiro. Foi contratada para ser preceptora, visto que as famílias, segundo Campos (2018), mesmo sem ter muita escolaridade, queriam que seus filhos tivessem uma educação moderna, com todos os saberes científicos da época, priorizando sobretudo a língua francesa.

Após a passagem pela fazenda, buscou trabalho em “[...] um colégio de moças; deu aulas aos filhos de uma rica família paulistana e terminou sua aventura pedagógica de volta a uma fazenda [...]” (Ritzkat, 2000, p. 270). Passando por lugares distintos, a preceptora alemã revela que, antes de embarcar ao Brasil, havia formado um pré-conceito dos brasileiros, ouvindo dizer que eram pessoas ‘selvagens’, sem bons costumes, visto a alta densidade de indígenas e das extensas paisagens de florestas. Contudo, seus conhecimentos prévios foram reelaborados assim que pisou nas terras brasileiras. “[...] Não lhes poderei contar nenhum assalto dos indígenas, nem mesmo uma luta contra tigres [...] tendo chegado até cá sem incidentes” (Binzer, 2017, p. 17). Adiante, Ina descreve sobre suas vivências entre a aristocracia brasileira, “[...] não existe quase brasileiro que não fale francês, embora alguns deles possuem apenas uma vaga noção sobre o país a que essa língua pertence [...]” (Binzer, 2017, p. 18).

Upon arriving in Brazil, Ina von Binzer (Figure 2) went to work in the interior of Rio de Janeiro, on the São Francisco farm, which was run by Dr. Rameiro. She was hired to be a tutor, since, according to Campos (2018), the families, even without much education, wanted their children to have a modern education, with all the scientific knowledge of the time, prioritizing above all the French language.

After her time on the farm, she looked for work at “[...] a girls’ school; she taught the children of a wealthy family from São Paulo and ended her pedagogical adventure back on a farm [...]” (Ritzkat, 2000, p. 270). Passing through different places, the German tutor reveals that, before embarking for Brazil, she had formed a preconception of Brazilians, hearing that they were ‘savage’ people, without good customs, given the high density of indigenous people and the extensive forest landscapes. However, her previous knowledge was reworked as soon as she set foot on Brazilian lands. “[...] I cannot tell you about any attack by the indigenous people, not even a fight against tigers [...] having arrived here without incidents” (Binzer, 2017, p. 17). Further on, Ina describes her experiences among the Brazilian aristocracy, “[...] there is almost no Brazilian who does not speak French, although some of them only have a vague notion about the country to which this language belongs [...]” (Binzer, 2017, p. 18).

Furthermore, the German tutor “[...] constantly compares her country of origin and her new one – social habits, landscapes, clothes, food, academic practices [...]” (Johnson, 1996, p. 137). In one of her letters, we find accounts of her experience with food, in which she describes that her stomach is having a hard time getting used to lard and the unchanging food of Brazilian cuisine, in which meals consist of black beans, unsalted cornmeal cake, cornmeal, corn, cassava, and sun-dried meat, very different from German food. Another point she highlights is the lack of punctuality among Brazilians, claiming that “[...] in Brazil, anyone who is very punctual must not be regulating things well” (Binzer, 2017, p. 58), and here she describes her students on the farm, who almost always arrive late, especially for German classes.

For many foreign tutors hired to teach in families’ homes, the greatest difficulty was communicating with their students, since many families did not have a repertoire of languages. Furthermore, in the constant presence of slaves, they preferred to speak in Portuguese. In this sense, European tutors were sought out to teach French, English and, less frequently, German. However, this was not always stimulating for the students, as he highlighted in one of his letters. “We struggled through the German class, always with the help of French, which is still the best resource, because when they start speaking German, I don’t understand a thing” (Binzer, 2017, p. 25).

In order to improve their teaching methods, Albuquerque (2013) highlights that the tutors needed to enter the culture in which their pupils were inserted in order to be able to teach the children something. Furthermore, infiltrating Brazilian culture and getting to know the social context was a way for the tutors to get closer to the

families and not face resistance from them. During her stay in Brazil, Ina described several events held by Brazilians, such as the noisy São João, Carnival and Christmas parties. According to the author Johnson (1996), although she was frightened by the behavior of Brazilians during festive celebrations, she began to experience Brazilian culture and relate it to memories of her country. It was a strategy to feel close to her family and a way to have fun with the new social context.

The presence of black people in agricultural and domestic work for their masters is also something that caught Ina's attention in her letters from the beginning. On Dr. Rameiro's first farm, she describes that there were an average of two hundred slaves, including women, men and children. In this context, she describes that she became uncomfortable with the presence of so many black people serving her, especially her slave Olímpia.

[...] “my black woman” so far this is the best part of my letter – and how nice it sounds, doesn't it? Her name is Olympia, which makes it decidedly more impressive when she answers me submissively and in any circumstance: “yes, ma'am”, even if I'm arguing with her. [...] her “yes, ma'am” is very common here, as for example in Berlin *gnädige Frau*. But this constant “yes, ma'am” ends up making us feel a bit brutish, because she uses this expression all the time and especially when she doesn't understand my Portuguese, which happens several times a day (Binzer, 2017, p. 19, emphasis added).

Upset, she tells her friend Grete about the working conditions of the enslaved. “Seven years ago, a slave was burned to death on the farm of Mme.'s brother [...] this is horrible, but it seems to have happened quite often, unfortunately” (Binzer, 2017, p. 42). Regarding the day of rest for black workers, it is the boss who decides on the best day, since it cannot be the same as the day on the neighboring farm, in order to avoid interaction between the workers. Regarding the enslaved, Ina's perceptions dialogue with the findings of other foreigners of the time, as we see in the passage of the traveling naturalist couple, Louis Agassiz and Elizabeth Cabot Agassiz, who passed through Brazil in 1865 and 1866, during the project of Europeanization of the world outlined by the German naturalist Alexandre Humboldt.

[...] a black man who has a firm intention can win his freedom, and once he has obtained it, there is no longer any obstacle to his raising his social or political status. But if, in this respect, slavery is much less absolute than it was in the United States, in other respects it is even more saddening. Slaves, at least in the cities, are true beasts of burden. Heavy furniture, pianos, sideboards, heavy suitcases, barrels piled one on top of the other, all of this, even boxes of sugar and sacks of coffee weighing over a hundred pounds, are carried

through the streets on the heads of the blacks. Because of this, these unfortunates often have their legs bent; it is not uncommon to see them, in the depths of old age, completely bent or crippled, and with difficulty walking with a stick in their hands (Agassiz & Agassiz, 2000, pp. 83-84).

Likewise, Ina raised some concerns about abolition, which could generate a state of calamity, since “[...] all work is done by black people, all wealth is acquired by black hands, because Brazilians do not work [...]” (Binzer, 2017, p. 48). Therefore, how can Brazilians survive without slaves, given that they do not have the physical strength to do manual work on farms and their only economic instability comes from work on plantations and mining, mainly carried out by black people?

Brazilians should organize among their own people a working class that they do not yet have, as well as create a class of artisans; they would achieve this goal successfully if they sent freed black children to practice a regular trade. But just the opposite happened: the Emancipation Law of September 28, 1871, determined, among other things, that slave owners should teach all these children to read and write. In the entire empire, however, there are perhaps not even ten houses where this requirement is met (Binzer, 2017, p. 168).

After a year of living there, in 1882, the educator began to recognize the need for schools for the children of slaves, due to the prospect of the approach of emancipation. Binzer (2017), in one of the letters, asks how a former slave could claim his rights if, until then, they had never been granted them, being treated with ignorance and inurbanity. Like Marcusso, we notice in the letters that “[...] slavery is perhaps the only theme that runs through practically the entire book [...] 1881 to 1883 – when abolition was already considered unstoppable by a good part of the ruling class” (Marcusso, 2012, p. 362).

Furthermore, she highlights the countless adversities in such a distant country, when she ended up getting sick from the stress of the noise in her first family's house, developing 'neuralgia', a disease that was responsible for her leaving Dr. Rameiro's farm. After leaving the São Francisco Farm, in the interior of Rio de Janeiro, Ina began teaching at a girls' school near the city of Rio de Janeiro; even so, she began to feel lonely. "I'm depressed and dead tired [...]" (Binzer, 2017, p. 80). It is clear that the educator begins to feel lonely and homesick, and so, after a year, she considers the idea of saving money and returning to Germany.

After facing several challenges in distant lands, mainly in relation to her classes, with imminent daily objections which often generated questions about the pedagogical knowledge acquired during her school years, she decided to move to São Paulo.

Day 22. Today, I went to see the pastor of the community here and the German consul. They were both very attentive and the consul, who is a smart man and knows how to take Brazilians into account, advised me to go preferably to the Province of São Paulo, to try to get a job there, because the one I have is not the position for me; in São Paulo I will also find other colleagues. He told me this and I have been looking in the *Jornal do Comércio* for anything that might help me, among the advertisements for runaway slaves and slave sales, which is also where teachers with immense ability and countless perfections are sought (Binzer, 2017, p. 90).

In the province of São Paulo, her perceptions about Brazilian social reality changed: “[...] São Paulo is the best place in Brazil for educators [...] we are a university city!” (Binzer, 2017, p. 123). In the capital of São Paulo, the tutor met other Germans who were going through the same situation, which comforted her, leading her to postpone her return home; later, she ventured to Fazenda São Sebastião, where things seemed more fun.

## THE CHILDREN'S PLACE

In the nineteenth century, in addition to the historical issues related to Brazilian politics and economy, it is essential to understand the relationship between children and schooling at a time when childhood was beginning to be recognized. In the face of so many objections, the social construction of the concept in modern French times began to influence the context of school education at the time.

The 19th century in the West was marked by the development of the concept of childhood. Thus, research began on child development and the understanding of this stage in human life, as well as the importance of school, from an Enlightenment perspective. According to Ariès (1986), the concept of childhood emerged in the early days of an industrial society, in which formal learning became the responsibility of the school, and the family became the place of affection. However, in Brazil, the first schooling still occurred under the yoke of the family mediated by a tutor:

Here, classes are from seven to ten; then comes the hot lunch, for which Madame Rameiro makes us wait uselessly until ten-thirty, so that I can no longer leave, because, as soon as I have the last bite, I have to go back to class. We continue until one o'clock, when we have thirty minutes for snack; at one-thirty the piano lessons begin and last until five, when dinner is served (Binzer, 2017, p. 32).

The study routine, in the context of the aristocracy, as described by Ina's routine at the Rameiro Farm, corresponded to only a portion of Brazilian children (Del Priori, 2010). The recent understanding of childhood, interpreted as an age that requires special attention, instruction and care, had not yet reached children in Brazil. For Del Priori (2010), the concept of childhood highlighted by Ariès (1986) is based on a Europeanized model of childhood, which contemplated a portion of the children of monarchs, investigated from the perspective of medieval paintings. However, the European education model extended to the Brazilian oligarchy, as we see in the account of a German tutor; but it failed to contemplate the children of slaves, indigenous people, tenants, small farmers, among others.

For Gondra and Schueler (2008, p. 225):

In a society in which childhood time was still imprecise, fluid – and plural and variable according to the division of social groups and conditions of class, ethnicity and gender –, the experience of care, games and childhood fun tended to end early, especially for slave children, but also for free and poor children, who began learning trades and performing various tasks, generally around 4-5 to 12 years of age [...].

With little expansion, public education in the European model, according to Del Priore (2010), came to Portuguese America in the 18th century, with the Marquis of Pombal, who encouraged the construction of some school buildings. These schools were built and modified over time, according to the needs of Brazilian society and government ideals, and involved political, economic and social factors. The period was marked by a division of education in society: “[...] secondary education of general culture for the education of the elites and primary education aimed at the education of workers” (Souza, 2000, p. 14). The concern was with teaching the first letters and the education of young people for the adult world. Thus, the curriculum included “[...] simultaneous learning between reading and writing, the inclusion of new grammar and spelling content and its result, the practice of writing texts” (Souza, 2013, p. 18). The emphasis was not on the development of children, but on the moral training of children for adult life.

Regarding public education, Veiga (2016) highlights that the objective of education was not to offer qualified education to the poorest, but to 'civilize' them for the expertise of social coexistence. During the 19th century, “[...] the way out for the children of the poor would not be education, but their transformation into useful and productive citizens in agriculture, while the children of a small elite were taught by private teachers” (Del Priore, 2010, p. 236).

Public schools, attended by the children of certain workers, were, for the most part, centers of several problems related to their structuring, pedagogical

organization, teacher training and other related issues. The Imperial Constitution of 1824 granted free primary education for all citizens (art. 179, XXXII) and the establishment of colleges and universities, where the elements of science, fine arts and literature would be taught (art. 179, XXXIII) (Constitution..., 1824). We can see in our first Imperial Constitution, the non-recognition of the right to education for black and indigenous people, a proposal that later became a project of whiteness.

Since the mid-19th century, Brazilian elites have been concerned about the future of the country, given our racial and cultural heterogeneity. They were influenced by the then-current European and North American racist theories that postulated a hierarchy between races and placed Asian and black peoples at the lowest levels of this hierarchy. At the end of the 19th century, a conciliatory solution was reached: Brazil should aspire to progress by “whitening” its population (Müller, 2008, p. 47, emphasis added).

Regarding those excluded from schools, Gondra and Schueler (2008) emphasize that children of slaves were always taught by older people or even by slaves who had already been freed. However, this teaching was not about 'literature', but rather about an education in manual labor, similar to what happened during the Middle Ages. There were some masters who even enrolled enslaved workers in schools, but this was an uncommon practice, given that the masters believed that enslaved people did not need education, since their destinies were tied to remaining in manual labor. In the 18th century, there were several debates for the “[...] delimitation of the target audience of schools and for the expansion of the rights to education [...] including proposals to educate and civilize Indians, black slaves or freedmen, and to improve the education offered to women” (Gondra & Schueler, 2008, p. 231).

A minority of slaves began to occupy space in public schools during the 19th century, and then other problems began to emerge, such as discrimination in the classroom by white parents who preferred to educate their children at home rather than leave them in the classroom with black and poor classmates. The practice gained such momentum that, according to Veiga (2016), in 1835, there was such a shortage of children in schools that fines began to be applied to parents who did not send their children to the institution, considering them negligent.

With the proposal of a poorly qualified public education, due to the mix of workers and oligarchs, home education was the best option for wealthy families, through the hiring of private tutors. “It was common among the wealthiest families to import tutors or send their children to study in Europe, or enroll them in foreign schools [...]” (Oliveira, 2000, p. 37).

Ina von Binzer passed through Brazil during the decade in which there was the greatest demand for tutors for home education, recognized even by legislation regarding the mandatory nature of education.

The 1880s were the years in which there was the highest frequency of advertisements regarding the supply and demand for home education services throughout the 19th century, which provided broader evidence for the study of this practice designated as tutors, female teachers, also called “governesses”. [...] it was not an “informal” education, but a recognized form of education, even in legislation and official documents referring to the obligation of education, fulfilling this obligation by parents who sent their sons, daughters and children under their responsibility to be educated in the family home (Vasconcelos, 2018, pp. 289-290, author’s emphasis).

It is interesting to note that families chose their tutors not only based on their education, but also gave preference to educators who came from certain countries, such as Germany, since the country was considered a reference in European school content. Even so, Ina encountered difficulties, as she wrote on May 29, 1882:

My Roman disciples are really very ill-mannered and I have to resort to various pedagogical resources to deal with them. I cannot under any circumstances leave the two youngest alone, downstairs, working in the study, while upstairs I give piano lessons to Lavinia (Binzer, 2017, p. 108).

In terms of home education, Brazilian families prioritized elementary education for boys, so that they could later enter high school, and, for girls, teaching behavior and good manners. “The tutors were responsible for school, moral, and ethical education, and for girls, behavioral education so that they could participate in society as ladies” (Campos, 2018, p. 413). In relation to the education of women in Brazil, we have again the Agassiz couple, who were given the instructions to observe and record, in addition to the fauna and flora, the knowledge possessed by local communities – from indigenous populations, through their colonizers, to slaves.

In general, in Brazil, little attention is paid to women's education; the level of instruction given in girls' schools is very low; even in boarding schools attended by the daughters of the wealthy classes, all teachers complain that students are removed precisely at the age when their intelligence begins to develop. Most girls sent to school enter at the age of seven or eight; at thirteen or fourteen they are considered to have finished their studies. Marriage stalks them and is not long in taking them (Agassiz & Agassiz, 2000, p. 435).

The foreign eyes that landed in Rio de Janeiro followed a similar route. According to Leite (2000, p. 133), “[...] most travelers were inspired by this global research project [of Alexandre Humboldt], even when they had more explicit political purposes”. Thus, women such as Maria Graham and Ida Pfeiffer, in the first half of the 19th century, Teresa of Bavaria, Annie Brassey and Ina von Binzer, who refused the role prescribed for women and ventured on long sea voyages, did not fail to record with penetrating observation the place of women in Brazilian society, especially with regard to education. They disembarked in Brazil at a time when female children were not sent to schools, they remained at home, and were instructed for a 'good marriage', as well as piano and French poetry lessons. According to Vasconcelos (2018), in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the only profession that women could choose was that of educator/tutor. Apart from that, they were left with the task of guardian of the home and family.

## FINAL REMARKS

When reading Ina von Binzer 's letters, we find in her writings the bias of yet another foreign perspective, recorded by a woman, on nineteenth-century Brazilian society, especially with regard to education, which, like other authors, reveals the socio-historical conflicts of the last decade of Imperial Brazil. From the perspective of a history of culture, Ina's correspondence , which at first glance may seem like a book of mediocre confessions from a young tutor to her friend Grete, is here elevated to a source of research that directly dialogues with the historiography of Brazilian education. We are aware that this is a work that is not finished, but it could constitute an attempt to drive new research. Finally, we would like to emphasize that the questions raised by the author in her letters reverberate in others that we can still find today, as Lapo (2001) has well explained. Thus, Ina's letters are important primary sources for studies in education, history, sociology and literary theory in the light of contemporary theories.

During the course of the work, we identified the reading and interpretation of a tutor on Brazilian education who until then was not so familiar with the division between white and non-white people. According to Campos (2018), Ina witnessed a period in Brazil that was undergoing political, economic and social transformations, in which schooling was restricted to family spaces, and schools were for a few. On the eve of abolition, enslaved people found themselves in a situation of helplessness, without any policy from the Imperial Government. They invisibly lived in society, recognized only as subordinate labor in the economic upheaval, which was taking shape a posteriori, in the perspective of a whitened Republic.

However, we highlight here three main issues found in Ina von Binzer's letters, namely: 1) The lack of investment in the construction and expansion of public schools, favoring instead the propagation of a specific private education for boys and another

for girls; 2) The failure to recognize the right to education for non-white people; 3) The educational duality that marks the trajectory of Brazilian education. Thus, choosing epistolary research to understand contemporary education in Brazil was quite appropriate, since, from the perspective of cultural history, the evidence found in the letters is better understood when questioned by future inquiries.

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