



“Everything is so far in time, and here everything is present, so alive, reaching my quill pen”¹. Piauí education and autobiographical writing in the work of Cristino Castelo Branco (1892-1931)²

“Tão longe tudo no tempo, e aqui tudo presente, tão vivo, me acorrendo ao bico da pena”. Escrita autobiográfica e educação piauiense na obra de Cristino Castelo Branco (1892- 1931)

“Hasta ahora todo en el tiempo, y aquí todo está presente, tan vivo, corriendo hacia la pluma de mi pluma”. Escritura autobiográfica y educación de Piauí en la obra de Cristino Castelo Branco (1892-1931).

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the autobiographical writing and education in Piauí through a bibliographic search of the works, *Frases e Notas* and *Escritos de Vário Assunto*, by Cristino Castelo Branco. As a theoretical framework for analysis, this study is based on the assumptions of the following authors: Brito (1996); Mendes (2012); Queiroz (2008); Ferro (1996); Lopes (2006, 2010) and Gomes (2004), among others. As a timeframe, the year of 1892 was chosen for being the year of his birth, and the year of 1931 as the end, due to his entry as Judge in Piauí State Court of Justice. The analyzes comprised in this study lead to reflections on the writing of the self, becoming a teacher, school premises and educational ideals in Piauí during the First Republic, based on the work of Cristino Castelo Branco.

Keywords: Writing of the Self. Educational Thinking. Education in the First Republic.

¹ Phrase taken from the book “Frases e Notas”, by Cristino Castelo Branco.

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Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a escrita autobiográfica e a educação piauiense por intermédio de uma pesquisa bibliográfica nas obras, Frases e Notas e Escritos de Vário Assunto, de autoria de Cristino Castelo Branco. Como referencial teórico de análise, este estudo fundamenta-se nos pressupostos dos seguintes autores: Brito (1996); Mendes (2012); Queiroz (2008); Ferro (1996); Lopes (2006, 2010); e Gomes (2004), entre outros. Como recorte temporal, designou-se o ano de 1892, data de seu nascimento, e o ano de 1931 como término, devido ao seu ingresso como Desembargador no Tribunal de Justiça do Estado do Piauí. As análises empreendidas neste trabalho levam a reflexões sobre a escrita de si, o constituir-se professor, os espaços escolares e os ideais educacionais piauienses durante a Primeira República, a partir da obra de Cristino Castelo Branco.

Palavras-Chave: Escrita de si. Pensamento Educacional. Educação na Primeira República.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la escritura autobiográfica y la educación en Piauí a través de una investigación bibliográfica sobre las obras, Frases y Notas y Escritos de Vário Assunto, de Cristino Castelo Branco. Como marco teórico para el análisis, este estudio se basa en los supuestos de los siguientes autores: Brito (1996); Mendes (2012); Queiroz (2008); Ferro (1996); Lopes (2006, 2010); y Gomes (2004), entre otros. Como marco temporal, se designó el año 1892, la fecha de su nacimiento y el año 1931 como el final, debido a su ingreso como Juez en el Tribunal de Justicia del Estado de Piauí. Los análisis emprendidos en este trabajo conducen a reflexiones sobre autobiografía, convirtiéndose en maestro, espacios escolares e ideales educativos en Piauí durante la Primera República, basados en el trabajo de Cristino Castelo Branco.

Palabras clave: Autobiografía. Pensamiento Educativo. La educación en la primera república

Introduction

The ideas of Cristino Castelo Branco were seen for the first time in the library of the Academy of Languages of Piauí (APL), during the research related to the doctorate degree. In that opportunity I came across a speech addressed to the normalist students from Piauí, during the time he was the Director of the public education, which drew attention for reflecting all the ideals of a time regarding the image of being a teacher, methods, school premises, school practices, educational thinking and public policies.

During the time he was the Director of the public education in Piauí (1927-1930), there was an expansion of schools in the State, which is why I resorted to his speeches and books that showed the great contribution he made to State education during the First Republic, even before he was appointed Judge at Piauí State Court of Justice. As a timeframe, the year of 1892 was chosen for being his birthdate, and the year of 1931 as the end, due to his entry as Judge in Piauí State Court of Justice.

In the first contact with his writing, it was realized how much it holds the reader: full of details, memory portraits, reporting a time and describing people, objects and life itself. Indeed, the author reveals his experiences and the perceptions of an era, which we began to feel from his writing and the feelings expressed in the ideas of those who loved his memory intensely.

For this reason, many questions arose, which support this text: how was his literacy, elementary and secondary education? Where did he study higher education? How was his professional life? What did he think about education?

From research, it was found out that Cristino, besides being a lawyer, was a teacher, a director of public education, a journalist and a judge. It is believed that in the State of Piauí, he is best remembered for his performance in the judiciary system and not as a teacher. Therefore, in this work, I focused his trajectory of life on his training path as a teacher and principal of public education, revealing his contribution to education in Piauí, through a bibliographic research that includes the works '*Frases e Notas*', of 1957, and '*Escritos de Vário Assunto*', of 1968.

In addition, it was crosschecked his autobiographical writings and those of the authors from Piauí, who addressed the history of education, such as Brito (1996); Mendes (2012); Queiroz (2008); Ferro (1996); Lopes (2006), among others. Also as a theoretical contribution to the theme of *autobiography and history of education*, this study is underpinned by Gomes (2004).

Writing of the self and the school premises

In the book *Frases e Notas*, of 1957, in the chapter *Notas retrospectivas*, Cristino Castelo Branco produces what is called writing of himself.

Self-referential writing or self-writing is part of a set of modalities of what is conventionally called self-production in the western world. This denomination can be better understood from the idea of a relationship that has been established between the modern individual and his documents. (GOMES, 2004, p. 10)

I think Cristino Castelo Branco tried to create his writing, as Gomes (2004) calls *memory theater*, that is, “a space that gives increasing prominence to the storage of records that materialize the history of the individual and the groups to which he belongs” (GOMES, 2004, p. 11). An example of this can be seen when the author portrays the story of Clodoaldo Freitas and, likewise in the work *Homens que iluminam*.

Apparently, with his writing, he wanted to offer the world where he lived a special sense of his trajectory, of what he thought deserved to be remembered. In this perspective, I

suppose that writing about the aspects of his life in his book, [...] Cristino was aware that his writings recorded a memory that would survive his history and that of others. His texts constitute specific stages of a life, such as birth, marriage, occupation - what we can call “multiple temporalities” (GOMES, 2004, p. 18).

In this opportunity, he introduces the retrospective notes stating that he thought he arrived too early in a very new world, and within three hundred years, the world would be better, defining himself as conformed to the time in which he lived, considering the situations imposed by God, hence the reason his life would be remembered.

The autobiographical writing and its relationship with the field of the history of education has increased, when using sources aimed at analyzing a certain period of time. In Piauí, Lopes (2006, p. 12) makes an interesting observation when mentioning that autobiographical writings have been developed especially by men, “a sign that the practice of writing about themselves and their experiences, in an exhibition of their trajectory, was an indication of public importance of their position in the world.”

The mentioned author makes this assertion based on the fact that, of a total of 33 autobiographical texts, 28 were written by men and only five by women. One hypothesis is that they occupied the literary spaces and had access to the means of publicizing their writings, considering the period between 1939 and 2005.

Cristino was born on July 24, 1892, at do Fio Street, nowadays Coelho Rodrigues Street, Teresina - PI. He was the son of Joaquim Ferreira Castelo Branco and Adelina Couto Castelo Branco. His mother, who died on June 30, 1905 when he was 13 years old, is described as “a woman who was still young, friendly, intelligent, full of grace and liveliness, who was considered, by the verve she had, the charm of the people and the lectures she took part in”(CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 122).

The absence of a father, who was a bookkeeper, merchant and municipal public employee, who died on November 15, 1933 at the age of 72, denotes a profound loss, as reported in the verses: “it finished; the life of whom was a powerful light for me, illuminating the peaks of life in the world, ended forever” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 122).

As a child, he would fly a kite, play a spinning top, go to the novena, climb the walls and trees, walk the streets and squares, ride a sheep and he enjoyed listening to the lectures between his father and friends. In his memories, Agostinha’s tray of sweets and the boarding of the 35th Battalion to Canudos, on the riverside, are present, in addition to the nights of São João and São Pedro. The diseases, like measles, chicken pox or very strong flu, at the time of his childhood, were treated by Dr. Areolino, a family doctor: “cockeyed and circumspect, looking sideways, very straight in his alpaca tailcoat; the same or identical to the first day of the century on which he spoke eloquently” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 125).

He had his elementary education in the primary classes of Sinhá Borges, in a large and airy room on Paissandu Street. He recalls the multiplication tables and reading lessons in Felisberto Carvalho. Maria Emílgia Castelo Branco, her teacher, was known as Sinhá Borges, according to Ferro (1996), who was responsible for guiding the girls at Colégio Nossa Senhora das Dores, a school founded in 1882, under the direction of Miguel de Sousa Borges Leal Castelo Branco; due to the Principal’s health problems, Professor Marcelino Ferreira Borges Castelo Branco took over from 1887.

When he died, the school was acquired by Antonio de Sousa Rubim. The institution operated as a boarding school and day school, receiving boys and girls. Apparently, after the school was closed down, Sinhá Borges continued to teach elementary classes - she was his fifth cousin, which demanded greater respect from the student, who called her aunt and took her blessing.

Then, he attended Colégio do Luís Sabino, on the former Grande Street, in a big house on the corner, which at that time was famous for the discipline and severity of the punishments throughout Piauí.

I had the misfortune to see and hear some parents, while enrolling their children, say in cruel recommendation: ‘Mr. Luís, beat with the stick.’ That was, unfortunately, the pedagogical mentality of the time, which excuses the teacher’s toughness, who in fact always treated me humanly, with gentleness and softness. It is true that my father, champion of common sense, and enlightened by the heart, never made such a recommendation (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p.125).

At the age of eleven, he started the preparatory study at Liceu Piauiense. When studying José Ribeiro’s Grammar and the excerpts from the book *Iracema*, by José de Alencar, he counted on the teachers Casusa Avelino, Otávio Falcão, Acrísio Veras, Higino Cunha, among others. Thus, in 1906, at the age of fourteen, he completed the ten preparatory studies required for enrollment in the College of Law.

As a Liceist³, he was at Afonso Pena disembarkation. In Piauí, in his memoirs, his teachers are notable, like Antônio Freire:

my former geometry teacher at Liceu Piauiense. Active and intelligent, he became very interested in the things of public education, to which he issued an important regulation that was in force for several years; he was the founder of the Model School and the Normalist School in Teresina (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p.153).

From his memories, we have contact with several subjects, such as Antonino Freire, Miguel Rosa, Higino Cunha, because as he recalls his experiences, he manifests different experiences, as Lopes (2006, p. 23) reports:

Finally, the autobiographical writings enable a heterogeneous view of formative processes and help us to rethink the schooling process and educational actions from different perspectives and experiences. Several subjects intersect these memories, making us recognize the plurality of the world and its reconstructions.

Miguel Rosa was his teacher of Brazilian history; Higino Cunha, the English teacher - former disciple of Tobias Barreto, one of the exponents of the cultural life of the State, about whom he referred: “He does not know whether he has aged, because the anxieties, the longings, the magnificent and tremendous revolts that make up the beauty and the eternity of life are with him, inside his heart. He does not know yet if he will die, because the true glory of men and their marks do not die.” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 169).

He exalted the intelligent men of Piauí at that time: Abdias Neves, Antonino Freire, Miguel Rosa, Clodoaldo Freitas, Higino Cunha, Elias Martins and Manuel Lopes Correia. At that time, there was a struggle between Freemasonry and the clergy. Among the students, “the prejudice against Catholics was similar to an unintelligent being, because men considered more intelligent claimed to be atheists and they scorned the priests” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 130).

³ Student that studied at Lyceum in Piauí.

This aspect suggests the constitution of social relations, built, mostly, inside school premises and transferred to other environments, “leading us to think about the place of the school, the construction of these sociability plots and the constitution of an important social capital in the students’ future professional life.” (LOPES, 2006, p. 23).

Thus, on April 5, 1907, he embarked to Recife, in the company of Wladimir Abreu, Hugo Napoleão and Raul Martins, who would also start the law course. The trip was considered to be long, as they traveled by train to Caxias, in Maranhão, from where they followed by steamboat, ‘The Itapecuru’, in order to wait for the Loide ship in São Luís. He arrived in Recife on April 16, after eleven days of journey: “a great city, with its bridges, streets of houses, full of people, considerable commerce, the movement of the port, the illustrious teachers, the academic environment saturated with so-called new ideas that stunned freshmen.” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 132).

In line with Ferro (1996), Piauí, at that time, still did not have railroads, and the displacement to Maranhão was carried out using the Cajazeiras railroad (nowadays Timon), via Caxias. Such trips occurred because there were no higher education courses in the State, so students had to emigrate to other cities, namely:

Recife, Pernambuco, mainly for the College of Law, where several people from Piauí graduated or for the Seminary of Olinda;
Salvador, in Bahia, preferably in search of courses in the health area, such as Medicine and Pharmacy;
São Luís do Maranhão, to attend the Mercês Seminar;
Rio de Janeiro - for medical courses or engineering courses at the Polytechnic School of the former capital of the country. (FERRO, 1996, p. 96)

The College of Law, in Recife, operated in an old mansion in the Church of Espírito Santo, in Praça Dezessete. Created in 1827, it was based in Olinda until 1854. “I took college studies very seriously, and for this very reason I got the highest score in a class of about one hundred students, where there were people from all the states of Brazil” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p.133).

In his memories, Cristino showed the daily life of the College of Law, where he had to redouble his studies due to fear caused by his colleagues. Thus, he was approved with distinction in Roman Law and Philosophy of Law, praised by Professor Laurindo Leão; as well as in Civil Law, under the responsibility of Henrique Milet: “without a doubt, I would not be, poor boy from Piauí, the most intelligent and prepared student in the class, but certain qualities of exposure and a strong spirit of synthesis gave me primacy.” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 134).

When writing about himself, he brings up activities that are part of his own definition. Therefore, his identity is markedly built by his performance in the public sphere. Cristino lived in several sororities in Recife, the last one on Augusta Street, an opportunity where he kept in touch with Lucídio Freitas, Nogueira Tapeti, among other people from Piauí and Maranhão. He described the sororities of that time as centers of coexistence where there was harmony, study and new ideas, and almost all students preferred to live that way, because in addition to feeling at ease, they formed bonds of friendship.

In fact, he points out that there were many students from Piauí at that time in Recife, who were often helped by Olímpio Costa, also from Piauí. He also recalled the free prescriptions for students, issued by the doctor Otávio de Freitas, by the dentist Marcelino Sampaio Castelo Branco, both fellow citizens.

At the age of nineteen, Cristino completed the course, getting his degree on December 11, 1911, at the college building, on Adolfo Cirne Square. The guest speaker of his class was

Barreto Campelo, and the representative, Gervásio Fiovaranti; as friends, he cited Francisco Cavalcanti Pontes de Miranda and Bráulio Cavalcanti, and some Piauí people, such as: Raimundo Cunha, Nogueira Tapeti⁴, Afonso Soares, Corinto Andrade, Wladimir Abreu, Esmaragado de Freitas and Nilo Brito.

Upon completing the course, he returned to his homeland at the beginning of the 20th century. In Piauí, a wide range of bachelors worked actively in the local press: “bachelor who did not write for the newspaper and did not make a speech, was suspected to be stupid” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 139).

Upon returning, he collaborated to *Piauí*, a newspaper that belonged to the Republican Party of Piauí, and *Diary of Piauí*, directed by Simplício Mendes. His writing addressed several subjects, among which the Rivadavia Correia Reform drew attention. By the way, it can be seen here his interest in the topic of education, especially about educational thinking and current public policies. His writing leads to reflection beyond his autobiographical account, bringing the story of the time in which he lived.

It seems that the author of the autobiographical “report deals with something that is not reduced to merely his personal existence, but it can also serve to build a history of the city or of Piauí, considering his view, regarded as a remarkable subject of this history” (LOPES, 2006, p. 20).

According to Camilo Filho (1986), Cristino Castelo Branco was highlighted in Languages in Piauí alongside other names, such as Higino Cunha, Clodoaldo Freitas, Anísio Brito, Abdias Neves and Lucídio Freitas.

In this way, he entered the teaching profession as a French teacher, at Lyceum of Piauí and at Normalist School, having taught together with his former teacher, Acriso Veras. Thus, in that same year, Anísio Brito was appointed; in addition, he started in the practice of Law in 1917, exercising judicial magistrate in Brejo, Maranhão; later, he returns to Teresina in 1919, continuing his collaboration to *Jornal O Piauí*. Moreover, in 1921, he begins his services as a lawyer for the city hall. The teaching staff of Normalist School, according to Piauí (1928), was composed of:

Portuguese - Professor Martins Napoleão and Firmina Sobreira who replaced the regular professor Leopoldo Cunha.

French - Doctors Christino Castelo Branco and Audemaro Motta

Arithmetic and Algebra - Doctors Area Leão and Luís Mendes Ribeiro Gonçalves

Geometry - Doctor AC Vieira da Cunha

Drawing - Álvaro Freire

Geography - Doctor A. Celestino Franco de Sá

Universal and Brazilian History - Doctor Anísio de Brito Mello

Natural History - Doctor M. Sotero Vaz da Silveira

Pedagogy - Lélia de Moraes Avelino

Music - Dona Firmina Sobreira Cardoso

Needlework - Dona Maria de Lourdes Martins Rêgo

It is noteworthy that in 1917, the Academy of Languages of Piauí was founded, and the Historical and Geographical Institute of Piauí in 1918, which shows the interest in humanities and social-historical studies, according to Ferro (1996).

Cristino marries Dulcila Santana Castelo Branco on January 17, 1914. In 1925, he returned to classes at Lyceum and Normalist School, teaching French and Moral and Civic

⁴Benedito Francisco Nogueira Tapeti.

Instruction. On January 1, 1927, he assumed the post of General Director of Public Education, where he remained until October 4, 1930.

During his tenure as Director of Public Education, the centenary of primary education was held in Brazil, an opportunity in which a great event was held in Teresina, starting at seven in the morning, bringing together all schools in the Demóstenes Avelino Group, from where they followed to Praça Marechal Deodoro. In front of the Normalist School, they practiced Swedish gymnastics exercises and sang the hymn of the first centenary of primary education, as shown in the agenda:

At 10 am at Igreja do Amparo a mass is celebrated by Father Zaul Pedreira. At 2 pm, there will be a civic session in the noble hall of the Normalist School, where teachers Firmina Sobreira, Lélia Avelino and Maria Dina Soares will give a speech. At the Olympia cinema at 5:12 pm, there will be a session for children. The parties will end with a dancing tea at 7 pm at Normalist School. ENSINO1927, p. 1)

At that time, several school groups were built, both in the capital and in the countryside, there were considerably increasing enrollments. On this issue, Humberto de Campos, in 1928, visiting public establishments in Teresina, would have mentioned:

if men did not worship the woman, honoring her mother, they would worship her in the sanctity of the teachers. This house honors the woman from Piauí, showing her intelligence, her culture, her dedication, the qualities and virtues, in short, that make her - mother or wife, daughter or educator - the charm and glory of life (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p.161).

During the administration of Cristino Castelo Branco in the Public Education Directorate, the process of interiorization of school groups took place: “The year 1928 is a milestone in the process of interiorization of the school group model, with the creation of this type of school in the municipalities of União, Livramento (nowadays José de Freitas), Barras, Campo Maior, Picos and Floriano.” (LOPES, 2010, p. 101)

The previously mentioned author, referring to Cristino’s speech at the inauguration of the Valdivino Tito School Group, in 1929, in the city of Teresina, pronounced the following:

This speech sought to unite the 1910 reform aimed at marking school modernity: normal teacher and school group. It incorporated, however, the disenchantments that the government had with the normalist teacher and that was evident in the crisis of 1922, when the insufficiency of the feminization of the teaching profession was declared and the necessity of celibacy was considered. That is why the building and the teaching resources appear as co-dependents on the teachers’ competence. As good teachers are not dependent on buildings and teaching resources, their existence was a luxury that could not be lost. Cristino Castelo Branco’s speech sought to demonstrate that the government fulfilled its role and that the responsibility for the fates of the inaugurated school rested with the female teachers (LOPES, 2010, p.101-102).

He also reported the presence and importance of Firmina Sobreira in the consolidation process of the Normalist School in Teresina, invited by Antonino Freire, introducing new

models, new programs and a new pedagogical orientation: “complete type of educator. A decided vocation as a teacher. The school was her life, her soul, her reason to live. As soon as she left, she died.” (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 163)

It is worth recalling that after the establishment of the Normalist School in Teresina, from 1910,

for the definitive implementation of normalist education, the government requested the arrival of the normalist teacher Firmina Sobreira, graduated from the State School of Maranhão, who applied to consolidate the normalist course and is, due to her dedication to the cause, considered as one of the main responsible for continuing education of teachers” (FERRO, 1996, p. 106)

An interesting fact that happened during his tenure as Director of Public Instruction is, on July 13, 1928, the vindication of Professor Joana de Abranches Saraiva due to a project submitted to the Town Council to reduce teachers’ salaries. She claimed that it could not be possible, once the salaries they received were already too low for their positions: “It is likely that, the situation of wage devaluation is one of the reasons for the teachers’ low level of preparation.” (FERRO, 1996, p. 92).

As seen, Cristino was a teacher at Lyceum and Normalist School, and Director of Public Instruction. It is worth highlighting his performance when he assumed, on October 30, 1917, the chair of member of the Academy de Languages of Piauí, having as patron Antônio Borges Leal Castelo Branco.

On October 4, 1930, he was approached, at dawn, by the porter of the Teodoro Pacheco School Group, to find out if the institution would open, because the Governor was in prison and said he could leave the group closed and wait for the appointment of a new director of public instruction. The loss of his position did not frighten him, so he stepped up his advocacy services. He was also a professor of civil law at the recent College of Law of Piauí, whose minutes he signed on April 14, 1931, having left this position to take the vacancy of Judge at the Court of Justice on November 4, 1931. Cristino was against the accumulation of positions, because he believed that teaching required a lot of dedication from the teacher.

I consider a serious error, the accumulation, allowed by the federal constitution, of the functions of Teaching and the Judiciary, each one more serious, higher, and absorbing. Condemning this and other accumulations, Pontes de Miranda observes that the constitution was made by the accumulators. Teaching is not just the time in class, as many think. In some countries, it is all the time. (CASTELO BRANCO, 1957, p. 176)

Education in Piauí, according to the thinking of Cristino Castelo Branco in the First Republic

In this topic, I try to promote an analysis of the educational thinking of Cristino Castelo Branco, based on his speeches, considering that his effective performance in teaching or as an educational manager was concentrated in the First Republic of Brazil, which greatly influenced his ideas.

As added by Souza (2008), there is a centrality attributed to republicans regarding education - marked by the imaginary of educational modernization - anchored in social integration and in the civic-patriotic form, affirmation of the nation, diffusion of the elements of the sciences.

These ideas permeated the thinking of Cristino Castelo Branco, being present in his speeches and writings, when he defended school for the people, mainly in the elementary sense, when he cried out for an end to illiteracy, inferring that there is only freedom with education, as can be confirmed below:

We need to educate and instruct the people to carry out the republic. This is the ultimate problem of national vitality. If the people do not know how to read and the illiterate cannot vote, how can we speak about republic? democracy? how really want representatives of the people to be sovereignly elected? Besides, as Araújo Costa observes, man is only truly free when he is instructed, otherwise he will always be dependent on others. (CASTELO BRANCO, 1928, p. 92)

Therefore, conceiving the educational model proclaimed by the Republicans, he mentions in his speech the civic role of the teacher in the process of implementing popular education. For Souza (2008), in the years that followed the Proclamation of the Republic, state governments sought to carry out public education reforms in order to promote popular education, based on establishing the compulsory and gratuitous nature of primary education. This can be seen in another speech in the same magazine, dated January 14, 1928:

Very kind teachers, the diploma you have just received is not only the reward for your efforts during four years of study in this institution, it is also a responsibility title, because from now on you are a teacher and being a teacher is one of the noblest, highest, most difficult, thorniest tasks. You learned in the pedagogy class that today's primary teacher is no longer that of a few years ago, who taught only how to read, write and count in the light of palmatory punishment stick and grotesque punishments, in a true moral degradation that demeaned and depressed us in the eyes of human culture. The current public school, radiantly lit, very interesting, captures and seduces the soul of the child who goes to it happily, satisfied as for a beautiful party of intelligence, affection, love, dedication, kindness, intelligence, preparation; and the teacher's civility replaced the atmosphere of terror that dominated the old establishments (CASTELO BRANCO, 1928, p.146).

Cristino's speech corroborates Sousa's thought (2015), when analyzing the conceptions of being a teacher in Piauí between 1922 to 1928 from newspaper notes and government messages; showing that in the beginning of the Republic, the profession was too devalued. However, the modifications resulting from the republican progress project that aimed at popular education impelled the reopening of the Normalist school, the creation of school groups, generating debates between clericals and anticlericals. The result of this was the "institutionalization of the profession as a normalist teacher as a missionary, mother and savior of the motherland, in addition to being covered with social recognition and a glorious aura, which sometimes hid the lack of economic recognition" (SOUSA, 2015, p.83).

Students are no longer automatons, passive instruments without pride, without soul, without dignity, in the hands of the master, each of them is an individual to be awoken, each one is a character in the process of formation; he is a citizen whose intelligence and civility will be lovingly cultivated. Therefore, there is no profession that requires greater

devotion and dedication than teaching. There have already been those who chose to be a teacher just to receive a salary, to have a job, without love for the job, without interest in the luck of the students, without the exact, perfect, luminous understanding of their duties and responsibility, without the clear awareness of the sublimity of his social mission. It is a crime, a clumsiness and an absolute lack of patriotism. (CASTELO BRANCO, 1928, p. 147)

It is possible to envision the calls for love of teaching as a social and patriotic mission. The ideas that permeate Professor Cristino's speech show the notion of being a teacher in the beginning of the 20th century, and already leads the student as a center:

The preceptor owes the school all his intelligence, all his energy, all his activity; he must always study. The teacher who does not study is not a teacher. Studying not only the disciplines he teaches, the methods to adopt the progress of pedagogy, but also the society and the environment in which he lives and, above all, the disciples, the students entrusted to his custody. The child, says the pedagogues, is a constant reason for observation and study for the perfect application of methods and processes capable of forming a complete, logical and consistent individuality with modern life. [...] The primary school, in its modern conception, based on the intuitive, national method, making teaching as effective as possible to take advantage of childhood's natural curiosity is one of the most suggestive and dazzling things I know. However complete and perfect its organization may be, however the best and most admirable the method adopted, the school will have no profit, no result will be produced if the teacher is not intelligent and cultured. The height of his mission is to be passionate about his work and to make his cathedra a priesthood. (CASTELO BRANCO, 1928, p. 147-148)

This speech by Director Cristino Castelo Branco, published in 1928, reflects many of the ideas disseminated at the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century, which were used to justify women in primary education and yet, invoking the mission, the priesthood, the vocation and the salvation of illiteracy, as confirmed in Queiroz: (2008, p. 93) "So, many of the attributes associated with the idea of the primary teacher, such as having a job, that is priesthood and mission, the celibacy."

[...] and for the teaching profession for the primary school teachers, there is no doubt about the superiority of the female sex. The pre-excellence of women as a kindergarten teacher, said Ruy Barbosa, is a fact of universal evidence. After showing the society, abundantly, in his remarkable opinion presented in the House of Representatives in 1882, he says the woman internalizes the instinct of education. He mentions the words of Madame de Maintenon, who once observed 'Any power of good advice would manage to educate a child at the age of ten onwards, but until that age there is no sharpness of precepts that is enough. It is crucial, genius and with this embarrassment, men are not known to deal with it' (CASTELO BRANCO, 1928, p.148).

Regarding the role of women in the society of Piauí, a theme so reproduced in Cristino's speeches, I seek support for this analysis in Queiroz (2008), when he affirms that a certain scientism marked the post-Higino Cunha and Clodoaldo Freitas generation, both contemporaries of Cristino, but with certain positivist traits, whereas at that time, there was still interference of the church in the society of Piauí, hence this hypothetically results in the ideal of a female teacher as "virgin, missionary and devoted, in addition to aseptic" (QUEIROZ, 2008, p. 94).

For the aforementioned author, the job opportunities in Piauí, at the beginning of the 20th century, was still quite small, which resulted in the fact that women would go from home to the church, being the Normalist School another alternative, with its consequent performance in the exercise of primary teaching. In turn, secondary education was still sought exclusively by men. From then on, a "model of enlightened woman, but wife and mother, especially queen of the home" emerged, defended by intellectuals at the end of the 19th century (QUEIROZ, 2008, p. 96).

The statement below illustrates that the role of the female teacher was one of those permitted by the society, because it is combined with maternal issues:

The woman who is a politician, a voter and congresswoman, as people want her to become nowadays, is the woman outside her purpose. The woman was born to be a mother and a teacher. Because, being a mother is to unfold the heart from fiber to fiber, being a teacher is to make the heart the source of wisdom. Moreover, these two tasks, for being extremely absorbent, should not be performed at the same time by one person. (CASTELO BRANCO, 1928, p. 149)

Cristino's speech reflects the thinking of a time, when women were suited to exercising primary teaching, where the ideals of mission, vocation and priesthood permeated the teaching profession. Finally, he acknowledges that "to the teaching profession the most useful and the most patriotic of professions, all your intelligence and all your enthusiasm, all your youth, all your virtues that are many and high, and that are noble." (CASTELO BRANCO, 1928, p. 148).

Final considerations

This work brings the historiographical showcase related to the autobiographical writings of Cristino Castelo Branco, present in his work - he who was a teacher, a director of public instruction, a judge, a journalist and a writer -, in addition to demonstrating the analysis of part of his writings and reflections on his thinking of the educational field. When reading, it is possible to identify, in the writing of the self, the experiences of his personal life, such as childhood, marriage, memories of parents, family and everyday life in the city.

Indeed, education is described from elementary school: through Sinhá Borges's classes; Felisberto de Carvalho's book; the rules of Professor Luís Sabino in high school, the memories as a student at the Lyceum; the admission to the College of Law in Recife. In all these moments, Cristino launches a collective memory, revealing everyday facts, denoting aspects of his identity, as well as signaling his admiration for his teachers.

Then, the article reveals Cristino as a teacher at the Lyceum and Normalist school, allied to his experience as Director of Public Instruction in Piauí, at a time when the State was experiencing the expansion of school groups and the construction of school buildings.

Furthermore, it reveals a reflection on women in the primary teaching profession, corroborating the educational thinking of that time, where the ideals of vocation, mission and

priesthood permeated the female teaching profession. I consider appropriate and timely that the studies on Cristino Castelo Branco's work and thinking be expanded to other studies, as they will enrich the history of education in Piauí, stimulating new research and reflections.

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