



## **Literature Contributions to the History of Education**

Contribuições da literatura para a História da Educação

Contribuciones de la literatura a la Historia de la Educación

### **Organization**

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### **Presentation**

This dossier is based on the premise that literature has precious contributions to make to the history of education. From the outset, as far as the methodological domain is concerned, there is a remarkable dilation – accompanied, in its quantitative aspect, by that which also refers to diversity – of the sources and objects provided by literary works for the historian’s interpellation of the educational past. The exploration of this potential is intimately consonant with the movement of historiographical renewal emerged in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the field of *tout court* history, and that comes a little later to the domain of history of education. Largely characterized by the protagonism of a sociocultural nuance, the appropriations made within the latter point, likewise, to new problems, which end up triggering new approaches, intensifying the dialogue of the history of education with other branches of the human sciences, especially around the mobilization of new theoretical repertoires.

In correlation with the above mentioned movement, the greater presence of literature, taken both as a source and as an object of analysis in the branch of history of education, is felt as of the 1990s in several vehicles for the dissemination and flow of production in this area. In the specialized journals of the field, which mostly emerged in that decade and in the following ones, in the minutes of scientific events within this domain, and in the monographs produced in graduate programs, one can observe varied approaches, ranging from children's literature, through profiles of education intellectuals and their ties with the literary area, the literary production of teachers and professors, the educational dimensions present in the work of writers, literature in literacy policies and projects, the very history of children's literature, to the possible uses of literature as a source for exploring schooling processes.

Attuned to such possibilities, the set of investigations herein presented aims to explore some paths opened up by the use of literature as an instrument for inquiry into relevant problems from the educational past.

Thus, if the connection with literature, the way in which it is attempted in this dossier, denotes the manner in which the male and female authors of the works internalize the myriad of transformations operated within the historiographical field, a relevant facet that is revealed by some of the studies presented here is noteworthy: that of investigating, in the literature of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both sociological and psychological interpretations of the educational past, during periods when the social sciences, at least in Brazil, did not yet fully count on scientific-academic production regimes that would be consecrated in the wake of that historic moment from the consolidation of universities in our country.

With such anchorages well pondered, the dossier gathers texts that analyze literary works, in view of the dimension of knowledge about history and the subjects of education, as well as of the pedagogical and schooling processes that these works allow apprehending. The analyses focus on titles that are close to the following genres: fiction, formative novel, autobiographical memoirs, reading books for elementary school. Sensitive to how the problems relating to the confirmation of historical veracity and to the status of the sources affect the historiographic field, the articles support the hypothesis that fictions, autobiographies and memoirs can contribute to the understanding of formation processes, of an individual's transformation, of school experiences and practices, of the constitution of the teaching profession, and of the exclusion and social hierarchization devices operated within the school.

The analyses carried out take literary works as a resource for the production of historical knowledge, relating them to the academic production of the history of education. In detail, they refer to several issues of interest to the educational field, among which those relating to the process of training individuals and certain aspects of school culture stand out. They deal with the different ways in which subjects interact with the circumstances experienced in their daily lives and, based on their own experiences, make their choices; how they are directly or indirectly affected by historic events of greater repercussion and, furthermore, how chance also produces its effects on individual formation journeys, in the form of unexpected encounters and events.

Altogether, the articles refer to school practices and routines, to the difficulties and meaninglessness of many of the proposed activities and of the demands imposed by

educators in the perception of certain students, including of some who later became writers widely recognized for their talent. They discuss the theme of prejudice and discredit that weighs on part of the students, especially those who are already socially marginalized. They focus on the specifics of education aimed at girls and on the training of women for teaching.

In “A autoformação do escritor *fora e contra* a escola portuguesa: Teixeira de Pascoaes e a sublimação do génio, do *Livro de memórias* (1928) a *Uma fábula* (1952)” (“The writer’s self-learning outside and against the Portuguese school: Teixeira de Pascoaes and the sublimation of genius, from the *Livro de memórias* [1928] to *Uma fábula* [1952]”), the reflections are centered around the theme of an artist’s self-training. To this end, the publication resorts to the analysis of the intellectual formation process conducted by the distinguished Portuguese poet Teixeira de Pascoaes and, in particular, of how the author evaluates the schooling offered back in his day in Portugal, which was incapable, in his judgment, of ensuring a teaching-learning process for literary writing, particularly with regard to the discipline of Portuguese Language. In the approach to a writer’s self-training, the thematization of the precariousness of the Portuguese schooling process is found interwoven, and such an interweaving is modulated by the cleavages between family and school culture and the different devices that act in this framework of intellectual training and transmission of knowledge, with highlight to the “paradigm” of the genius, in which the attributes deemed to be of an individual nature, taken as a technology that would explain the prodigiousness and acuity of artistic work, are re-examined in the light of the sociological theory, especially with the aid of a repertoire sourced from Norbert Elias’s production.

“‘Lectora amiga’. Género y experiencia de escolarización en la Argentina de la década de 1930” (“‘Dear reader’. Gender and schooling experience in Argentina in the 1930s”) presents considerations on the education of girls in Argentina, in the 1930s, taking into account the social expectations regarding women: personality traits, care for appearance, behavior in society, and responsibilities as to house chores and taking care of children, among other elements associated with femininity. The article provides a fertile analysis of these issues, based on the school journey of a female student, by examining her notebook and her reading book used in the last year of primary school, as well as autobiographical accounts written by the woman that she became seventy years after completing primary education. An interesting aspect of school material culture addressed in the text concerns the existence of two versions of the studied reading book, *El Forjador*, by Luis Arenas, an exponent of the New School movement in Argentina. There was a version intended for boys, and another for girls, whose differences allow identifying gender conceptions just as they spread in everyday school life.

In the article “O romance *Canção de ninar* e a relação entre as mulheres, a educação e o trabalho: a *Cuca* nas vidas femininas desde meados do século XIX” (“The *Canção de ninar* novel and the relationship between women, education and work”), the authors make use of a work characterized as a psychological thriller to present reflections on the threats that, even today, hover over women who seek to reconcile motherhood and professional life. Based on the book that won the 2016 Goncourt Prize for French Literature, the authors show, in an original and convincing manner, how different

elements of the history of girls' education and of women's professionalization contribute to an understanding of the reasons why the work of women, especially of those who become mothers, tends to be unrecognized as to their importance. With its tragic outcome, the novel dramatically shows how women's work tends to be made invisible when it is done inside the house and consists of taking care of other people, or be considered superfluous when done outside the house, as though it was a form of amusement for women, an escape from their true duty, that of caring for their children. This is what leads working mothers to be held accountable for any sort of damage or suffering that their kids may come to suffer.

In “‘Isto aqui não é escola, é zoológico. Lá estão os animais’: *Morte em tenra idade* de Jonathan Kozol e as injustiças e violências promovidas pelo sistema escolar americano na década de 1960” (“‘This is not a school, it's a zoo. There are the animals’: *Death at an early age* by Jonathan Kozol and the injustices and violence promoted by the American school system in the 1960s”), issues directly associated with the conflicting relationships between teachers and students are the focus, made evident from the reconstitution of the atmosphere of a segregated school in the suburb of Boston, USA. The analysis takes into account the troubled period in which the book was published, 1960, marked by the fight of black Americans for civil rights and by the reactions provoked by the participation of the United States in the Vietnam War. Racism and the discriminatory practices related to it thus integrate the flow in which Kozol builds his autobiographical memories, and which are employed by the present article to problematize the theme of symbolic violence within the school, mediated by a theoretical-methodological discussion about the use of a literary production founded on the recalling of school memories with the aim of testing their potential as a device for interpreting the historical, social and psychological reality of the educational past.

“O romance de formação da professora: contribuições da literatura para pensar a história da educação” (“The teacher education novel: contributions from literature to think about the History of Education”) in its turn, examines the historical conditions of teacher training and of the teaching activity in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil by looking into two literary works: *O calvário de uma professora* (1928) and *Clarissa* (1933). The former consists of an autobiographical novel that presents a rich testimony about the training and professional activity of a normal-school teacher in São Paulo during the First Republic. The analysis evidences other aspects concerning the restrictions faced by women in their opportunities for training, as well as for choosing and exercising the profession. Teaching presented itself as an alternative for women; nonetheless, it was difficult for them to reach the highest positions in their career. Female teachers almost invariably found themselves subject to the authority of male colleagues, in a context in which merit weighed little in the assignment of positions. *Clarissa* (1933) offers a portrait of the young teacher in training made by the writer Érico Veríssimo, who did not experience first-hand the challenges faced by teachers but followed with interest the intense discussions on the education theme in the 1930s in the country, and expressed in the novel his own view of school problems and the hopes he had in the renewal of school practices, which came close to the proposals conveyed in the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* (1932).

“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)” (“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]”) reveals the attempt to, when exploring two formative novels based on autobiographical writings – *Doidinho* (1933) and *Infância* (1945) – authored, respectively, by José Lins do Rego and Graciliano Ramos, problematize the country’s schooling in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in terms of the sense that the individuals of that time made of the school, its rituals, the knowledge taught, and the very role played by the latter, when analyzing the real dramas of concrete life. It is important to note that the individuals mentioned take on the guise, in view of the literary creation expedients of the novelists, of archetypal figures of the society in which the plot takes place, proposing an intellection of that which is real, not only by resorting to the authors’ memories, but, additionally, considering that such memories make up a complex picture resulting from the junction of different temporalities, that of the “I” – the narrator – and that of the “he” – the character –, in which the psychological dimensions, both the one that more strictly characterizes the plot and the one used by literati to recreate the atmosphere of their respective school pasts, are explored in the article in order to enrich the historical approach about the vicissitudes of the affirmation of the school institution in the country.

The reading of all articles together that compose this dossier, in which educational issues are examined from the literature and in the interface with the history of education, shows the fertility of this encounter. The literary elaboration of the characters in the works considered favors a connection with the personal experience of the subjects involved in the pedagogical relationship: the initial impressions of the child who goes to school for the first time; the indignation of the student who does not feel respected by their teachers, or the discouragement of one who cannot understand the purpose of the duties imposed on them; the relationships that, in their turn, male and female teachers establish with their profession, the difficulties they encounter and how they face them. Moreover, the characterization of the spaces, times and social interactions presented in literature books, when related to the knowledge produced in the context of the history of education, allows apprehending other nuances of the process involved in an individual’s formation, and of the very existence of schools in their social and historical circumstances.