



**Between Literature and History of Education:
A reading of “*To Love, Intransitive Verb*”¹**

Entre a Literatura e a História da Educação:
uma leitura de *Amar, Verbo Intransitivo*

Entre Literatura e Historia de la Educación:
una lectura de *amar, verbo intransitivo*

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Abstract

The present article discusses the use of literature as a historiographic source for writing the history of education and reflects on ways to understand, through the reading of this type of vestige of the past, the representations in circulation in São Paulo at the beginning of the twentieth century about women in general - and preceptors, in particular. It also discusses, through a critical reading of the work “*To Love, intransitive verb*” by the modernist intellectual Mario de Andrade, the relations between text and context of the writing of the book, particularly the period 1923-1944. In the light of theoretical precepts from the History of Education, Cultural History and Philosophy of Language, the text weaves considerations about the relations between two distinct fields - the History of Education and Literature - while problematizing, through the critical analysis of the source, the representations of femininity and education in circulation in the period.

Keywords: To Love, intransitive verb; Preceptorship; Literary sources.

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Resumo

O presente artigo discute o uso da literatura como fonte historiográfica para a escrita da história da educação e reflete sobre maneiras de compreender, por intermédio da leitura desse tipo de vestígio do passado, as representações em circulação na São Paulo do início do século XX sobre as mulheres em geral – e as preceptoras, em particular. Também discute, por meio da leitura crítica da obra *Amar, verbo intransitivo*, do intelectual modernista Mario de Andrade, as relações entre texto e contexto da escrita do livro, particularmente, o período de 1923-1944. À luz dos preceitos teóricos oriundos da História da Educação, da História Cultural e da Filosofia da Linguagem, o texto tece considerações acerca das relações entre dois campos distintos – a História da Educação e a Literatura –, ao mesmo tempo em que problematiza, por intermédio da análise crítica da fonte, as representações de feminilidade e de educação em circulação no período.

Palavras-chave: Amar, verbo intransitivo; Preceptoria; Fontes literárias.

Resumen

El presente artículo discute el uso de la literatura como fuente historiográfica para escribir la historia de la educación y reflexiona sobre las formas de comprender, a través de la lectura de este tipo de vestigio del pasado, las representaciones en circulación en São Paulo a principios del siglo XX sobre las mujeres en general - y las preceptoras, en particular. También discute, a través de una lectura crítica de la obra *Amar, verbo intransitivo*, del intelectual modernista Mario de Andrade, las relaciones entre texto y contexto de la escritura del libro, en particular el período 1923-1944. A la luz de preceptos teóricos de la Historia de la Educación, de la Historia Cultural y de la Filosofía del Lenguaje, el texto entreteje consideraciones sobre las relaciones entre dos campos distintos -la Historia de la Educación y la Literatura-, al tiempo que problematiza, mediante el análisis crítico de la fuente, las representaciones de la feminidad y de la educación en circulación en la época.

Palabras clave: Amar, verbo intransitivo; Precepto; Fuentes literarias.

Introduction

The discussions contained in this article are inserted in the field of History of Education in Brazil, from the perspective of the New Cultural History (BURKE, 2008; GALVÃO; LOPES, 2010; LEENHARDT, 1998; PESAVENTO, 2014). In summary, based on the assumptions of cultural historians, we reflect on the potential of using literature to understand the representations of women preceptors who were in practice in Brazil, more precisely in the homes of rich families in São Paulo, at the beginning of the 20th century. In this effort, the novel *To Love, an intransitive verb* – hereinafter referred to as *To Love*² –, by the intellectual Mario de Andrade, emerges as an exquisite cultural artifact, if we consider the theoretical presumptions involving the use of literary sources to understand the culture of a given time/ space.

Thus, we seek to discuss, in addition to the issues consecrated by literary criticism about this famous text (SAGAWA, 2010; SCHÜLER, 1992), the possibilities of rapprochement between the reality imagined by the author about such female teachers and the representations in circulation in the social environment that we can extract from them. A counterpoint between art and verisimilitude is presented, since the knowledge of the past that comes to us in the form of a literary text can only be understood from the point of view of the maker of that very past, at the risk of anachronism, as Erich Auerbach tells us ([1946]/2021, p. 25) in his work *Mimesis*: the representation of reality in western literature.

To Love utters a peculiar non-school educational process outside institutional quarters, based on a provocative writer who, among his varied intellectual activities, was also a teacher, which is why, in his creative work, he highlighted the desires and setbacks of a character practicing pedagogical acts at home (PRATSINIS, 2017; 2020; SAGAWA, 2010; SCHÜLER, 1992).

Given this, we are led to the following questions: Who is the preceptor represented in *To Love*? What does this preceptor imagined by Mario de Andrade tell us about the history of women in general, and of educators/preceptors in particular, at the dawn of the 20th century? How intensely is preceptorship conceived in such a novel? What spaces did she occupy? These are the questions we seek to answer below.

As for the method used in the construction of our empiricism, we instrumentalize the critical analysis of traces of the past, synthesized in the concept of historiographical operation: rearticulation of traces of the past in the present time through an interpretative practice coined, above all, by a social place. Transformation of a cultural artifact into a source of information about the past (CERTEAU, 2020). We will thoroughly detail this issue on the following topic.

Some interfaces between literature and history of education

Literary texts enable the researcher to perform a multiplicity of readings, in addition to helping us understand issues of the human experience in the past that only official documents, hardly, or any other type of historic trace would be able to provide. Perhaps it is for this reason that Febvre (1989, p. 31), in a classic passage, explained that documents are vital for historians, but clarified that this is for all texts “and not just archival documents in whose favoring creates a privilege [...]. But also, a poem, a painting, a drama: documents for us, testimonies of a living and human history, saturated with thought and potential action.”

² Abbreviation for greater reading fluidity.

From this perspective, Antonio Candido, in a detailed analysis of the subject, elucidated that both human experience and the social dimension are art factors, warning – as done by Robert Darnton (2010), in Lamourette's Kiss – that literature and history are good neighbors, from the perspective of better considering them as communicating vessels rather than hermetic figures, despite their specificities, both theoretical and methodological.

At this point, in line with the possibility exposed by Lucien Febvre, the role *To Love* played remains a question, considering its time of production, in the capital of São Paulo from 1923 to 1944³, and the extent in which such literary text brings us closer to the social, cultural, political and economic reality of those times. Furthermore, what desires, utopias and dilemmas can literature express and what does this have to do with collective life at the time? Shall fiction be decanted from reality?

These are questions that permeate the activity of the researcher intending to use literary sources for their writing. These are formulations aimed at the work analyzed in this paper, but others would also fit into the same framework. If literature and other artistic expressions are produced by people from a given time/space, that means literature presents itself as an exquisite source for understanding the meanings of existence. Although it may seem like an adverse situation, historians rely on facts crystallized in the sources, as evidence that will give credibility to the narrative, but, as Antoine Prost explains, the historian:

is located at a time when the future was anticipated for the present by men of the past in the light of their own past; through imagination they reconstruct a past moment as a fictitious present in relation to which they redefine a past and a future. Historians' past is a time with three dimensions (PROST, 2017, p. 163).

In this sense, it is worth remembering that Literature, unlike History, is art. This fact sets it apart from other types of texts. It is not, therefore, that conception that literature is used to define all written expressions, such as medical, legal, accounting literature, nothing like that. The idea described here comes from Aristotle and his concept of mimesis, which means imitation of the world. Literature as art brings this: representation.

Imperious to have in mind that to understand literature as a historiographical source is to emphasize the way it was conceived and try to understand the limits between fiction and historical science, as the strong idea we have is that literature portrays pretense, the imaginary or it is a form of entertainment for the reader, pure delight dissociated from reality, which has no commitment to the truth (TODOROV, 2020).

But literature can aesthetically narrate situations that populate the author's mind, extracted from the world around them, which does not mean that it is all invention nor that everything is true. The dilemma, after all, is not this one, as literature can report the world without commitment to accuracy, however, what is credible can be extracted from it, since the literary text “is not born in a void, but in the center of a set of living discourses, sharing numerous characteristics with them” (TODOROV, 2020, p. 22).

³ We understand that this time lapse is justified by the fact that it was the period in which the novel *To Love* was written and is a result of what the author experienced and captured about society in that time and space. The initial term in which Mário de Andrade designed and began writing the novel *To Love* was the year 1923 (with first publication in 1927), until the final term, in 1944, when he published the second version of the work, with several changes, the start with the title, where the intransitive lost the z, forty pages were removed, some excerpts were repositioned, others added.

In this sense, Aristotle ([335? BC]/2007, p. 43) also said in his *Poetic Art* that it was “[...] evident that it is not within the poet purview to narrate exactly what happened; but what could have happened, what was possible, according to verisimilitude⁴ or necessity”, in other words, the poet does not have to be exact, but he is also not prevented from narrating exactly what happened. For this reason, as Candido (1981) infers, the plausibility and inner coherence of the narrative become more important than referential precision. And this undertaking will require a great fictional effort, and not a mere informative record.

In some way, every work of fiction has roots in the society in which it was produced, which equates to the product/space relationship being directly proportional magnitudes: *To Love* is to the capital of São Paulo as Mário de Andrade is to the novel. It is in this sense that Abreu (2006, p. 41) explains that “literature is a cultural and historical phenomenon and, therefore, capable of receiving different definitions at different times and by different social groups”. Thus, regarding research in the field of history of education, the aim is to understand the ways in which literature was produced and what makes it specialized, in contrast to other communicative expressions or contextual records of when it was written.

Nicolau Sevcenko ([1983]/2014) published an important work entitled *Literatura como missão: tensões sociais e criação cultural na primeira república*. This is a study of the end of the nineteenth-century Brazil, one of great political and economic transformations, in which abolition and the Proclamation of the Republic stand out, which, despite the undeniable permanences, particularly those related to inequality, placed Brazil elsewhere socially, politically and economically. It was in this context that Euclides da Cunha and Lima Barreto created their respective literary works, which Sevcenko (2014) identifies as permeated by the spirit of the mission of inventing both language and country that trace a panorama between science, culture and history.

It is worth remembering that Sidney Chalhoub (2003) developed an important historiographical contribution with the work *Machado de Assis historiador*, in which he addresses aspects of a literate who helps us understand nineteenth-century Brazil and the meanings of the historical process he witnessed.

From this perspective, we also highlight the thesis *A experiência do cuidado de si em Machado de Assis*, by Fernandes (2022), which, in turn, demonstrated the power of Machado's work for understanding the educational dimensions present in this author's writing in the field of History of Education.

We also emphasize the presentation of the dossier published in the journal *Cadernos de História da Educação*, whose theme addresses the “*Contribuições da literatura para a História da Educação*”, in which Lima and Menezes (2022) clarify that literature has been taken both as a source and as an object, more intensely, from 1990 onwards, so that the academic approach to this interdisciplinary meeting has increasingly forged fertile work for understanding the History of Education.

In this way, literature is a “fertile source”, as Ferreira (2020) named it, not only for the reader in general, but, above all, for the careful examination of the historian, as it has sufficient potential to accentuate imagination and sensitivity, attributes so dear to the historian's craft. Thus, artistic manifestations that comprise literature, as Ferreira (2020) infers, are inexhaustible sources for understanding what they have to say about social representation, considering that representations of the social world are continually determined by group interests that weave them, according to the classic formulation by Chartier (1991).

⁴ It is worth remembering that verisimilitude is not only associated with the theory of representations collected from literature and/or mythology, but is also heavily used in the legal field. Also known as plausibility, verisimilitude points to an apparent credibility of the fact and the law when the evidence presented gives the judge confidence to make emergency interlocutory decisions, to avoid the loss of property or avoid irreparable damage or damage that is difficult to repair.

To understand the schoolmaster and the teacher in the 19th century, for example, Villela (2020) used various sources in order to discuss the emergence of normal schools, the knowledge taught in those schools and the feminization of teaching in Brazil. Among the sources presented, the novel *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant*, by Manuel Antônio de Almeida, in the excerpt transcribed below, served to illustrate the daily school life of ordinary people:

In fact, he took care of this and told the master to receive the little one; He lived in a small and dark house at Da Vala street. The barber was received in the room that was furnished with four or five long pine benches, dirty from use, a small table that belonged to the master, and a larger one where the disciples wrote, all full of small holes for inkwells; On the walls and ceiling hung a number of huge cages of all sizes and shapes, inside which birds of different qualities jumped and sang: it was the pedagogue's favorite passion (ALMEIDA, 1998, 44-45).

When comparing the novelist's text with nineteenth-century newspapers in circulation, as well as travelers' reports, Villela (2020) noticed that Brazilian and foreign preceptors offered to teach in the homes, as there was such a demand from some affluent families. However, when it comes to ordinary families, the challenge of understanding how access to education was achieved becomes an arduous task. In any case, the records of the state initiatives, in the sense of organizing primary education, mean that Manuel Antônio de Almeida's fictional text is not mere imagination, but a lamp illuminating cracks and gaps in knowledge.

Along these lines, Cury (2021), when analyzing the contemporary situation of homeschooling as a legal challenge following the advent of the new coronavirus pandemic, which began in 2019, presents a study on home education in Brazil, in force including in the First Republic, and cites the novel *The Athenaeum: A Novel* (1888), by Raul Pompeia, as a literary source that addresses home education as a widespread practice before entering secondary education.

Louro ([1997]/2017), in turn, in writing the text called "Women in the classroom", uses the provocative *Humanitarian Opuscle*, by Nísia Floresta (1810-1885), a self-taught teacher with the voice of vanguard, to denounce the difficult reality of women. Maria Teresa Santos Cunha, pioneeringly, published, in 1990, *Traps of seduction: the novels of M. Delly*, analyzing the education strategies of female subjectivity between the 1930s and 1960s.

These and several other writings used literature in some way as a source for constructing research in the history of education. They demonstrate that the critical examination of literary texts allows us to understand various issues that involve the educational act (school or otherwise), as seen in *To Love*.

The woman represented in *To Love*

One of the keys to understanding the situation of women's subjugation throughout history relates to the idea of power, not to mention, as we know, gender being a construction arising from the power relations between men and women themselves, as it is based on such relations that it is legitimized.

Interestingly, although the law deals with regulations that in essence reveal the positivization of interests produced in the relationship of political force, legal manuals do not clearly express the concept of power, although its effects are present. They limit themselves, at most, to saying about their legitimacy, coercion and their relationship with morality, as, for example, in Reale (2009, p. 46), when expressing that "morality is incoercible, but the law is coercible". This finding excludes some works on the philosophy of law that sometimes address the topic. But what is power?

Power, in the sense of behavior, is the aptitude or generic capacity to act, to produce effects, to determine (BOBBIO; MATTECUCCI; PASQUINO, [1983]/2004, p. 933). Foucault ([1979]/2006), in a classic text, explains that power is exercised and only exists in action. For him, power is what represses nature, individuals, instincts, a class, it is an activation and unfolding of the relationship of forces in function of a truth: “‘Truth’ is circularly linked to systems of power, which produce and support it, and the effects of power that it induces and which reproduce it. ‘Regime’ of truth”, named the philosopher (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 14).

In the context of the novel *To Love*, women are at the same time the object of power and subject to it by determination of a society with strong patriarchal traits. The perversity of this subjection lies in the legitimization obtained from the discourse built around religious and cultural values. Thus, as regulations are created based on power, which expand men's rights and restrict women's rights, non-compliance can generate possible coercion, even if they are nothing more than customs.

Furthermore, we do not lose sight of the crucial issue that the time taken to write *To Love* coincides with the first Brazilian feminist wave, from which several efforts were made by women with a combative and vanguard spirit, aiming not only at the political right to suffrage, but the recognition of their equality and autonomy in different fields, such as work and education.

As Besse (1999) tells us in her work *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*, that as a result of such struggles, women gradually began to occupy spaces never imagined in Brazil. For the researcher, after the First World War (1914-1918), female roles began to change in Brazil, in step with economic expansion and the urbanization process, a situation that enabled women from the middle and upper classes to gradually access spaces in addition to private ones, opportunities for education and paid work – a phenomenon, in fact, that occurred in much of the western world (PEDRO, 2017; PERROT, 2019; SOIHET, 2013).

Despite the implemented efforts and achievements, the path was subject to strong male suspicion, which in *To Love* is personified in the preceptors. She bows to the contingency of needing to survive, in contrast to the lethargy and traditions of the family hiring her services. Such a family symbolizes the continuity of the state of affairs that placed women in a condition of inferiority. The novel shows this contrast between independent, hard-working women, like Fräulein, versus those from the house that hired her, educated to adhere to the demands of the home, based on the logic of male preponderance over women. Women-social adornments, as Perrot (2009) so aptly named.

In this sense, the masculine/feminine counterpoint is what sustains this sense of power, whose reference, to be recognized and followed, needs to be fixed, a kind of dogma, tradition above human construction, something transcendental or ahistorical, naturalizing the dual relationship, rooted in social dynamics so deeply that it sustains power. In this way, its rupture becomes quite difficult, because, hadn't been for vigor, it would be opening space to undermine the custom.

Following this line, the ancient history of female subjugation has ingrained many records in the foundations of value and in people's imagination, resulting, for example, in the selection/distinction of young women “for marriage” and for occasional relationships, such as the cultured preceptor Fräulein and hundreds of “women to bed”. It doesn't matter if it's casual love, due to a tacit prior contract to use the female body as a pedagogical instrument; or directly with prostitutes from Brás or Bom Retiro in São Paulo, for those already initiated, as they also needed to have someone to give vent to their drives, or lasciviousness, as was the custom of the time (MATOS; SOIHET, 2003; RAGO, 1996, 2008).

This inculcation even had repercussions in the vernacular, since language is a living social product. Simply analyzing the dubious meaning that can be attributed to men and women with the words *adventurer*, *experienced*, *free*, *lost*, *professional*. This reflection can be observed in the meaning of words recorded in dictionaries, such as “*professor*” and its female counterpart in Brazilian Portuguese, “*professora*”, in which, for her, the entry contains an allusion to the figure of a prostitute, and the same does not occur for the male vernacular.

Eliane Vasconcellos Leitão (1981), in *A mulher na língua do povo*, developed a detailed reflection on the invisibility of women and the dehumanized stereotype channeled in the asymmetry of words, whether in indefinite pronouns or in agreement with gender concurrence⁵ and generic use in the male form, concluding that language and sex are always linked, in different ways. This seems to be closely related to the idea of how the body is socially conceived, considering that organic and social dimensions come together in it, which is reflected in language, even before we begin to develop speech.

In the table below, we compile meanings contained in the Brazilian vernacular that demonstrate a non-random meaning for the entry *professora*, since, both in Ferreira (2010, p. 1,715) and in Houaiss (2004, p. 2,306), the very brief result in the latter dictionary coincides with the meaning “N.E. Pop. Prostitute with which teenagers begin their sexual life.”

Table 1 – Meaning of the words *professor* and *professora* in Brazilian Portuguese

Fonte	PROFESSOR	PROFESSORA
Ferreira (2010, p. 1.715)	(ô) [Lat. <i>Professore.</i>] M. n. 1. One who professes or teaches a science, an art, a technique, a discipline; master: university professor; gym teacher. 2. Fig. Expert or trained man. 3. One who publicly professes religious truths. ♦ Supervising professor. Education. professor with good qualifications, who supervises academic work, scientific research, dissertations and theses. Professor. Who holds a chair (3); professor.	(ô) [Fem. of <i>professor.</i>] F. n. 1. Woman who teaches or belongs to faculty; master. 2. Bras., N.E ⁶ . Pop. Prostitute with whom teenagers begin their sexual life.
Houaiss (2004, p. 2.306)	/ô/ <i>m.n.</i> (sXV cf. FichIVPM) 1 one who professes a belief, a religion 2 one whose profession is teaching at school, college or university; teacher, master (e.g. of mathematics) 2.1 one who gives classes on a subject (e.g. of dance) (e.g. of guitar) 2.2 p.ext. one who transmits some teaching to another person (ask him to teach your son to ride a bicycle, he is good p.) 3 one who has a diploma from some course that trains teachers (like normal, some university courses, the course degree etc.) 4 fig. individual very versed or expert in (something) ■ adj. 5 who professes; proficient 6 who works as a teacher or has a diploma or teaching title ♦ [...].	<i>f.n.</i> 1 woman who teaches or teaches 2 B N.E. inform. prostitute with whom teenagers begin their sexual life • use in Brazil the term is used in relation to women who teach at any level, from kindergarten to university • ETIM fem. for teacher.

Source: Table prepared with the translation of direct quotes from the respective dictionaries.

⁵ “That is, one or more masculine and feminine forms appear together, we find that the adjective, which determines them, is used almost obligatorily in the masculine plural” (LEITÃO, 1981, p. 17), example: Vitor, Maria and Joana are *estudiosos*(scholars).

⁶ In a work called *Nada na Língua é por acaso*, Bagno (2007) deals with linguistic variations, and the one contained in Table 1 is classified as diatopical, which concerns regional variants based on culture.

Perhaps this is the mark of greatest disturbance in what has been analyzed so far, as the idea that was in circulation from 1895 to 1920, put forward in studies by Galvão and Lopes (2010), Louro (2017) and Reis (1993) among others, show female teachers as priestesses, pilgrims, selfless missionaries, whose profession attracted moral control over young students from normal school onwards. Even the photographs showed highly respectable poses, highlighting the deep and solemn look of these young women, denoting high missionary ideals, diametrically opposed to the idea of prostitution. It seems that the key to understanding such perplexity is present in the image that a prostitute is someone who “sells any type of knowledge”, depending on the existing demand, even if they are practical classes of sexual or sentimental initiation.

That said, it is clear that the image of women appears to fluctuate when revealed by cultural constructions. Education and voting are examples of the main flags of feminist struggles of the 20th century, it is enough to see that, under the mantle of the Constitution in force in the First Republic – contemporary with the idyll⁷ of Mário de Andrade –, women were not allowed to participate in the suffrages, but the decades from 10 to 30 were marked by many female attempts to break such chains, including the work of female teachers (CAMPOS, 2009; VIDAL; VICENTINI, 2019; XAVIER, 2014).

This hermetic system of female subjugation did not go unnoticed by early 20th century legislators when it came to civil matters. The Civil Code of 1916 itself ferociously affected women at the time of *To Love*. This codex⁸ stated that women did not have full capacity, meaning that the consent of the father, if single, and of the husband, if married, was necessary to perform acts of civil life. This reveals an important trait, whose effect is sometimes ignored when, for example, the character Mrs. Laura (wife of Mr. Felisberto Sousa Costa, Fräulein's contractor) does not make important decisions in the family due to her supposed cognitive deficit and reproduction of a social ethos that denies female protagonism and intellectual growth.

It should be noted that Mrs. Laura did not participate in the negotiations made between Felisberto Sousa Costa and Fräulein regarding the undertaking that targeted her son Carlos, nor regarding the form, much less regarding the remuneration. But she had to open her house to a woman she didn't even know. The novel reveals that Mrs. Laura, upon meeting Fräulein, was irritated by her husband's decision, but restrained herself, as obedience was the wife's main duty: “– Good morning. You're the preceptor, aren't you? She smiled, hiding her irritation. – I am” (ANDRADE, [1944]/1995, p. 52).

Later, when Mrs. Laura discovers the real reason for Fräulein's presence, she does not rebel, silently accepting the decision from above *comme il faut*, since giving Carlos the opportunity to have a “future sacred home” through the preceptor's service seemed fair to her. Mário de Andrade clearly explains this reality in the following passage:

Sousa Costa looks at the ground. Mrs. Laura stares at the ceiling. Oh! creatures, creatures of God, **how disparate you are!** The Lauras will always look at the sky. The Felisbertos are always down to earth. Ascending feminine soul... **The male always attached to earthly filth.** Let us put earthly filth (ANDRADE, 1995, p. 81, emphasis added).

⁷ According to Moisés ([1974]/2008), idyll concerns any short lyrical, loving, descriptive, dramatic or epic poem, for rural or pastoral themes, and also began to characterize a sentimental story. Idyll was used by Mário de Andrade as the subtitle of the novel *To Love*, which refers to a lesson saturated with pain and disappointment.

⁸ Within the scope of legal sociology, there is a consensus that family law is the most conservative of the legal system, due to the intense respect for the social institution it represents, which is closer to the natural and biological order, as well as because it is linked to traditions and customs structured in the interest of maintaining (and not transforming) an existing order that transmits cultural values (ROSA, [1970]/2009, p. 107).

This discussion, as well as the reading of the transcribed scene, demonstrate that the roles are already defined in advance and that the wives should just accept what was said (look up), as arising from magical prerogative. Article 233 of the Civil Code⁹ of 1916 gave Mr. Felisberto this right, therefore, according to the current regulations, he did not usurp anyone, since the head of the conjugal society belonged to him, therefore, all his decisions regarding the family were legitimized by the legal system civil law in force at the time, which was not the result of chance, but a reflection and refraction of social dynamics.

The preceptor represented in *To Love*

From the novel, it is clear that Fräulein was a refined woman, she knew several languages, including Portuguese, as she communicated easily in Brazil, but she had dreams of one day returning to Germany, getting married and starting a family. However, regardless of the intellectual level she possessed, she was subject to the same restrictions imposed on women based on sex. She was a woman, therefore, under Brazilian civil regulations, she was a “quasi-person”, considering that in several areas of life prohibitions imposed inferiority on her.

In relation to being a foreign teacher and her difficult living conditions in Brazil, Mário de Andrade revealed a contrast, drawing on the stereotype built around the German people. Not a single hair out of place represents much more than care and personal care, but it points to the questions that Norbert Elias (1997) presented in *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, a work that deals with the formation of that European State and the habits of its citizens. Furthermore, when talking about Germans, sometimes there is an immediate association of that people with the characteristics of austerity, punctuality, coldness, reliability, but also with discipline, rationality, etc.

From this perspective, it is important to highlight that the character Fräulein was strategically designed, but the author did not merely want to show the attributes of someone who firmly questioned the price of taxi services in Brazil, who was bothered by the misalignment of boxes on the contractor's family bookshelf or was tormented by the irregular fifteen-minute delay for class or lunch, in other words, he found Brazilian culture strange. The main intention was to make it clear that she was an educated woman, but filled with a certain mediocrity, in that she was a supporter of theoretical thoughts that supported the racial superiority of the Germans in relation to other peoples of the world, particularly Brazilians.

The text reads: “The noble destiny of men is to remain healthy and look for a prodigiously healthy wife. Of a superior race, like her, Fräulein. Black people are an inferior race. The indigenous too. The Portuguese too” (ANDRADE, 1995, p. 63). Here we see a certain confluence between the preceptor's prejudices and those of the Sousa Costa family, who tried to disguise the physical signs of their own mixed Brazilianness. Now, the one that had an ardent appreciation for planning and predictability suddenly needs to sell its services in Brazil. But the author highlights that the sobriety and practicality of the Germans did not facilitate adaptation, on the contrary. According to Mario de Andrade's perspective, we Brazilians, would be a people full of exclamations.

But there's no doubt: life remaining the same, although new and diverse, is a bad thing. The Germans' bad. German people have no escapes or unforeseen events. The surprise, the unprecedented in life is for them a continuity to continue. In the face of nature it is not like that. That's how it is in life. Decision: We will travel today. The Latino will say: We will travel today! The German says: We will travel today. Full stop. Exclamation points... they are necessary so that reality does not tire us (ANDRADE, 1995, p.54).

⁹ “Art. 233. The husband is the head of the conjugal society. It is of his discretion to: [...] IV. Authorize a woman's profession and her residence outside the marital roof” (sic) (BRASIL, 1916, p. 23).

In this sense, the preceptor represents a frustrated woman, a misunderstood immigrant and an undervalued teacher. Not that the amount of Rs 8:000\$000 (eight *contos de réis*)¹⁰ was any demeaning, it seems to be the opposite. But the labor, performed in that way, symbolized the rupture, both with what was expected to be peculiar to the Germans and with the preceptorship work.

After all, being a preceptor represented a highly dignified role – subverted in the novel in question. Although Fräulein had all the skills to teach other languages and piano, she was also willing to teach the arts of love, meeting a demand that seemed to be frequent from wealthy Brazilian families. There is a passage in *To Love* that demonstrates that the Sousa Costa family was not the first to make use of the services:

- Fräulein prepared him. In any case, this has no consequence... Mesquita was the one who recommended Fräulein to me. Zezé Mesquita, you know him, well! the one who moved to Rio last year...
- I know.
- If they used her, I believe it was for their eldest son. And the worst danger is the mistress! They are children, they take this nonsense seriously, they start giving too much money... and with that come addictions! The danger is addictions! And the illnesses! Why are these young men all undeserving, soft?... Because of their mistresses! and then you think that Carlos, if he didn't have Fräulein, wouldn't he learn these things in the same way? Yes, he would, ma'am! If he hasn't learned already!... And from whom! Good! The best thing is not to talk about it anymore, it gives me a headache. It is done and ready (ANDRADE, 1995, p. 82).

The preceptor portrays an inexorable conflict. From her figure emerges the dilemma of her work being, at the same time, noble and degraded, necessary and disposable, eternal and perennial. But what can we extract from this apparent disorder? Initially, the narrator highlights the dichotomy between **the man of life** and **the man of dreams**¹¹. An inner struggle fought and experienced by the preceptor, whose opposition concerns relationships: inconsequential / measured; practical love / romantic love.

The man of the dream sees the sexual initiation lesson for money as an insult and a cry of disappointment. In a different way, the man of life says: “That’s not quite right, my Lady. I'm not shameless or self-serving! I am working in a profession. And just as noble as the others” (ANDRADE, 1995, p. 77). Fräulein carried within herself such a dichotomy. In

¹⁰ Despite the difficulty in establishing a precise equivalence of the purchasing power of the currency in *réis* from the time of the *To Love* deed to the present day, due to the varied economic conditions, in order to have at least an idea of teacher Fräulein's remuneration, we carried out the following calculation: on July 27th, 1927, the price of cattle/weight quoted at Rs17\$500 (seventeen thousand and five hundred *réis*), so that the Rs 8:000\$000 (eight *contos de réis*) of Fräulein's salary was enough to purchase 457, 14 cattle/weight units in Brazil. When considering that such commodity, on January 24th, 2023, is quoted at R\$ 282.61/@, currently, such quantity [which by association concerns Fräulein's salary], corresponds to the amount of R\$ 129,192.34 (one hundred and twenty-nine thousand, one hundred and ninety-two *reais* and thirty-four *centavos*). Basis: Diário Nacional (1927, p. 7) and CEPEA (2023). Until 1942, the Brazilian monetary standard was the *mil-réis* (1\$000), so that one thousand *mil-réis* was equivalent to one *conto de réis* (1:000\$000).

¹¹ The expression “man” was used in a generic way by the narrator of *To Love*, applicable to Fräulein, referring to the human being and not to a specific gender, according to Andrade (1995, p. 60).

appearance, she is a teacher who needs to be asexual, with an unblemished reputation, or even, using the words of Guacira Lopes Louro (2017, p. 444), with a necessary “unassailable morality”. It can be seen that the activity of initiating the student into love, admitted by the man in life, supports the bourgeois intention of taking the son/apprentice to marriage, based on the idea of living, in the future, a love that is elevated, but without madness, whose greatest value was practical and hygienic life.

But *Fräulein* is human. And she dreams of obtaining resources, returning to Germany and starting a family. *Fräulein* has fantasies and knows that she needs to nourish them to remain standing in the midst of the dryness of the world, the loneliness and estrangement in relation to Brazil and, mainly, due to her apparently valued profession, but which, in reality, objectifies her.

From what has been explained so far, *Fräulein* is aware of her job and this type of subverted teaching that she practices. As a German, she wants to believe that she belongs to the strongest race, coming from a country of austere and high culture. However, in the Sousa Costa's house, she was merely another expensive object, such as a car, crockery and crystal. She is subject to the customs of the elites of a young, mixed-race country that is still very far from progress, as she believed¹².

It is important to note that, throughout the idyll, only the narrator calls the preceptor by her name. For everyone in the house, she was simply *Fräulein*, and with this nickname she preserves herself, while showing that she is the foreigner, the strange¹³ one. The narrator uses her civil name, Elza, to demonstrate that the conflict between two beings resides in the same person: the woman of life (“being”) and the woman of dreams (“is”). The following passage demonstrates this particularity, demarcated by the verbs *ser/estar*, “to be” in Brazilian Portuguese.

Fräulein had little by little mechanized her poor conception of love. There the man-of-life and the man-of-dreams came to be confused in preaching a single truth and, much funnier still, in seeing the same picture. Teacher of love... but she wasn't born for that, she knew it. Circumstances were what had made her the teacher of love, she had adapted. She didn't even discuss whether she was happy, she didn't realize her own unhappiness. It was, verb to be (ANDRADE, 1995, p. 104).

However, this simultaneous verb relationship embedded in the same person does not only concern the intransitivity contained in the novel's title, but the attempt to make a fresh start as the fate of the 1920s. The teacher appears to be asexual, under which there is no suspicion of her real job: to teach love without madness, rational and utilitarian, so desired by hypothetical bourgeois families in São Paulo.

In the pedagogical act, the rich young man must undergo the awakening of that pure and sublime love, but in a controlled way. The love taught by *Fräulein* uses sexuality only as an instrument, denying it in another sense, after all, there is an undertaking whose object of service is a duty that needs to overcome the pleasures of the flesh. Thus, the lessons serve exclusively to open the young person's eyes to the good family he has and the one he may create in the future. From what has been said, it is clear that “living” and “existing” in the world dialogue in a sinuous way.

¹² Ina Von Binzer, or simply *Fräulein*, who served as a preceptor in Brazil, probably died in 1916, before returning to Germany, said in one of her letters to a fellow countryman about Brazil: “[...]it is a beautiful strange country, but it will never be a homeland” (BINZER, [1956]/2017, p. 213). In her letters, she highlights her fear of the exotic South American country and the difficult task of teaching Brazilians.

¹³ Foreigner comes from the Latin *extrānvēus* (CUNHA, [1982]/2005, p. 333), which means stranger, person who belongs to another group or who is not a member of the *civitas*. It also refers to when the State does not recognize the quality of its members.

That is why we think that the allusion to constitutive dualisms integrates the image of a man, filled with binomials and crossed with paradoxes, in the same way that Fräulein is. Seeing and understanding the dichotomies of human beings through art depends, in Mário de Andrade's view, on refined sensitivity and criticism, which was made difficult in Brazil due to the superficiality he saw around him.

This is demonstrated in correspondence sent by the author to Manuel Bandeira, on April 6, 1927, when he asked “who criticizes this country? True criticism?” (ANDRADE, [1927]/2001, p. 340). Furthermore, he writes that the book would have great complexity of problems that few realized at the time. He was referring to the novel *To Love* and its internal paradoxes.

Because of its peculiar idyll, it has strange verb conjugation. The complaint highlighted by Mário de Andrade in the novel concerns the hermeneutics of disguise, the portrait of what is not genuine, the family that is not sacred, despite appearances, the son's first love that is nothing more than the father's strategy. Of the falsified idyll, of the real city hidden behind sexual prophylaxis, of the anguish of the preceptor woman, who despite being educated, has to submit herself to disguise and subjection in order to survive.

Final Considerations

The reading of the novel *To Love, an intransitive verb*, by Mario de Andrade, enables us to think of the literary text as a powerful source for scrutinizing the past, dreams, desires, fears and fantasies of those who lived before us. By reading this trace, in particular, we come closer to an ambience that denotes a certain type of education in the customs and sensibilities of men, women and children in the first decades of the 20th century in the city of São Paulo. In fact, the work allows us to look at the process of acculturation of individuals and groups in different possibilities of intersections related to gender (men/women), the level of literacy (more or less educated women), ethnicity (Brazilians, Germans) and generation (young, adults, old).

To Love is a novel of concatenated speeches produced from the lens of its attentive writer. Here, once again, we return to the thinking of Michel Foucault ([1969]/2014), for whom discourses are “nodes” [or atoms] that make up a network. One of them is the passage in the novel in which the narrator explains that Sousa Costa looks at the ground while his wife always looks at the sky, which refers to the idea that men would be pragmatic, objective and their actions would be guided by clear and productive criteria, whereas women would be contemplative and passive, which is why the private environment was, par excellence, their socially demarcated space: made natural.

If we consider Mário de Andrade as a poet of the new and his experience gained in public administration by leading efforts to ensure that knowledge was also on the peripheries, we can think that *To Love* functioned as a critique of a type of endogenous education that created inequalities of all kinds: class and gender, mainly.

To Love is an idyll, but not traditional, as the author's lens portrays the purity of fatality and thematizes a love that, turned into a verb, does not fit in with the lack of traditional grammar, as a way of criticizing part of São Paulo's bourgeoisie that tried to be what effectively wasn't, to hide what it really was: conservative, provincial and not very literate.

The mask did not fit only the face of this social group, but it was fitted on the face of the teacher Elza, who becomes Fräulein: an unnamed woman. A German preceptor, cultured, poor and pragmatic, who taught love as a necessity for survival. Her depersonalization occurs when other people's ways of life become greater than her own, regardless of the fact that the mansion's books were nothing more than untouched ornaments, revealing a teacher doomed to a mediocre life by embodying the political choice of several families, in which the “Egyptian sleep” in the books had the same value as the veneer that foreign teachers could provide.

Finally, Mário de Andrade purposefully used a plot that refutes certainties, reveals the world as ambiguous, shows that the kiss may not be idyllic either, quite the opposite and, above all, that education is a broad, contradictory process, which goes beyond the school yard, involving different practical traditions and knowledge.

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